

The Emotional Geographies of Expectant Fathering

by

Alice Emmeline Menzel

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Geography
College of Life and Environmental Sciences
University of Birmingham

3rd April 2024

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

Abstract

Pregnancy, and the transition to parenthood are intensely emotional experiences and inherently gendered periods of change. Feminist geographers have convincingly situated family/parenting as fundamentally spatial practices, with the transition to parenthood being associated with a unique array of spaces/places and changes to spatial routines. Yet despite a wealth of literature on pregnancy/maternalities, and emerging/increasing work on fathering, the experiences of expectant fathers have, heretofore, been largely absent. Drawing upon periodic in-depth interviews, conducted between January 2021 – May 2022 with nine expectant fathers in the UK (most living in England), this research explores the lived, emotional geographies of expectant fathering.

Importantly, this research was conducted amidst the coronavirus pandemic, which saw widespread disruption to ‘normal’ spatial mobilities and routines. Interview narratives are therefore contextualised via broader social-media analyses of the pandemic experiences of UK expectant mothers/fathers. This research brings together, and contributes to, the critical junctures of geographies of family/parenting, emotional and embodied geographies, and political geographic research on (anticipatory) emotional governance, facilitating unique, critical insight into the emotional and spatial experiences of expectant fatherhood in an era of crisis. In so doing, it situates expectant fathering as a daily emotional practice, negotiated and contested across different spaces and, importantly, at different scales – from bodies, homes, and into workplace spaces, mediated also by national policy and legislation. Ultimately, it reveals how fathering, and the evolving identities of expectant fathers are always already shaped by cultural discourses/expectations around masculinity in particular places, by (in)dependence, and by state-citizen relations within specific spaces of healthcare, employment rights/flexibility and welfare, exacerbated in periods of crisis.

For my own father, Alex Menzel, for being my inspiration.

Also to Sidney, my best pal, who was with me through every step of my Geography journey – from sitting with me as I revised for my GSCE exams, to going off to University and doing a Masters and PhD. Although you didn't make it to the end, you'll always have a special place in my heart.

Acknowledgements

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child – and while this is something to which I cannot personally attest, I do think that the same is true of completing a PhD. There are so many people to whom I am immensely grateful in supporting me in producing this work, who I would like to acknowledge, and wholeheartedly thank here. There are many people to thank, and I have broken these acknowledgements up into their contributions to this thesis.

Foremost, my thanks must go to the expectant fathers who participated in this research – and especially having done so during the pandemic. It was an honour and privilege to have had the opportunity to listen to your experiences. Thank you for sharing them with me. They have not only made the writing of this thesis possible, but also brought to me some much-needed hope, positivity and excitement into my life in a time where I felt there was very little to be hopeful and positive about. I will be forever grateful to you for getting me through that time. I hope that the pages that follow wholly capture your experiences.

Thank you also to all the group admins of the parenting groups who shared details of my research, and to Dave, Eleanor and Elsie – and anyone who retweeted my research poster – for their support in recruiting participants.

Thank you to my Examiners, Professor Anna Tarrant and Professor Paul Hodgkinson for taking the time to read this thesis. My thanks also to Dr Phil Jones for Chairing.

In beginning my second order of thanks, I must express my gratitude and appreciation to my wonderful supervisors, Professor Peter Kraftl, and Professor Jessica Pykett, for their incredible support over the last seven years – not just during the last five years through this PhD, but also for the two masters before that. Thank you for your kindness, generosity and patience (especially your patience) in the writing of this thesis, and for your thoughtful and constructive comments at every turn. Thank you also for your smiles and unwavering positivity at all times, but most especially in those dark days of the of Pandemic.

Thank you also to all the amazing people in the School of Geography at the University of Birmingham (past and present) for always being there to provide moral and practical support – not only in my research, but also within the world of academia and teaching, and especially over the last year. To Dr Melanie Griffiths, Professor Jon Oldfield, Dr Natasha Cornea, Professor Sophie Hadfield-Hill, Dr Laura Crawford, Dr Johanne Bruun, Dr Rosie Day and Dr Jo Southworth – thank you for the opportunities you have given me, and for your support and encouragement (and for the space/time to finish this thesis). Thank you also to Heather Barrett for her smiley positivity and patience with answering my emails. Additionally, I would also like to thank (in no particular order) Professor Pat Noxolo, Professor Dominique Moran and Dr Adam Ramadan – each of whom have at some point claimed responsibility for convincing me to do a PhD in the first place. While I cannot remember who truly came first, you each made a profound impact on me as a student of the University of Birmingham, as personal academic tutors, dissertation supervisors and lecturers.

Thanks also to Dr Rachel Colls of Durham University for your amazing encouragement and guidance, and for your thoughtful and constructive comments on previous drafts of papers upon which some of these chapters are based – specifically those on father-foetal relations, and negotiations of paternity leave.

My thanks also to Dr Emma Waight of Coventry University for sharing her publications with me when my institution did not have access.

To the attendees of the *Geographies of Children, Youth and Family Research Group 2023* Writing Retreat – in particular Alexis, Cassie, Sophie, Catherine and Ruth – thank you for your kindness, support and empathy which got me through the chapter on baby things. To Alexis especially – although we knew each other for a few short days, your words have stuck with me, changing my outlook on writing whenever I am struggling. I often remember them with fondness and empowerment.

To Rebecca, Smruthi, Carey and Fira – thank you for your words of encouragement in the final months of writing this thesis. I look forward to our future collaborations together, building on the findings of this thesis.

Thank you to the members of the British Sociological Association Sociology of Emotions writing group in 2021 – in particular Fiona – for their encouraging feedback on my research and suggestions. Thank you also the members of the *Geographies of Childhood, Young People and Education* research group, which it was my pleasure to serve as secretary for six years, and to do so over much of this PhD.

Now, to the important people in my life on a more personal level, who are equally important in the production of this thesis:

To my friends – thank you for being there on this journey. Thank you to Todd, Laura, Freddie, Lucy and Jim for the escapism provided in our Stargate RPG, and to Todd, Freddie and Fran for Pathfinder – which I look forward to being able to start up again! Thank you also to Cathy, Charles and Chocbar (Jordan) for getting me out and about, and for making me laugh.

To my mum, Debbie, and dad, Alex, who 27 years and 365 days ago (it's a leap year!) brought me into this world. Since that day, they have filled my life with love, joy, support and encouragement. They have nurtured each one of my academic achievements, giving me the love and confidence to pursue my dreams. Without the two of you, I probably wouldn't have developed the same interest in family, parenting and fathering as I have done. You are the best parents I could ever, ever, wish for you and I love you both so much.

Thank you to my mum for all lunch time meet ups, and fancy afternoon teas, giving us quality mother-daughter time. I have loved the time we have spent together over the last few years – especially recent times spent with Ralph.

Thank you also to my dad for reading this thesis (although you're welcome that I only asked you to do so once!).

To the rest of my family, including my big brother Luke and sister-in-law Natalie (and Resty too!), and my little sister Grace – thank you for your support and encouragement, and for not being too judgemental about the fact I went to Uni 10 years ago, and *still* haven't left....

Thank you also to the Waugh household of Congleton – Mandy, Colin, Lola, Cocoa (and Sookie) – for your positivity and for our headland walks in Cornwall where I had time to think.

Finally, last but not least, thank you to (Dr!) Todd Waugh Ambridge for his love, support and encouragement – over the last six years, but most especially over the last few weeks. I know it's been tough, but we're finally there! Thank you for getting me through it. In particular, thank you also for your highly care-full reading of this thesis, helping me to resolve the chaotic switches in tenses.

Todd – Thank you for the many, many (many, many!) hours you have listened to me about my work, trying to decipher the ideas in my brain, so that they can become words on a page. Thank you for being my rock, and pillar of support – not in a way of stoicism, but of complete understanding and compassion. Thank you for providing me with so much emotional support, doing much the same emotion work described by my participants – embodying a protective brick wall and protective layer (Martin), cocooning me (Tom) against the external stresses and distractions of the last few weeks, to provide me with time to just focus. Further still, thank you for your thoughtful arrangement of future things to celebrate our achievements (and to, finally, at long last, de-compress from the stresses of PhD life). I look forward to our future adventures together, where, as you have said ‘the word thesis will not feature so heavily.’

Funding and Publications

This research was funded by the ESRC as a part of a 1+3 studentship (grant number: ES/P000711/1 Project Reference: 2066096). I am immensely grateful to the ESRC MGS DTP for this support, and for the opportunities and collaborations such support has enabled.

Sections of this thesis have been presented at a number of conference and so have benefited from questions and discussions that emerged:

- Segments of Chapter 4 have appeared in “The Coronavirus Pandemic, Exploring Expectant Fathers’ Experiences”, a Special Issue paper in the *Journal for Cultural Research*.
- Aspects of Chapter 5 have been written into a paper on inter-embodied encounters between fathers and unborn children, a revised version of which was under review at the time of submission, but has since been published in *Gender, Place and Culture*. My thanks to Peter Kraftl, Jessica Pykett and Rachel Colls, along with the anonymous reviewers for their comments.
- Aspects of Chapter 7 have also been written into a paper on the emotional geographies of negotiation of paternity leave, soon to be submitted for review in *Social and Cultural Geography*. My thanks for again to Peter, Jessica and Rachel.

I am also grateful to the *Geographies of Children, Youth and Family Research Group* (GCYFRG) for a bursary-funded place to attend the 2023 Writing Retreat, at which to focus on Chapter 6 – as attendees that year know, I struggled greatly with this chapter, but the kindness, support and reassurance I received there has enabled it to develop into a chapter I am proud of.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Funding and Publications	viii
Table of Contents	ix
List of Figures.....	xv
List of Tables.....	xv
1 Introduction	1
1.1. Introduction and Social Justification	1
1.2. Academic Rationale.....	3
1.3. Aims and Objectives.....	6
1.4. Thesis Outline.....	7
2 Literature Review	10
2.1. Introduction	10
2.2. Feminist Geographies: A Guiding Philosophical, Conceptual Framework	11
2.3. Emotional Geographies	16
2.3.1. A Framework for Examining Emotional Geographies.....	19
2.3.2. Emotional, Embodied Geographies.....	21
2.3.3. Emotional vs Affectual Geographies.....	23
2.3.4. Emotions and Masculinities	25
2.4. Emotional Geographies of Parenting.....	30
2.4.1. Caregiving Objects and Parental Subjectivities.....	34

2.5. Spatialities of Fathering.....	37
2.5.1. The Geographies of Fathering	39
2.5.2. Spatialities of Paternal Love/Intimacy	43
2.5.3. Fathering, Masculinity and Work.....	48
2.6. Spatialising Expectancy and Emergent Pre-Parenting Geographies	50
2.6.1. Maternal (and Absent Paternal) Geographies.....	52
2.7. Situating the Thesis: Towards Emotional Geographies of Expectant Fathering..	60
3 Methodology.....	62
3.1. Introduction	62
3.2. Feminist Philosophy and Ethical Research Praxis	63
3.3. Research Design	65
3.3.1 Ethics of Longitudinal Research During the Pandemic: Emotional Considerations, Attrition and Care-fullness	68
3.4. Recruiting Interview Participants	69
3.5. Interview Participants	72
3.6. Periodic In-Depth Interviews	77
3.6.1. Zoom Interviews: Intimate Spatialities, Absent-Presences and Blurred Boundaries of ‘Field’ Space	81
3.6.2. Feminist Reflections on Empathy, Care and Emotional Reflexivity During Pandemic Research with Men	85
3.7. Social Media Data: Extant Narratives of Pandemic Parenting	87
3.8. Data Analysis.....	90
3.8.1. Emotional Immersion through Transcription	91
3.8.2. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: A Framework	92
3.9. Summary and Analysis Outline.....	96
3.9.1 Empirical Chapter Outline.....	97

4 Putting on a Brave Face: The Gendered Emotion Work of Expectant Fathering	100
4.1. Introduction	100
4.2. The ‘Role’ of Expectant Fathering	103
4.3. Sticky Emotions, Sticky Masculinities: Reflections and Aspirations on Emotions and Masculinity During the Transition to Fatherhood	110
4.4. Emotional Geographies of Pregnancy Confirmation: The Entanglements Between Grief, Loss and Anticipation	119
4.4.1. Taking Tests	121
4.4.2. Emotional Bordering: Keeping an Emotional Distance	126
4.5. Pandemic Emotion Work	128
4.5.1. Emotional Bordering and Waiting Outside	130
4.5.2. Masculine Expectations to ‘Dealing with It’	134
4.6. Silencing of Emotions: Navigating Covid Restrictions and Workplace Spaces	136
4.6.1. Going to Ultrasound Appointments.....	137
4.6.2. The Paradox of Emotional Expression: Banter in Spaces of Hypermasculinity	140
4.7. ‘Arriving at Arrival’ : The Significance of Emotions	144
4.8. Conclusion	147
5 Expectant Fathers’ Inter-embodied, Multi-Sensory Encounters with an Unborn Child: Developing a Sense of Intimacy and Love.....	150
5.1. Introduction	150
5.2. Embodying (Dis)Connection: Bodies and Expectant Fathers’ Emotions	153
5.2.1. Inside/Outside: Bodily Borders and Boundaries within Father-Foetal Interactions	158

5.3. Inter-Embodied Encounters: Transcending the Border	164
5.3.1. Ultrasound Scans: Visual and Audial Encounters	166
5.3.2. Foetal Movement: Haptic Geographies of Encounters with an Unborn Child	170
5.4. Intimate Care-full Encounters: Doing Family with Foetuses	176
5.5. Conclusion	179
6 Preparing the Home: Expectant Fathers' Accumulation and Affective Encounters with Baby Things.....	182
6.1. Introduction	182
6.2 The 'Family' Home	184
6.3. Accumulating Baby Things: Moral Geographies of Consumption Practices as Enactments of 'Good Parenting'	188
6.3.1. Localised Share Economies and Second-hand Goods.....	189
6.3.2. Online Second-hand Marketplaces and Environmentally Conscious Consumerism.....	194
6.3.3. Scrolling, Negotiating, Collecting: The Gendered Work of Purchasing Things from Online Marketplaces	197
6.4. Integrating Materialities of Baby Things into the Home: Shifting Material Landscape of Home: The Integration of Materialities of Baby Things.....	205
6.4.1. Home-work: Nursery-Making...and the Production of Family Home	205
6.4.2. DIY, Masculinities and the Production of Paternal Subjectivity	211
6.4.3. Storage of Baby Things: Clutter and Dormant Objects? Or Objects-in-Waiting.	221
6.5. Affective Encounters: Arriving at Arrival.....	225
6.6. Conclusion	233

7 Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Precarity and Uncertainty in Expectant Fathers’ Negotiation of Paternity Leave from Work	236
7.1. Introduction	236
7.1.1. UK Legislative Context	239
7.2. Making Plans for Leave: Gendered Considerations	242
7.3. Workplace Policies and Employee Contracts: The Stresses and Anxieties of Leave Ineligibility	249
7.4. Apprehensions of Taking ‘Too Much’ Time Away: Anxieties of Being a Good (or Bad) Worker	255
7.5. Initiating Leave: Uncertainties of When and Guilt of How Long	258
7.6. Being on Leave and Returning to Work: Spatial Navigations of Work and Care and Falling Back into Gender	262
7.7. Adapting from Arrival: Workplace Tensions and Father-Employee Retention.....	268
7.8 Conclusion.....	272
8 Conclusion	275
8.1. Introduction	275
8.2. Findings and Contributions	276
8.3. Implications for Policy and Practice.....	278
8.4. Directions for Future Research.....	280
References	283
Appendices	314
Appendix A – Research Poster	315
Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet	316
Appendix C – Interview Consent Form.....	319
Appendix D – Demographic Questionnaire	320
Appendix E – Interview Guides	322

Interview Introduction	322
Image-Elicitation-Style Exercise – Guiding Instructions	323
Second Trimester Interview	324
Third Trimester Interview	326
Post-Birth Interview	327
Follow-up Interview	328
Appendix F – Summary Table of Participants	329
Appendix G – Adoption Process Roadmap	330
Appendix H – Additional Opt-In Activities	331
Appendix I – Diary Consent Form	333

List of Figures

Figure 1: A Network Sociogram Showing Participant Recruitment Avenues. Constructed using Nvivo12. 73

Figure 2: A Nested Hierarchical Coding Chart Visualising Codes Used in Data Analysis. Constructed Using NVvio12. 95

Figure 3: A Word Cloud Depicting Most Commonly Used Terms in Interviews. Constructed Using NVivo12 96

Figure 4: A Timeline of Parental Leave Legislation in the UK 241

List of Tables

Table 1: A Summary of Interview Participants 74

1 Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Social Justification

Pregnancy, and becoming a parent are largely recognised as intensely emotional periods of change (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). They are also widely regarded as highly gendered experiences, ones which are experienced differently by expectant mothers and fathers. These gendered dynamics of the transition to parenthood have long been of interest to feminist scholars (see, for example, Miller, 2005, 2010 on mothering and fathering, respectively) and increasingly to feminist geographers (Hamper, 2022; Hamper and Nash, 2021; Tomori and Boyer, 2019). This thesis is concerned with the emotional geographies of expectant fathering, an experience which has, heretofore, been largely unexamined within geography (though see Menzel, 2022).

It offers a particular timely intervention, examining expectant fathering in light of a number of recent social crises. This is not least the coronavirus pandemic – during which data collection for this thesis was conducted – where many expectant fathers in the UK (and across Europe more broadly) were effectively ‘barred’ from attending appointments, and sometimes even the birth of their child (Menzel, 2022; Lista and Bresesti, 2020). These restrictions, I have argued, engendered a general retreat towards traditional gendered parenting roles, enforcing a reversion back into dynamics of mother-caregiver, present in the home and spaces of care, and distant-father, who is largely *absent* from these spaces (Menzel, 2022). These gendered divides have only been further reinforced since the pandemic. In 2023, parenting organisations *Pregnant then Screwed* and *The Fatherhood Institute* launched a joint campaign, petitioning for the UK government to extend paid paternity leave entitlements in the UK from two weeks to six weeks (amid the cost-of-living crisis and austerity politics – see Briggs and Hall, 2023) in an effort to

encourage greater father-involvement in the early years and to address gender inequality in the labour market <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/640814> [accessed: 25/07/2023]). These calls were rejected by the UK government in January 2024 (The Fatherhood Institute, 2024).

In light of such responses, it is hardly surprising that societal expectations of intimate, involved and equitable fathering remains a cultural ideal, rarely met in practice (Faircloth, 2021) – even with decades’ long debates around cultural ideals of the ‘new man’ (McQueen, 2017; Elliot, 2016) and social appetite for intimate, involved fathering (Dermott, 2008). Indeed, the suggestion that the pandemic – more specifically work-from-home orders and lockdown restrictions – would facilitate greater father-involvement, heralding a new-age of gender equality, has been largely rebuked (see Chung et al., 2021). However, the *reason* these gendered divides persisted – rather than being actively resolved – is because of pervasive societal understandings and expectations of what is entailed in mothering and what is entailed in fathering. These gender roles are learned and internalised by parents during the period of pregnancy and expectancy (and indeed long before).

Through this thesis, I argue how it is the *spaces* of parenting, and specifically of expectancy, which impede this equality, specifically through the signals that they send to fathers about how they ‘matter’ to care. That is, I argue through this thesis how the different experiences of mothers and fathers are mediated, fundamentally, by the exact *spaces* in which they are embroiled, via the cultural codes they exude, which not only mediate societal expectations of gendered parenting roles, but also work to reinforce these in emotional, embodied ways (Aitken, 2009). Moreover, these expectations are mediated and reinforced at a number of critical spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017), which overlap and intersect to reinforce cultural expectations and assumptions of (expectant) parenthood.

1.2. Academic Rationale

There has been a growing interest in fathering research across the social sciences in recent decades (see Schoppe-Sullivan and Fagan, 2020 for a recent overview). This interest is reflective of broader societal concerns around fathering that have emerged due to widespread appeals towards more equitable divisions of childcare (along with domestic responsibilities), as well as to resolving fractious tensions around work-family balance (Macht, 2020a).

Indeed, many feminist commentators have emphasised the important need for critical (social-scientific) research on (expectant) fathering in striving towards gender equity, particularly in the workplace (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Miller, 2010), and across society as a whole (Ranson, 2014, Doucet, 2009). They have argued, for example, how women's/mothers' prolonged leave from work (due to pregnancy) can negatively influence career prospects, perpetuating the prominence of the gender-pay gap (MacAllister et al., 2021); however, through doing research which highlights and foregrounds *men's* role/commitments as fathers (and the barriers they face to participation in care), feminist scholarship can help 'challenge' and redress these gender norms. Importantly, research has also shown how (equitable) father-involvement in childrearing is associated with participation during pregnancy, with greater investment and inclusion of fathers prior to birth leading to higher-quality, more positive and more stable familial relationships post-birth (Walsh et al., 2017; Johnsen et al., 2017), providing an important rationale for this thesis' focus on expectant fathering.

Within Geography, there has been some excellent – though still fairly limited – examinations of fathering, much of which builds upon Aitken's early conception of fathering as a "daily emotional practice that is negotiated, contested, resisted differently in different spaces" (2000: 581, emphasis added, reiterated in Aitken, 2005, 2009).

However, this work has largely not spread to consideration of fathers' experiences *prior* to the arrival of a child – to fathers' experiences during pregnancy and the emotional process of *becoming* a father. This is despite the long-standing and well-established body of work on geographies of pregnancy/maternalities (see Longhurst, 2008).

The absence of expectant fathering within geography is surprising given the rise of 'pre-parenting' cultures in many Western contexts, wherein parents (particularly mothers, but increasingly fathers) are expected to demonstrate their emotional commitment to parenting before the actual arrival of a child (Hamper, 2022). Indeed, contemporary discourse over intimate/involved fatherhood has been increasingly extended backwards in time (Faircloth, 2021; Twamley et al., 2013), becoming enrolled into (interventionist) policy imperatives which argue that "involving men as early as possible lays the foundation for better, more involved fatherhood" (Draper and Ives, 2013:723, cited in Menzel, 2022: 87). These expectations have profoundly spatial dynamics, to which geographers could usefully explore.

Indeed, much of the extant literature on expectant fathering has emerged from the cognate fields of Sociology, Business Studies, Midwifery etc., resulting in a lack of a critical spatial perspective. Much less evident within existing scholarship are the specificities of the actual *spaces/places* of expectant fathering; of where expectant fathers *go* (or, indeed, cease to go) during the course of pregnancy and transition to parenthood – and, further still, within the context of the pandemic, expect to go but *can't* – with whom and why, along with their *lived, emotional experiences* of these; of how they *feel* in and about these spaces and how they may come to see particular spaces in new ways (after Luzia, 2010). This thesis seeks to examine these various facets in more detail, developing a conceptual framework for an *emotional geographies of expectant fathering*.

Moreover, this thesis also aims to consider expectant fathering holistically – addressing how previous research has tended to focus on a particular *dimension* of fathering, giving a partial (and disconnected) view of the emotional experiences that comprise expectant fathering. This thesis instead presents a plethora of emotional experiences that comprise the transition to fatherhood, and demonstrates what a critical geographical perspective uniquely adds to understanding expectant fathers’ experiences, through interrogation of how these experiences are importantly cross-cut by a number of different spaces and places – and spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017). It thus makes an important contribution to feminist geographic scholarship on family/parenting, further extending the – still fairly limited – research on fathering. Moreover, to broader social-scientific literature on (expectant) fathering, this thesis also makes a valuable contribution by demonstrating the significance of a spatial perspective.

I approach this research from a fundamentally feminist standpoint, grounded in a framework of maternal feminism – centring the significance and value of care as a basis for radical change (Ruddick, 1995, cited in Twamley, 2019). This is thus a thesis founded on *hope* (see Ahmed, 2004: 183-189); hope for a more socially-just and gender-equitable future (McDowell, 1997), taking men’s aspirations of future care-giving as a starting point. Through this thesis, I hope for a future in which mothers and fathers may be considered largely equal – perhaps even, eventually, ‘interchangeable’ – in their parenting roles and commitments, and to be recognised for this across different spaces, for example workplace spaces (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Birkett and Forbes, 2019), but also beyond, to society as a whole. This is not to undermine the substantial physical/embodied work of women/mothers in carrying, birthing and (breast)feeding children, but rather to deconstruct the societal assumption that women/mothers are therefore more ‘natural’ and more ‘capable’ caregivers, which perpetuates in society (cf. Aitken, 2000; Ruddick,

1995), and to move towards a future where fathers feel able to fully and equally ‘share care’ (Hodkinson and Brooks, 2019).

I thus situate this research within the recent surge of geographical literature seeking to ‘regender’ care (Boyer et al., 2017a; 2017b), specifically by attending to the importance of *men*’s engagement/participation in such care-work to redress traditional gender relations – which are fundamentally embedded in space (Gorman-Murray, 2017) – such as through enactments of intimate, involved fathering (Meah, 2017; Meah and Jackson, 2016; Dermott, 2008).

In exploring the emotio-spatial experiences of expectant fathering, this thesis draws upon the voices/experiences of expectant fathers themselves. Indeed, there has, heretofore, been no research within geography which has properly consider the voices/experiences of expectant fathers *in their own words* – much research drawing upon the accounts of mothers as a proxy (see for example Hamper, 2022) – resulting in a dearth of knowledge/understanding of expectant fathers’ own actual, lived, emotional experiences of the transition to parenthood. This thesis problematises – but more importantly, addresses – this absence, by ‘giving voice’ to expectant fathers, gathered, primarily, via periodic in-depth interviews conducted with nine expectant fathers (most living in England) over January 2021 – May 2022, adopting a qualitative ‘mini-longitudinal’ design strategy (see Vincent, 2013 on advantages of repeat interviews in social research on pregnancy).

1.3. Aims and Objectives

In critically examining the emotional geographies of expectant fathering, this thesis has four specific, though interlinked, research objectives:

1. To investigate expectant fathers' emotional experiences of various spaces and places during pregnancy, and into early parenthood.
2. To understand the importance of particular practices and interactions for how fathers anticipate and attempt to build an emotional connection with their future child.
3. To interrogate the significance of space and place (as well as other geographical notions, such as borders and boundaries) in shaping these emotional experiences.
4. To subsequently 'give voice' to expectant fathers, as a group whose experiences have been largely neglected within geographic research.

1.4. Thesis Outline

In order to meet the above aims, this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides the Literature Review, examining the key literature informing this research – specifically work on emotional geographies, geographies of fathering (along with cognate work on family/parenting) and spatialities of expectancy via emergent literature on pre-parenting. Chapter 3 presents the Methodology, providing the methodological rationale for how I undertook this research, detailing a range of key ethical considerations (not least those entailed in having conducted this research during the coronavirus pandemic). Then, drawing upon the conceptual debates and empirical data described in these preceding chapters, the Analysis section of this thesis is split into four separate, but interrelated, chapters, each of which cross-examines a key dimension of the emotional geographies of expectant fathering. The structure of the Analysis chapters is intended to reflect the temporalities of pregnancy, beginning with the early experiences of pregnancy confirmation and anticipations/anxieties of the first scan, and ending with a discussion of the instigation of parental leave with the imminent arrival of a child. However, these

chapters are also structured to draw out the significant *spatialities* of expectant fathering, doing so at different scales, beginning with the intimate scale of the body and ‘zooming out’ to larger spatial scales.

In Chapter 4, I examine the ‘emotion work’ of being an expectant father, particularly in the early stages of pregnancy, examining how expectant fathers conceptualise and manage their perceived role during this time – primarily being a ‘supportive partner’, an expectation which was heightened, and became particularly emotionally fraught, during the emotional turbulence of the pandemic.

Chapter 5 considers expectant fathers’ evolving experiences of pregnancy, (beginning primarily at the first ultra-sound scan) with a focus on the emotional, embodied geographies of expectant fathering. I do this specifically through examination of expectant fathers’ inter-embodied, multi-sensory encounters with their unborn child inside the womb – an interior bodily space within the body of their pregnant partner. I interrogate especially the role of bodily borders/boundaries in mediating these encounters and the emergence of anticipatory forms of love and intimacy.

Chapter 6 then builds on the two previous chapters by ‘zooming out’ from a focus on bodies to one on the preparatory ‘home-work’ of readying the home for the arrival of a child. This chapter considers the emotional geographies of expectant fathers’ experiences of the shifting material landscape of home in preparation for the arrival of a child. I consider especially how fathers participate (actively, and often individually) in the accumulation, integration and emotional encounters with ‘baby things’, examining the affective capacities of these material objects in eliciting expectant fathers’ emotional connection to their future child.

In Chapter 7, approaching the imminent arrival of their child, I examine the emotional geographies of expectant fathers' negotiation and arrangement of leave from work. I examine the tensions participants felt between leave-taking and being a 'good worker', illuminating their anxieties/uncertainties about taking leave from work. Bringing together the arguments of the preceding chapters, I situate workplace spaces as amongst the biggest factors which impede expectant fathers' greater participation in care after the arrival of a child. I examine how, even where workplace cultures are generally supportive of fathers up-take of (extended) leave, the implementation of parental leave legislation, along with workplace-cultures, in practice, often work to discourage fathers' leave-taking. Thus, workplaces are a central space through which parents 'fall back' into gender.

I bring these discussions together in my Conclusion in Chapter 8, where I reiterate the value of an emotional geographies 'lens' for understanding expectant fathers' experiences, as well as the important need for, and implications of, including, more equitably, the voices/experiences of expectant fathers more fully into future research. I also outline priorities for policy and practice, focusing on the need to attend more carefully to expectant fathers' emotions – entangled with space – in creating more gender-equitable futures.

2 Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the conceptual background for this thesis, introducing and reviewing key areas of scholarship and theoretical concepts informing this research, developing a conceptual framework for interrogating the emotional geographies of expectant fathering in the subsequent, analytical, chapters of this thesis. It begins with a brief explication of my guiding philosophical frameworks, where I outline two distinct strands of feminist inquiry – feminist phenomenology and post-structural feminism (see Berggren, 2014) – for how they intimately inform my conception of various notions central to this thesis, specifically the entanglements of emotions, spatialities, (inter-embodied) practices and gendered identities (Simonsen, 2007). I then turn to a critical examination of the three central pillars of this research: emotional geographies, fathering and expectancy/anticipation (specifically in terms of pre-parenting). Here, I interrogate the geographical nature of these, situating each as distinctly spatial phenomena through discussion of key geographical concepts of space/place, scale, time, borders/boundaries etc. (see Clifford et al., 2009; Bondi, 2005a). Through examination of these three pillars, I ‘home in’ on an understanding of expectant fathering as a geographical process; an emotional, embodied *spatial* practice that is negotiated, contested, resisted and reworked differently in different spaces (after Aitken, 2009: 230). I build on this in the final section of this chapter where I examine more specifically extant interdisciplinary literature on expectant fathering.

2.2. Feminist Geographies: A Guiding Philosophical, Conceptual Framework

This thesis is fundamentally underpinned by a feminist philosophical position, which provides the important conceptual (and political) background of my research on expectant fathering. Feminist philosophy informs not only my epistemological, methodological and axiological dispositions in doing this research (as discussed in the Chapter 3, the Methodology – see Hiemstra and Billo, 2017; Dixon and Jones, 2006), but also intimately informs the ontological and epistemological foundations of this research on expectant fathering.

Indeed, many of the literatures examined in this review have their early disciplinary origins in the work of feminist geographers, who have been instrumental in invoking a plethora of historically neglected foci to geographical scrutiny (Domosh, 1998), including so-called ‘feminine’ spheres of life such as family/parenting and pregnancy; spatial practices of care along with ‘feminine’ ways of knowing, including emotions, embodiment and the validity of intimate personal experience and family life (see Bondi, 2005b; Longhurst, 2001). For example, it was only in the 1990s that family and other intimate relations became explicit subjects of geographical inquiry (Hall, 2016), emerging out of early feminist geographical research concerning “the household as a unit of production...[which]...rapidly evolved into a focus on women’s roles/obligations as mothers” (Valentine, 2008: 2100-2101), with geographic interest in fathering similarly emerging from feminist scholarship, as I will discuss later.

Foundational to feminist approaches within Geography is the critique of historical, ‘masculinist’ assumptions of space and place as universally experienced, demonstrating instead difference and subjectiveness of spatial encounters (Thien, 2011), attending especially to the fundamentally *gendered* nature of social relations/experience and how gender identities are constituted in, by and through space/place (after Butler,

1990; McDowell, 1999). The political project of feminism and feminist scholarship is one imbued with a commitment to – and desire for – a different, more (gender) equitable future. It is thus a project ultimately founded on *hope* (see also Ahmed, 2004:183 – 189). In achieving such goals, feminist geographical scholarship has long recognised that in order to understand – and address – the gendered nature of social life, critical interrogation of the gendered, emotional experiences of *men* is vital (McDowell, 1999, 1997). Emergent geographical work on masculinities is thus similarly indebted to feminist thinking and the central assertion that “socio-spatial relations are gendered”, facilitating critical examination of masculinities in (particularly) men’s everyday spatial lives (Gorman-Murray and Hopkins, 2014: 2; van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005). This is particularly necessary for working towards more (gender) equitable futures, as part of the broader project of feminism (McDowell, 1999), as I do in this research.

There are, of course, many different bodies of feminist thought (see Tong and Botts, 2017 for an overview). As discussed in Chapter 1, this research is foundationally underpinned by a framework of maternal feminism, centring the significance and value of care as a basis for radical change (Ruddick, 1995, cited in Twamley, 2019). Conceptually, however, I situate my work at the critical junctures of feminist phenomenology – with a focus on lived experience, bodies, emotions and space (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014); as well as post-structural feminist understandings of (gendered) identity as performative and partial – in a constant state of ‘becoming’, with a recognition of discourse and power in reifying these constructs, embedded within social space (Butler, 1990).

Central to feminist phenomenology is the focus on embodiment and lived experience (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014; Berggren, 2014). Grounded in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1964, 192), phenomenological perspectives posit the centrality of the body to consciousness and experience, arguing that the body is a material object through which consciousness is attached and the world lived (Simonsen, 2007: 169), regarding lived experience as a ‘mid-point’ between mind and body, overcoming the dichotomies of subject and object (Berggren 2014). However, feminist phenomenologists largely disavow Merleau-Ponty’s (hetero)normative assumptions of lived experience which infer that people experience social phenomena in broadly the *same* way, neglecting the importance of social identity (inscribed onto bodies) within lived experience (Berggren, 2014). Instead, feminist phenomenologists emphasise gendered *difference* to embodied experience, highlighting the bodily aspects of gender and the gendered nature of lived experience (ibid.). As such, they have critiqued and extended traditional phenomenological concepts (such as Merleau-Ponty’s notion of inter-embodiment), redeploying these in order to critically examine the unique embodied experiences of women, such as those of pregnancy, as I will explore later in this review (Lupton, 2013, also Holt, 2017, 2013).

Feminist Phenomenology is therefore what Kinkaid (2020) terms a *critical* phenomenological perspective, which offers a useful mechanism for “articulating the ways that different bodies...*encounter space differently*” (p.168, emphasis added). In other words, the cultural ‘codes’ embedded in particular spaces of how to act can affect people differently based on various social characteristics, which “directly influence the way people perform their identities – including their gendered identities” (Giazitzoglu, 2019: 68). This conception is useful for the present thesis in considering how men navigate space as expectant fathers.

Whilst post-structuralism is a rather diverse collection of theories, which are somewhat rather loosely tied together, it is perhaps principally unified through its commitment to analysing constructions of meaning and their entanglements with power relations, seeking to contest and disrupt understandings about social reality which are assumed and taken to be ‘natural’ (Blunt and Willis, 2000). Post-structuralism builds upon the structuralist ontology that subjects are constituted by social reality and experience – that they are socially constructed – but goes further to centre the role of discourse and language in their constitution (Berggren, 2014).

In other words, discourses – embedded within text, speech, systems of believe, bodily practices, habits, gestures, etc. – do not just reflect social reality, but actively *produce* (and indeed, reproduce) it through performative practice (McQueen, 2017; Wylie, 2006). Thus, when referring to the ‘gendered nature’ of phenomena in this thesis, I mean to signal to the gendered *assumptions* and expectations which have been internalised as ‘natural’.

Furthermore, post-structuralists argue that discourses are never static or fixed; they do not represent fully-formed ‘structures’ of reality, but are instead always shifting, always partial and incomplete, in a constant state of flux (Berggren, 2014). Post-structuralists thus point to the central role of *power* in discourse, highlighting the dominance of certain discourses over others (Simonsen, 2012; Wylie, 2006). In this way, they also emphasise the *plurality* of (competing) discourses in the construction of knowledge, experience and identity (McQueen, 2017, Simonsen, 2012, 2007 see also Lupton, 1998) such as expectations surrounding gender roles (e.g., hegemonic masculinity – see later).

Feminist geographers draw upon post-structuralist theories to analyse the spatiality of gender and gendered spaces (Harrison, 2006; Blunt and Willis, 2000). Building on Butler's (1990) conception of gender as a performance, along with West and Zimmerman's (1987) 'doing gender' thesis, feminist geographers are concerned with how gender is performed in relation to space, providing an important foundation for geographic work on masculinities (Gorman-Murray and Hopkins, 2014). Whilst gender (and relatedly gender roles, including those of mothering and fathering) is widely regarded as a social construction throughout this thesis, I partially depart from this ontological viewpoint in favour of the more post-structural notion of performativity (as with Andreasson and Johansson, 2019), which I explore more through Meah and Jackson's (2016) work of fathering later in this review.

While the philosophical projects of post-structuralism and (critical) phenomenology are sometimes regarded as in tension – even diametrically opposed to – one another, following Berggren (2014), I suggest these can be brought into useful dialogue. This is because “for emotional experience to occur there has to be both a bodily response to a particular situation fused with a mindful realisation of that experience as expressed in language, word meanings and metaphors” (Burkitt, 2014: 23). Thus, in developing a holistic understanding of emotional experiences, temporally, spatially, scalarly and experientially – as I do in this thesis (rather than focusing only on particular aspects which may provide deeper, but ultimately only partial understandings) – phenomenology requires post-structuralism, specifically its deconstructive critiques of the role of power and discourse in shaping lived experience, while post-structuralism simultaneously needs phenomenology's recognition of how such discourse is embedded within lived experience and embodiment (Berggren, 2014).

2.3. *Emotional Geographies*

Interest in emotions within geography largely emerged in relation to the feminist ‘turn’ of the discipline, critiquing the absence of the central role of emotions as vital ways through which we experience and ‘know’ the world, and come to understand our ‘place’ within it (see Bondi, 2005b, for a review).

There has been a proliferation of spatial thinking about emotions across broader social/cultural theory in recent decades (see Massey, 1992, cited in Bondi, 2005a for a broader overview). However, much of this engagement has tended to be via the use of fairly metaphorical conceptions of space, using this to demonstrate the significance of social context for how emotions are interpreted and emerge (i.e., Burkitt, 2014; 1997 – see Massey, 1992 and Bondi, 2005a for a broader discussion of spatial thinking). As such, they are grounded in conceptions of space as a rather static entity (Staeheli and Martin, 2000, see Smith and Katz, 1993, cited in Bondi, 2005a).

For Geographers, however, space is more than a mere ‘container’ or ‘external background’ to social life, but rather a *process*, actively involved in the formation of social experiences (Kinkaid, 2020; Thrift, 2009). Geographers understand space as ontologically *relational* (ibid.; Bondi, 2005a), as never fixed, never absolute, but as continually being constructed – continually *becoming* (Thrift, 2009; Bondi, 2005a; Crang and Thrift, 2000; cf. Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1992). This resonates with post-structuralist thinking as outlined above, but which importantly shape lived experience of that space; making phenomenological insight also imperative. The term ‘*spatialities*’ is often deployed by Geographers in order to conceptualise the myriad ways “the social and spatial [are] mutually constitutive” (Bondi, 2005a: 147, n.3), a term coined by Soja (1980) to capture how the social shapes the spatial, whilst the spatial *simultaneously* shapes the social (Aitken, 1998; Hallman, 2010). This is known as the ontology of the socio-spatial

dialectic (Soja, 1980), which is at the very foundation of modern human geographic thought (Massey, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). This thesis is concerned with the *emotional*-spatialities of expectant fathering; the entanglements between emotion and socio-spatial experience known as *emotional geographies* (Bondi et al., 2005).

Emotional geographies is a critical body of work concerned with the myriad ways in which emotions/feelings form an essential part of our everyday experiences, interrogating the importance of how *where* we are when we feel what we feel fundamentally *matters* to that experience (Wasielewski, 2015; Bondi et al., 2005; Anderson and Smith, 2001). This resonates with the conceptions of emotions developed by broader social-scientific scholarship, such as Burkitt's contention that "it is largely through emotions, generated in relation to others, that people give meaning to and make sense of the world and their actions within it" (2002: 156; de Boise and Hearn, 2017). For Geographers what is critical here is an understanding of emotions – conceptually and experientially – in terms of their socio-*spatial* mediation (Bondi et al., 2005: 3); as always emergent in relation to space/place (ibid.; Berggren et al., 2020; Thien, 2011; Anderson and Smith, 2001).

Scholarship from emotional geographies has variously explored emotional relationships/attachments *to* particular spaces (Wylie, 2009; see recently Anderson, 2023 on geographies of attachment), as well as how everyday social relationships occur *within*, and are mediated by, space (O'Brien, 2017). This includes examinations of the ways in which specific emotions influence experiences of particular spaces – for example, literature on geographies of anxiety (Todd, 2021; Boyle, 2019, see also Foster, 1979), as well as love/intimacy (Meah, 2017; Morrison et al., 2013; Thien, 2011; Wylie, 2009; Valentine, 2008); emotions which are central to this thesis.

Yet, while emotions are a largely familiar concept – used within everyday language as an encapsulating term referring to myriad feeling states such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, etc. (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014) – they are also highly difficult phenomena to actually define (McQueen, 2017; Pile, 2010; Bondi, 2005b), particularly given the various ways emotions may be conceived. Burkitt (2014, 2002), for example, regards emotions as ‘complexes’, which are multidimensional in their composition, possessing corporal, and discursive, forms – providing a useful rationale for needing both phenomenological and post-structuralist perspectives in this thesis (Berggren, 2014). Emotions are “modes of communication within relationships and interdependences”, arising within relationships, which have corporal and embodied aspects, as well as socio-cultural ones (Burkitt, 1999: 115), constituted “in ongoing relational practices” (1997: 115). Emotions, in this thesis, are thus understood as being representative of our *relationships* with others (Burkitt, 2014). They are expressions of (inner) feelings, manifested in socio-culturally recognisable forms (McCormack, 2008), as social *translations* of particular feeling states (Edensor, 2015; Pile, 2010), which importantly unfold through our interactions with other entities (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014; Lund 2012), mediated by (highly gendered) expectations (McQueen, 2017).

Emotions are thus not wholly individualised or discrete phenomena, but are ontologically *relational* (Burkitt, 2014; 1997). They are crucially constructed in relation to space and place (Bondi et al., 2005; Anderson and Smith, 2001), but are further emergent in relation to encounters with people, situational contexts, objects/things and everyday practices (Davidson and Milligan, 2004) – as well as other emotions. The emotion of anxiety, for example, as shown in Chapter 7, has affective resonances with feelings of stress, self-consciousness, insecurity, worry and dread (amongst others) (Todd, 2021; Kerr et al., 2018), each of which may become culminated in feelings of

anxiousness and uncertainty¹. Emotional geographies thus offer a means for articulating, fundamentally, how being in particular spaces influences people's expression of their emotions/feelings – often in highly gendered ways (Giazitzoglu, 2019 see Hochschild, 1979). Through this thesis, I demonstrate the contribution that an emotional geographies lens can make to understanding the gendered experiences of expectant fathers, experiences which have heretofore been largely unexamined within geographic scholarship.

2.3.1. A Framework for Examining Emotional Geographies

In addition to considering emotions' spatial dynamics, geographers have also attended critically to the temporalities of emotional experiences, considering these from a number of temporal scales: from particular times of day, for example, working in conjunction with literature on night-time geographies (see Kerr et al., 2018; Hubbard, 2005 – see also Kraftl and Horton, 2008), to periods of transition such as critical life-course events (Bondi, et al., 2005). Indeed, as Anderson and Smith (2001) note, there are particular times of our lives which are so intensely lived *through* emotions – such as becoming a parent – that attending to the role of emotions as critical modes of “knowing, being and doing” (p.8) is vital and cannot be overlooked. In other words, emotions fundamentally *matter* in understanding these experiences (Bondi et al., 2005).

¹ This is to distinguish between anxiety as an emotion – an affective resonance which is relatively temporary – and the prolonged state of (social) anxiety disorder as a sustained state of ill-ease (for this see Todd, 2021; Boyle, 2019). However – as I will explore later in this thesis (see Chapter 8) repeated and sustained periods of feeling anxious may lead to more permanent states of ill-health and stress (Pykett et al., 2020).

Through this thesis, I chart how an emotional geographies framework can enable greater understanding of expectant fathering. I am interested in the (highly gendered) emotional experiences which comprise being an expectant father, and the entanglements of these with various spaces/places associated – explicitly or implicitly – with the period of pregnancy/expectancy, birth, and early parenthood. Indeed, as I argue in Menzel (2022), examination of the inter-entanglements between emotions and space is critical in developing greater understanding of

“fathers’ feelings of inclusion/exclusion in various parenting spaces/places and the influence of this on their (in)equitable participation in parenting – or rather their sense of being/feeling able to actively engage in the responsibilities of parenthood/childcare”

(Menzel, 2022: 85)

Moreover, literature on emotional geographies also highlights the ways emotions emerge in and *across* different spaces/places, at a range of spatial scales. This includes examination of emotional experience at the intimate scale of the body (Roy, 2014), within interpersonal relationships (Morrison, 2012a), attachment and belongingness in spaces such as the home (Blunt, 2009), along with feelings of inclusion/exclusion from other everyday spaces (Aitken, 2000), and emotional forms of governance at the (inter)national scale (Jupp et al., 2017).

An emotional geographies framework thus facilitates critical insight into the ways the spatialities of emotional experience overlap and *intersect* in constituting that experience. For example, in calling for work which attends critically to the importantly emotional dynamics of parental leave-taking, Longhurst (2017) highlights the significance of the overlapping scales of national policy, communities, homes and bodies in perpetuating (highly gendered) arrangements of parental leave between mothers/fathers (discussed further in Chapter 7).

However, rather than adopting a flat ontology of space, as for Marston et al. (2005) – who sought to critique hierarchical notions of scale and proposed eliminating the concept all together – in this thesis, I interrogate how the social identities and relations of expectant fathering are constituted by these different spaces, at overlapping spatial scales. Indeed, focusing on multiple scales, simultaneously, actually *enhances*, rather than removes its significance. I utilise geographical scale as a central organising device to interrogate the different *spheres* of emotional experience/encounter of expectant fathering – following Valentine (2013) in working my way outwards from the body (Chapters 4 and 5), to the home (Chapter 6) through to everyday institutions beyond the home (Chapter 7). I therefore do not propose a collapsing of scale, but instead a teasing out of the interactions across them. In so doing, I explore how various facets of emotio-spatial experience coalesce at each scale in shaping the experiences of being an expectant father in different spaces/places.

2.3.2. Emotional, Embodied Geographies

Examinations of emotions within Geography largely emerged in parallel to renewed – and largely feminist – engagement with the body and embodied experience (see Davidson and Milligan, 2004). Such work is grounded in broadly phenomenological conceptions of the centrality of the body to lived experience (after Merleau-Ponty 1968, 1962 – see Kosut and Moore, 2010), as a key site through which performances of identity, everyday relationships and encounters are played out (Morrison, 2012a; Davidson and Milligan, 2004; *ibid.*; Simonsen, 2007).

For feminist geographers, bodies are thus “intensely emotional(ised) areas” (Bondi et al., 2005:5), and are hence an important locus for consideration of emotional geographies (Bondi et al., 2005:5; Davidson and Milligan, 2004). Indeed, as argued by

Davidson and Milligan (2004) “our first and foremost, most immediately felt geography is the body, the site of emotional experience² and expression” (p.523). In other words, emotions importantly take place and are experienced at this closest of spatial scales (ibid.).

Emotional and embodied experiences are thus intimately entangled; we cannot attend to one without consideration of the other.³ As such, understanding emotional experiences of space/place necessitates critical consideration of bodily capacities and cultural meanings subsequently ascribed to particular bodies (i.e., gendered dynamics) (Hubbard, 2005). In this thesis, I will explore how the differing bodily capacities – in carrying, and later (breast)feeding a child – influences mothers’/fathers’ emotional

² Within phenomenological conceptions of the body, there is often a distinction between embodied experience, as the perceptive ways of knowing and experience the world through the body (after Merleau-Ponty – see Kosut and Moore, 2010), and the body as the site of such experience.

³ This is to reject the dichotomies of the mind-body dualism and the Cartesian insistence for the primacy of the disembodied mind to consciousness/experience which has long perpetuated Western philosophical thought (Berggren, 2014; Longhurst, 2001). Indeed, feminist scholars have long contested the ontological separation between mind and body advocated by the Cartesian mind-body dualism. They argue, in particular that the dichotomy between mind and body have heavily gendered assumptions, where knowledges of the mind, such as (objective) logic and reason) were historically characterised as masculine, privileged over ‘subjective’ knowledge associated with emotions and the body which were largely feminised and thus arguably devalued (Longhurst, 2001). Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the body, as opposed to the (masculine, disembodied) mind, perhaps accounts for the attractiveness of his philosophies to feminist scholars.

experiences of space/places during periods of expectancy and into early parenthood (discussed further later in this review).

In interrogating the importance of the body to lived experiences of space/place, such work reveals how bodies produce space, while, at the same time, also (re)produce themselves – and social relations – *in* space (Simonsen, 2007 after Merlau-Ponty, 1968, 1962 and Lefebvre, 1961, 1958). Bodies are spaces where feelings/emotions are first registered – they are “the practio-sensory realm in which space is perceived through” (Simonsen, 2007: 174) – and thus we cannot separate our emotions from bodily ways of perceiving the world (Burkitt, 2014). This is significant for Chapter 5 of this thesis, in which I examine expectant fathers’ multi-sensory, inter-embodied and affective encounters in different spaces in creating an emotional connection to their future child.

2.3.3. Emotional vs Affectual Geographies

Within the consideration of embodied experience and (multi)sensory encounters as ontological tenets of emotional geographies, affect offers a useful, and important, conceptual broker, reflecting how emotions are often *felt* in the body in ways which are not always wholly knowable, or which often exceed conscious perception and definition (Fitzpatrick and Longley, 2014: 50). Affect is generally deemed to be a pre-cognitive force, while emotions are post-cognitive in being specific, nameable, states (Doughty et al., 2016; Bondi, 2005b; Thrift, 2004).

There are a number of different conceptions of affect, and its exact meaning has been subject to quite heated and thorny debate (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014; Roy, 2014; Duffy, 2013; see Pile, 2010 and responses Dawney, 2011; Curti et al., 2011). While some prefer the more specific conception of affect as the “*motion* of emotion” (Thien, 2005: 451; Parr 2014), for others, affect is more fully, and usefully, deployed in the

Spinozean sense (through Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, via Massumi, 2002), referring to the *capacity* of an entity to affect and be affected (Roy, 2014) through the flow of intensity which passes and circulates between bodies – including human and non-human (Burkitt, 2014). However conceived, affect is broadly accepted as a sense of ‘push’ in the world (Thrift, 2004); “the passage from one experiential state...to another” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: xvi, cited in Roy, 2014: 42). Affect thus allows for attentiveness to the exchange of relations *between* entities; as transpersonal relationships which circulate within and between people, places and things (Anderson, 2014; Burkitt, 2014; Thrift, 2004). This understanding of affect is important in this thesis for how expectant fathers’ encounters with various entities – specifically the bodies of others (Chapter 5) and material objects (Chapter 6) – constitute highly emotional experiences, facilitating a sense of emotional closeness and intimacy with their future child (Menzel, 2024).

As Burkitt (2014) argues, it is in relation to others, or particular situations, that feelings (i.e., affects) come to be identified as specific emotions. In other words, it is this relatedness which ultimately gives meaning to affective experience, hence my preference for *emotional* geographies in this thesis (see Pile, 2010; Bondi, 2005b). However, like Roy (2014), I consider that the affective resonances of such experiences are still particularly useful and interesting in understanding how emotions *emerge* in everyday encounters (Burkitt, 2014).

That is, I am less interested here in the complex (indeed, often convoluted) debates on what affect itself should actually mean, and its distinction from emotion (for this see Pile, 2010, and responses Dawney, 2011; Curti et al., 2011). I concur instead with Bondi (2005b) that labouring on the distinctions of these phenomena provide rather “unhelpful dualisms” (p.445). In this thesis, I regard emotion and affect as interrelated concepts, using them in-tandem to explore the ways encounters with other entities – human and

non-human – coalesce to elicit emotional experiences which constitute expectant fathering. Affects can include every aspect of emotional experience, or sometimes just the physical disturbances and bodily actions (i.e., tingles in the hands), which are indicative of, but exceed, a specific nameable emotional experience (Wetherell, 2012).

Emotions are affects, but affects are not necessarily emotions (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014; Roy, 2014; Duff, 2010), although they do encompass various other facets which comprise emotional *experience*; the embodied feeling that reflects/represents an emotional state⁴ (Thien, 2005). Through this thesis, I primarily focus on expectant fathers' emotions, but signpost to the affectual experiences which comprise, but still exceed, those emotions.

2.3.4. *Emotions and Masculinities*

Important to this thesis is the idea that the ways people understand and give meaning to their emotions are governed by what Hochschild (1979) termed 'feeling rules'; rules which offer the social guidelines which regulate how we 'should' feel in a situation (McQueen, 2017; Wetherell, 2012; Hochschild, 1983) or particular places (Davidson and Milligan, 2004). Building upon Bourdieu's (1990) notion of 'habitus', scholarship on emotions has posited how emotional experiences are mediated by *emotional habitus*, which give individuals (or particular social groups) "a language and set of practices which outline [appropriate] ways of speaking about emotions" within a situation, which are

⁴ This is not to imply a hierarchical relationality here: affect is arguably the more versatile concept, but this does not make it better (and it is often critiqued as being too vague to be useful). Indeed, perhaps most accurately, though certainly most unhelpfully, Stewart (2007) describes affects as 'somethings' (cited in Barnwell, 2016).

specific to particular times and particular places (Burkitt, 1999: 117; 1997). Moreover, individuals then learn to internalise these social expectations, through repeated enactments of these feeling rules such that they become habitual rather than requiring continual, conscious decision-making (Greco and Stenner, 2008; Painter, 2000).

This conception of emotions situates them as fundamentally *learned* phenomena, learned in relation to space/place (Bondi et al., 2005), producing (for example) *gendered* emotio-spatial experiences (McQueen, 2022; 2017). This is to recognise, then, that there can be great variations between what we feel and how we *express* our emotions; between how we think and talk about them (Greco and Stenner, 2008). Relatedly, within scholarship on emotions, there has been significant interest in the performance of ‘emotion work’⁵, referring to the management of emotions, which become necessary when our feelings/emotions “do not fit with what is expected” of us in those situations (McQueen, 2017: 209; Parish and Montsion, 2018).

In being learned phenomena, there is also an intrinsic intergenerational dimension to emotion work (discussed further in Chapter 4). Hopkins and Pain (2007) – calling for more relational interrogations of age – argue intergenerationality provides a useful means for understanding how social norms (and by extension change) are mediated across generations. This thesis’ focus on (expectant) fathering – as a critical juncture of

⁵ Although often used interchangeably, there is significant distinction between the notion of ‘emotion work’, as everyday, informal practices of negotiating feeling rules, and ‘emotional labour’ as more formalised forms of emotion work embedded within neoliberal and capitalist systems, such as through the performance of paid or volunteer work (Hochschild, 1983) or performances of practices of caregiving (see Parish and Montsion, 2018), thus with important intersection with wider literature on the geographies of care (Milligan and Wiles, 2010).

intergenerationality (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006) – provides a particularly novel opportunity to explore how emotional work and feeling rules are embedded within cultural discourses and expectations around fathering – and further still to masculinity more broadly (de Boise and Hearn, 2017). Indeed, scholars have noted how younger generations of fathers typically seek to ‘pushback’ on discourses which reify gendered divides in parenting practices (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006) – albeit with somewhat limited success (Doucet, 2006).

Within extant work there has been substantial exploration of the performance of emotion work by women, within the contexts of heterosexual relationships (McQueen, 2022; 2017), or employment spheres that are embedded in the performance of care, such as nurseries (Boyer et al., 2013). This work reveals the significance of emotion work in re-producing particular assumptions of gender roles, such as the expectation for women to be caring and attentive – see also Hochschild’s early (1979, 1983) work on the emotional labour performed by female flight attendants. However, there has been recent interest in the emotion work performed by men in relation to masculinities, with Berggren (2014) developing a thesis of ‘sticky masculinities’, drawing upon Ahmed’s (2004) idea of the stickiness of emotions to argue how gendered societal discourse around emotion work becomes attached to masculinities. Giazitzoglu (2019) takes this work further to consider the explicitly spatial mediations of emotion work, through how “men perform emotional labour to suit the emotional demands of the spaces they enter and interact with” (p.68).

These works bring together post-structuralist concerns about how subjectivities emerge through discourse and (critical) phenomenological insights into how we are shaped by lived experience (Berggren 2014: 233), revealing how, through the repeated enactment of cultural codes and feeling rules of masculinity, such emotion work becomes

‘stuck’ on bodies (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Berggren, 2014). This highlights how there are often important discrepancies between men’s actual emotions, versus their display (de Boise and Hearn, 2017). Connell’s (1987) work on hegemonic forms of masculinity is particularly important here in considering the significance of these gendered discourses of masculinity and ‘doing gender’ within (men’s) everyday lives, through how patriarchal structures are reified by cultural hegemonies of gender relations (Waling, 2019).

The notion of hegemonic masculinities (first developed by Connell, 1987, later revisited in Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) offers a framework for understanding how gender relations operate not only between men and women, but how these relations also exist *among* men, with certain kinds of performances and displays of masculinity being socially regarded as the epitome of what it means to be a man within a particular society (Waling, 2019; Messerschmidt, 2018; McKenzie-Norton, 2010)⁶. Importantly, however, hegemonic masculinities are based on heavily idealised notions of ‘manliness’, which rarely – if ever – culminate together and exist within an individual in reality (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Nevertheless, they remain highly significant within cultural understandings of what it means to be a ‘true man’ in society, with these multiplicities often therefore being significant sites of social scrutiny and tension for men (Waling, 2019; McQueen, 2017; de Boise and Hearn, 2017).

Indeed, through this thesis I discuss masculinity in a rather dichotomous way – contrasting traditional, hegemonic, stoic masculinities with ‘new’, caring and emotional ones (de Boise and Hearn, 2018). This is, admittedly, an oversimplification of the

⁶ In other words, hegemonic masculinities involve aspiring to embody performances of masculinity in its most purest form, eschewing any and all traits which may be culturally regarded as ‘feminine’ (Holmes, 2015; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

literature on masculinities, which sees masculinity more as a continuum than a dichotomy (see Waling, 2019). However, as Chapter 4 reveals, such dichotomous understandings of masculinity are useful for revealing how men themselves think about masculinity – and their hopes/aspirations as (expectant) fathers.

As McQueen (2017) argues, there is clear association between Hochschild's (1983, 1979) discussion of emotion work and the societal expectation for men to suppress their emotions. Within Western constructions of masculinity (particularly those of the UK/England), men are often expected to be able to remain cool, calm and collected, and to control emotions that would signal vulnerability, thus demonstrating their 'strength' and control over any weaknesses (de Boise, 2018; Holmes, 2015). Consequently, men are largely socialised to conceal their emotions and difficulties as much as possible, and should, likewise, be un-needing of help/support from others. This expectation is demonstrated most especially within the social adage of 'boys don't cry' (McQueen, 2017), drawing a fundamental connection between emotional stoicism and masculinity (Macht, 2017). As such, men's emotional expression is often subject to particularly close social scrutiny (McQueen, 2017; de Boise and Hearn, 2017), constituting highly gendered forms of emotional labour, which are importantly spatially manifested (Giazitzoglu, 2019).

Indeed, the conception of fathering as "a daily emotional practice that is negotiated, contested, resisted and reworked differently in different spaces" (Aitken, 2009: 230), has clear connotations of emotion work. This gendered nature of emotion work is the focus of Chapter 4, in which I explore the performance of emotion work by expectant fathers as part of understandings of their 'role' during pregnancy/expectancy – primarily centred around supporting their partner (Widarsson et al., 2015; Åsenhed et al., 2013). I explore the gendered nature of this emotion work, interrogating how it reifies

understandings of highly gendered parenting roles, exacerbated especially during the coronavirus pandemic (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020), which has ultimately been detrimental to fathers' feelings of involvement in pre-parental care.

2.4. Emotional Geographies of Parenting

Within the wider scholarship on the geographies of family (see Hall, 2016; Hallman and Benbow, 2010; Aitken, 1998) lies the subdiscipline of the geographies of parenting (Jupp and Gallagher, 2013). Such work has been heavily influenced by the sociological, and ontological paradigm of family-as-practice developed by Morgan (1996), conceptualising family as not just something people 'are' but something people '*do*'; as performative rather than just socially-constructed (Valentine and Hughes, 2012), thus resonating with post-structuralist thinking (Butler, 1990). However, geographic scholarship has importantly extended this work, with feminist geographers convincingly situating family/parenting as importantly *spatial* practices (Luzia, 2010). People 'do' family, but they do it *somewhere*, in particular spaces/places and those spaces fundamentally *matter* to the enactment of parenting (ibid.; Menzel, 2022; Hallman, 2010; Aitken, 1998). Space, in other words, is regarded by geographers as "a dynamic resource in the 'doing' of family" (Valentine and Hughes, 2012: 253).

The geographies of parenting is a critical body of work, concerned with examining "how parents create, experience and negotiate space and place as parents" (Luzia, 2013: 245, see also Jupp and Gallagher, 2013), attending to the ways these spaces are importantly navigated via heterosexualised (Luzia, 2013, 2011, 2010), classed (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; 2014; Holloway, 1998) and – though examined to a lesser extent – racialised (Holloway et al., 2024; see Hamilton, 2020; Tomori, 2009 for more sociological analyses) dynamics. Of particular significance to this area of scholarship,

however (and of particular relevance to this thesis), is the conception of parenting as an intensely *gendered* spatial practice; one which is “mapped onto particular gendered identities” (Jupp and Gallagher, 2013: 156). Indeed, feminist scholarship has long argued how the spatialities of parenting, and practices of ‘doing’ family are typically performed differently by mothers and fathers (Barker, 2011; Valentine, 1997, 1996).

Indeed, early considerations of parenting within geography emerged largely from feminist strands of the discipline – from examination of the geographies of time in mothers’ navigation of urban space (Dyck, 1990), gendered performances and division of domestic labour/childcare within the home (England, 1996), as well as the formation of local ‘mothering’ parental networks (Holloway, 1998), to more contemporary examinations of the role of objects in constituting parenting practices (Tomori and Boyer, 2018; Whittle, 2018; MacAllister, 2016; Boyer and Spinney, 2016).

However, across these various works, much of the literature on parenting within geography has focused on the experiences/accounts of mothers (Jupp and Gallagher, 2013). Indeed, it has been recognised that much of the geographies of parenting literature could be more accurately described as the geographies of *mothering* (ibid.; Luzia, 2013, 2010), due to the comparative deficiency of accounts on fathering (Meah and Jackson, 2016)⁷. While this focus on mothering is to importantly (and, indeed, rightly) recognise the substantial and central contribution of mothers in “fulfilling the responsibilities, commitments and emotional/physical/domestic labours of parenting” (Menzel, 2022: 85),

⁷ The umbrella term ‘parenting’ is used here to encompass the diverse range of contemporary parenting practices (including same-sex parenting couples (Luzia, 2013, 2011, 2010; Gabb, 2004) and experiences of parenting beyond pregnancy such as adoption (Leinaweaver et al., 2017) and surrogacy (Schurr, 2018; Schurr and Miltz, 2018) – discussed later.

there exists a general absence of the voices/experiences of fathers within geographic research. In particular, the experiences of *expectant* fathers have been largely unexamined – a gap this thesis seeks to address.

Within geographical research on parenting, there has been considerable work attending to the emotional dynamics of parenting, exploring everyday practices of navigating the many labours, demands, and joys, of parenting in different spaces/places – situating parenting as a distinctly *emotional* spatial practice (Kerr et al., 2018; Aitken, 2000). These emotions of parenting are often bound up with emotional geographies of care – and relatedly *care-like* literatures, such as those of love (Morrison et al., 2013; Gabb, 2004) and intimacy (Meah, 2017; Valentine, 2008).

Indeed, care is often central to the geographies of parenting, particularly through consideration of the repeated, routinised performance of care and (emotional/practical) practices of caregiving which constitutes parenting (Waite and Harada, 2016; Philip, 2013). This includes consideration of the emotional experiences of constructing a sense of love/intimacy with one's child (Meah, 2017; Macht, 2017; Gabb, 2004) as well as the pressures to express this love and perform care in a particular way – especially in order to conform to societal expectations of 'good parenting' (Jupp, 2012; Gabb, 2012). I explore these emotional dimensions of parenting geographies in Chapters 5 and 6, and 4 and 7, respectively, drawing out the emotional geographies of expectant fathering. Through this thesis, I use the term 'care-full' – borrowing from Collins and Stanes (2021) – to denote practices and interactions which are 'full of care'.

Before continuing, it is important to note here that while such concepts of care, love and intimacy evoke a certain sense of cosiness and warmth, with its disciplinary origins in feminist scholarship, care is widely regarded within geographic scholarship as

labour (even as a labour of love) which has both emotional and practical dimensions (Milligan, 2014; Philip, 2013)⁸.

Relating to the above debates around appropriate expressions of parental love and care, a particular emotion which has been of significant interest to scholarship on parenting is that of anxiety (Faircloth and Murray, 2015), an emotion particularly significant to this thesis, not least having been conducted in an era of crisis during the coronavirus pandemic (Menzel, 2022). Anxieties around parenting emerge particularly with regards to the growing prominence of contemporary discourses of ‘good parenting’ practices – via intensive parenting cultures which have been increasingly enrolled into pre-parental practices as expressions of commitment to future parenting (Faircloth, 2021; Parker and Pausé, 2019), which I will return to shortly.

Indeed, anxieties around parenting have featured heavily within literature on the geographies of parenting – albeit somewhat rather implicitly since the advent of the field. For example, research has highlighted the anxieties of navigation of urban space with prams (Boyer and Spinney, 2016), and managing apartment soundscapes (Kerr et al.,

⁸ Such literature also recognises how relationships of care are often deeply embedded in power relations; relations of power which are often uneven, but also fluid and in a constant state of flux (Milligan, 2014) That is to say, the unevenness of these relationships is rarely one-way, even within the same relationship – it is not always a care-giver who is in ‘control’, nor always a care-receiver. Nor is this ‘power’ necessarily wholly possessed by individuals. For example, as I will discuss later in this review, in the section on the geographies of pre-parenting (section 2.6.), an unborn child has a certain degree of power over their parents (Holt and Philo, 2022), even as this power is not necessarily ‘real’ or wholly possessed by these unborn children (but is rather imbued onto them by society) but which, nevertheless, still intimately shape the behaviours of expectant parents in ways which are highly context and spatially specific.

2018). In quite a different context, Waight and Boyer (2018) explore the central role of objects in eliciting parental anxiety, such as through navigating the ‘riskiness’ of second-hand objects (including toys as well as clothes), examining the ‘border work’ performed (largely by mothers) in managing these risks to ensure their safe consumption by children. The emotional geographies of anxieties within parenting are thus clearly bound up with moral judgements around ‘good parenting’ in the above literatures, through demonstrations of control over ‘noisy’ and ‘unruly’ children within public space (Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016).

Geographic work has also shown how feelings of self-consciousness and judgement around parenting coalesce at different spatial *scales*, from deficiencies of the body in providing care (Aitken, 2000), perceptions of the home (Kerr et al., 2018; Dowling and Power, 2012) to (national) family policy (Jupp, 2017) as well as localised parenting cultures (Holloway, 1998). These anxieties are not necessarily a function of ‘neurotic’ parenting – certainly parenting entails plenty of feelings of joy and love (Gabb, 2004) – but rather, these feelings of anxiety are revealing of the intensity of social/cultural pressures and expectations to practices and ideals of ‘good parenting’ (see Faircloth and Murray, 2015), societal discourses which are intensely gendered.

2.4.1. Caregiving Objects and Parental Subjectivities

While, for geographers, emotions are intimately entangled with place, recent years have seen growing attention to the things *within* those spaces (Casey and Taylor, 2015), which come together to shape our everyday experiences of, and within, those places (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Anderson and Toila-Kelly, 2004). In particular, there has been a wealth of literature in recent years examining the role of objects in the construction of a sense of identity and belonging, bound up with particular places – perhaps most notably through

work on the home (Soaita and McKee, 2021; Woodward, 2021, 2016; Casey and Taylor, 2015; Olesen, 2010; see also Blunt, 2005).

Engaging with the vibrancy of ‘things’ (Soaita and McKee, 2021), such work has also attended to the significance of objects in the formation of particular subjectivities of identity, become enrolled into everyday forms of identity work. This identity work is perhaps most significant during intense life-course events and transitions (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Owen, 2022; Horton and Kraftl, 2012), through practices and processes of ‘unmaking’ and remaking home at these junctures – such as that of becoming a parent (Tomori and Boyer, 2019) – highlighting the “temporal, material and spatial fluidity of home” (Owen, 2022: 993). Objects thus act as significant sites of connection to others, often in highly emotionally-charged ways (Bondi et al., 2005).

These literatures thus also point to how objects elicit, and may be imbued with, parents’ emotions (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Waight and Boyer, 2018). Research has examined, for example, the significance of particular objects in the performance of parental care, from the ‘red book’ (MacAllister, 2016) and prams (Clement and Waight, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006), using these objects to exhibit status as ‘good parents’ (often in ways which are highly middle-class – see Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006; Prothero, 2002). Research has also examined the anxieties entailed in balancing the safety of second-hand objects with ethical concerns of environmentally-conscious forms of consumption (Waight, 2019, 2017, 2014, 2013; Waight and Boyer, 2018).

This vibrant literature utilises a number of conceptual frameworks⁹. While a full review of these varied epistemological approaches is beyond the scope of this review, what fundamentally unites these areas of scholarship is recognition for the ways that material objects and things have affective power over people (Woodward, 2021, after Bennett, 2012); they have *agency*, an affective pull (Clement and Waitt, 2018), an ability to call to people to touch and interact with them in particular ways by virtue of their sensory, material properties (see Rautio, 2013 on stones). I explore this further in Chapter 6 by considering how through the accumulation, integration and emotional encounters with ‘baby things’ (largely within the home), in lieu of the presence of their actual future child, expectant fathers develop a sense of intimacy and emotional connection with them (Leinaweaver et al., 2017).

In this thesis, I adopt a more post-structuralist understanding of identity as being in a constant state of flux and becoming, emergent through performative *practice* (Butler, 1990, also Simonsen, 2007), while recognising the significant role everyday objects, matter and materialities play in eliciting this sense of identity, such as through performances of care (Tarrant, 2016; Waight and Boyer, 2018). This is still to attend to the relationships between materialities, bodies, emotions (and affects) as well as the discursive underpinnings of these in highlighting the (i.e., gendered) politics which often underpin such spatial relations, specifically normative understandings of ‘good’/‘bad’

⁹ These frameworks include (Feminist) New Materialism (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Waitt and Boyer, 2018; Whittle, 2018; Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Chambers, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016), material culture (Tarrant, 2016; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2004) and intimate geographies of domestic consumption habits/practices (Casey and Taylor, 2015; Waight, 2015, 2014, 2013; Prothero, 2002).

parenting (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), recognising the significant role everyday objects, matter and materialities play in eliciting this sense of identity, such as through performances of care (Waight and Boyer, 2018; Tarrant, 2016 – see also later discussion on Meah and Jackson, 2016 on emergence of father identity through caregiving).

However, extent scholarship on objects within the geographies of parenting has drawn, almost exclusively, on the experiences/accounts of mothers, with limited work examining fathers' emotional encounters with objects. This is even as research has long noted the value of including fathers' perspectives and experiences (Davies et al., 2009; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). There is, consequently, a general lack of understanding of the meaning of objects to fathers, and how these are enrolled into fathers' caregiving practices. A partial exception here includes Tarrant's (2016) research exploring the material cultures of home in the everyday lives of grandfathers in the UK, which reveals the inscription of identity onto the material landscape of home through the display of particular everyday domestic objects that are representative of their sense of selves as (intimate, caring) grandfathers. I address this gap in Chapter 6.

2.5. Spatialities of Fathering

Since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of research on fathering across the Social Sciences – particularly following shifting gender relations and changing family dynamics (Schoppe-Sullivan and Fagan, 2020; early work including Laqueur, 1992; LaRossa, 1992). As noted in Chapter 1, there has been some excellent, but still rather limited consideration of fathering within geography (practically limited to Menzel, 2022; Meah, 2017; Meah and Jackson, 2016; Barker, 2011, 2008; Aitken, 2009, 2005, 2000 – see also Tarrant, 2016, 2014a, 2013 on grandfathering). Experiences of fathering have featured within geographical research beyond these works, but the focus on practices of fathering

has often been somewhat rather implicit; as a consequence of the (men) participating in the research being fathers (for example Cox, 2016, 2014; Gorman-Murray, 2013; Smith and Winchester, 1998), as opposed to fathering being the primary and sole focus, per se. Thus, while in this section I critically review extant literature on fathering within geography – highlighting my core contributions developed in the empirical chapters of this thesis – I necessarily borrow from broader scholarship on fathering from disciplines such as Sociology, Business Studies etc., which are significant to the arguments I develop in my empirical chapters. I situate these broader literatures in their spatial significance, revealing how they may be brought into useful dialogue with scholarship on the geographies of fathering, and further still to broader literatures on emotional geographies of parenting, discussed above.

Broader social-scientific examinations of fathering have largely emerged in response to critical feminist scholarship on the shifting socio-spatialities of parental care; in particular the changing gendered dynamics of how parents reconcile the relations (and tensions) between waged work and care work (Macht, 2020a, Boyer et al., 2017a). This work has been prompted especially by women's increased participation in the labour force throughout recent decades and changing societal emphasis towards more intimate, involved fathering ideals (Dermott, 2008). However, though there have been shifts in cultural *expectations* of fathering, these changes have not necessarily been as evident in practice (Faircloth, 2021).

Indeed, feminist scholarship has long been largely critical of the cultural praise directed at fathers for simply 'being there' and spending time with children (Beglaubter, 2019) largely by taking on the 'fun' aspects of parenting, such as play, which can be built into masculine ideals (Chung, 2021; after Brandth and Kvande, 1998; Doucet, 2006). They have argued how such practices leave fathers with the *emotions* of parenting, but

with ‘little...responsibility of the domestic [and practical care] labour...such emotions should rightly entail’ (Aitken, 2000: 585, after Ruddick, 1992), with the responsibility of this practical care often remaining on mothers.

This is further compounded by the pervasive societal expectations of breadwinning and waged work which remain central to fathering identities (Faircloth, 2021; Twamley and Schober, 2019; Aitken, 2005). Indeed, ‘involved fathering’ is actually defined through explicit reference to waged work, encompassing fathers who “engage in hands-on care while continuing employment” (Solomon 2014, cited in Brandth and Kvande, 2018: 75). Thus, there remains a disconnect between equitable parenting between mothers and fathers (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Twamley and Schober, 2019) which is importantly spatially derived, with men’s performance of waged work being associated with workplace spaces, thus being predominantly *away* from the home (Brandth and Kvande, 1998). These distinctly spatial dynamics thus provide an important rationale for critical geographical considerations of fathering.

2.5.1. The Geographies of Fathering

Over recent years, there has emerged a burgeoning body of work on fathering within geography, with geographical examinations of fathering being largely inspired by the early, seminal work of Aitken (2000) on primary caregiver fathers in the US during the early years. This research highlights fathers’ personally felt and culturally perceived deficiencies of infant caregiving as ‘Mr Moms’, conceptualising fathering as thus “a daily emotional practice that is negotiated, contested and resisted differently in different spaces” (p.581). Reflecting what Aitken later (2009, 2000) refers to as the ‘awkward spaces’ of fathering – awkward in that they are never wholly comfortable or clear what is entailed in ‘fathering’ (as distinct from mothering) – much of this work has attended

especially to the emotional dynamics of fathering, largely in relation to cultural expectations around masculinity and care in different space and places. Nascent work, for example, has examined fathers' emotional experiences within maternity care spaces (Menzel, 2022), along with the enrolment of masculine subjectivities within day-to-day performances of caregiving within the home (Meah and Jackson, 2016) – including through performances of DIY (Tomori and Boyer, 2019 – see also Cox, 2016, 2014) and fathering through foodwork as 'recognisably manly' domestic activities (Meah, 2017 – see Gorman-Murray, 2008) – as well as driving children to different place in cars (Barker, 2008). Research has also explored fathers' experiences at the boundaries of work and home, in emotionally and mentally partitioning these spheres as part of the emotional 'work' of fathering (Gorman-Murray, 2013; Smith and Winchester, 1998).

Such an interest in the emotional geographies of fathering comes at a rather interesting impasse where there is, as Meah and Jackson (2016) and Aitken (2009, 2005, 2000) note, tensions between the 'idea' of fatherhood and the 'fact' of fathering. For Aitken,

much of our understanding of what it is to be a father, hinges on an "idea" [of fatherhood] that does not embrace the "fact" of fathering as a daily emotional practice that is negotiated, contested and resisted differently in different spaces (2000, p.581).

Aitken conceptualises the 'idea' of fatherhood as a social construction, and the 'fact' of fathering as what fathers (are) actually (able to) do, as defined within the constraints of various institutions, which I explore further in this thesis through consideration of expectant fathering. A commonly cited historical 'idea' of fatherhood which emerged during Industrial Capitalism is the father as the 'breadwinner', where social constructions of being a 'good father' were associated with performing paid labour (Meah and Jackson,

2016). However, related to women's increased participation in paid employment, recent decades have seen the emergence of a new idea of fatherhood, often referred to as the 'new father' image, which socially constructs a 'good father' as an equal co-parent, emotionally (and practically) involved in the nurturing and caring of his children (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Aitken, 2000). This conception resonates with societal discourse of the 'new man' as a more emotional form of masculinity (Elliot, 2016).

Indeed, Meah and Jackson (2016), find that for some men in the UK, an important dimension of 'being a man' is being a *father*, which "involves complex geographies of care," that "[not] surprisingly...may also require specific forms of emotional labour" (p.500) – as alluded to be Aitken (2009, 2005) in conceptualising fathering as 'awkward'. This point on emotional labour is significant, since becoming a father is tightly bound with cultural expectations of what already *being* a father means, and what practices/roles this entails (Faircloth, 2021; Draper, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b).

The performance and navigation of this emotional labour is the concern of Chapter 4, in which I examine expectant fathers' (self)regulation of emotions in order to conform to culturally-specific expectations of masculinity during (expectant) fatherhood, thus situating emotions and masculinities as 'sticky' (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Berggren, 2014). While such emotional management is largely experienced at the individual level, grounded in expectant fathers' bodily incapacity to carry a child (Mohr and Almeling, 2020), through Chapter 4, I explore how it is also mediated via various other, overlapping, spatial scales, not least those of national policy through the emotional navigation of 'visitor'-restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Menzel, 2022; Hodgkinson and Das, 2021), navigated especially within maternity care and workplace spaces, which reinforce assumptions of fathers largely secondary 'place' within care.

Conceptualising (expectant) fathering as a performative practice is also to consider it as a highly relational practice – not only in relation to mothering (mediated via societal expectations of gendered parenting roles), but also in relation to *children*. In other words, it is the spatial practices of intimacy/care through which subjectivities of fathering emerge and ‘become’ (Doucet, 2013). This is illustrated most effectively in Meah and Jackson’s (2016) analysis of how a father does his daughters’ hair as an example of caregiving that is explicitly intimate and haptic. They describe how “this task is all the more challenging because...[his daughter is]...of Afro-Caribbean descent...[with]...hair-management requirements which he is less likely to be familiar with as a bald, White man” (p.503). Yet, he performs this with familiarity, confidence and tenderness; revealing how, in that moment, through that act of care – somewhat reflective of rather post-structural interpretations of identity (Blunt and Willis, 2000) – he is not merely ‘White’, not merely ‘man’, but *father* (Menzel, 2018). Meah and Jackson’s (2016) analysis reveals the significance of fathers’ tender, embodied, caregiving practices in reconstituting and bringing to the fore particular parts of their gender identity and (inter)subjectivity as men (after Maclaren, 2014), with this care-full, embodied, haptic encounter being enrolled into the performance of intimate, tender, and ultimately loving fathering (Menzel, 2018). It is these spatial practices of love/intimacy and the construction of tender, care-full fathering – which forms the basis of a number of my empirical chapters.

2.5.2. Spatialities of Paternal Love/Intimacy

In his seminal work, Aitken (2000) argues that despite the emergence of the new ‘idea’ of fatherhood, fathering practices are still heavily constrained by ‘monolithic’ (p.582), ‘insidious’ (p.581), ‘pervasive patriarchy’ (p.584). This may refer to, for example, the historical idea of the father-as-breadwinner, which continues to pervade Western societal ideas of ‘being a man’ (Meah and Jackson, 2016), and which is sometimes linked with negative effects on fathers’ ability to maintain (emotional) father-child relationships (see Bryan, 2013). It may also, perhaps, refer to societal constructions of hegemonic masculinity in terms of emotional aloofness (as I discuss further in Chapter 4). For example, as Lilius (2016) notes, “the fact of fathering as a practice of intimacy, nurturing and care is still associated with femininity in many contexts” (p.1765). Moreover, Aitken (2000) claims that our “enduring myths of social reproduction do not seem to support forms of masculinity that encompass a sense of self that is nurturing and domestically orientated” (p.581).

This is perhaps less true in more recent decades, where there has been growing interest in domestic forms of masculinity (see Gorman-Murray, 2013, 2008). The emergence of such scholarship is connected to the advent of literature on emotional, and caring masculinities (Elliot, 2016; Berggren, 2014); forms of masculinity which are intimate, tender and care-full – characteristics which are often affiliated with contemporary ideals of fatherhood, largely building on the work of Dermott (2008).

Indeed, as I discussed in my MRes thesis (Menzel, 2018), social research has drawn upon various concepts as analytical tools in attempting to make sense of so-called ‘new’ forms of fatherhood and contemporary fathering practices (Miller, 2010; Dermott, 2008). While these include notions of care (Philip, 2013) and nurturance (Marsiglio and Roy, 2012), in more recent years there has emerged critical feminist scholarship which

considers fathering through the lens of love/intimacy (Macht, 2017; Meah, 2017), critiquing and unpacking the problematic affiliations between these care-like literatures, femininity and mothering (see Menzel, 2018 for a review). These latter literatures arguably build upon Dermott's (2008) theorising of intimate fatherhood; however, to my mind, her conception of intimacy is largely to denote the social practices which constitute emotional proximity and closeness to ones' child (as part of contemporary discourses of involved fatherhood), rather than to capture/reflect how fathers actually *feel* – how they actively seek to create and 'do' love towards their children, developing a sense of love/intimacy – as I seek to do in this thesis by interrogating the emotional geographies of expectant fathering.

Sociologist Macht (2020a, 2020b, 2017), for example, examines the social construction of paternal love, exploring how fathers seek to 'do' love towards their children, navigated against hegemonic expectations of masculinity: in particular expectations of male emotional stoicism. In so doing, she develops a notion of 'emotional bordering' to encapsulate "the boundary work that men as fathers reproduce on an emotional level in order to create relational boundaries with the aim of either *maintaining* emotional closeness or emotional *distance* in their intimate relationships" (Macht, 2020b: 18, emphasis in original). This theorising resonates strongly with broader scholarship on emotions and masculinities, not least the conception of masculinities as 'sticky' reviewed previously (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Berggren, 2014, after Ahmed, 2004) through how expectations of emotional (in)expression become 'stuck' onto particular bodies – and, as I will show through this thesis, specifically the bodies of expectant fathers.

Although Macht's consideration of 'bordering' here is largely metaphorical, it nonetheless provokes a highly geographical theorising of the emotional geographies of fathering. I interrogate this further in this thesis – particularly in Chapter 4 where I

examine the emotion work performed by expectant fathers (particularly in the early stages of pregnancy) in, and across different spaces (after Aitken, 2009, 2005, 2000). More specifically, I bring Macht's notion of emotional bordering into dialogue with Hodgkinson and Das' (2021) analysis of how new/expectant fathering is characterised by the communicative metaphor of the unemotional 'rock'; the expectation of expectant fathers' 'role' being a 'pillar of support' – an unwavering 'pillar of strength' – an expectation heightened especially during the emotional turbulence of the pandemic (extending my earlier work Menzel, 2022).

Returning to the subject of the construction of paternal love/intimacy, in another fascinating paper, Meah (2017) analyses the spatialities of fathers' engagement in food-work – the preparation and procurement of particular foods – arguing how certain foods hold particular 'love value' (in ways which are highly individual and specific to each father-child relationship, depending on a child's tastes and health needs). Her analysis reveals how, through food, fathers engage actively in practically caring for (and, indeed, emotionally about) their child, as well as demonstrating intimate knowledge of their children's individual food preferences and dietary requirements. As such, Meah (2017) argues how such domestic, caregiving practices, become enrolled into how fathers 'do love' towards their children.

This is perhaps all the more significant for how Meah's participants were all fathering in the context of post-separation families (see Meah and Jackson, 2016), meaning their children often did not live with their father full-time. Participants thus had to continually adapt and demonstrate to their child constant awareness of changing/shifting their child(ren)'s eating habits and likes/dislikes – illustrating the complex geographies of intimacy and intimate relationships (Morrison et al., 2013; Valentine and Hughes, 2012; Valentine, 2008). Moreover, the presence of these foods in

the home, even when their children are absent, acts as a material inscription of their fathering into particular rooms within the home (cf. Tarrant, 2016). This latter point is of particular relevance to Chapter 6 of this thesis, in which I examine fathers' engagement in the preparatory work through which fathers ready the home (and indeed themselves – practically and emotionally) for the arrival of a future child, re-creating the home as a distinctly parental space through the accumulation, integration and interaction with materialities within it (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Leinaweaver et al., 2017).

Of particular significance to this thesis is Meah's analysis of the spatial/temporal 'circuits of intimacy', used to encapsulate how an ontological sense of intimacy/closeness may be 'stretched' over space, but also over time (MacLaren, 2014). In particular, Meah's analysis of food-work reveals the ability for (multi)sensory experiences/encounters in facilitating a sense of intimacy with an absent loved one, highlighting the affective capacity of the senses in transporting us – metaphorically, though in explicitly embodied ways – to different spacetimes, bridging distances between beings. While for Meah (2017), this is articulated largely through memory, with sensory encounters with particular foods – particularly through taste and smell – creating a sense of emotional connection with some who has passed away (including ones' own father), there is capacity to extend this thinking to consider how a sense of intimacy (and indeed love) may be forged with someone *who has not yet been born*.

Indeed, as Evans (2014) argues, spatial enactments of family may be embedded within multiple timeframes – including the past (through memory, as for Meah, 2017), but also the future, via hope and anticipatory encounters, bringing the future into the present (Draper, 2003a, 2002a, 2002b). These distances may be vast – emotional intimacy/connection spreading over (inter)national scales (Liu, 2017) – but they may also be incredibly small, merely a layer of skin, as I will explore through examination of

expectant fathers inter-embodied encounters with their unborn child, inside the womb, discussed further in Section 2.6 (though see Longhurst, 2018), which provides the basis for Chapter 5.

This points to how the body is also highly significant within the emotional geographies of (expectant) fathering, which have, interestingly, largely not been considered explicitly within geography (though see Ranson, 2014; Doucet, 2013 2009, 2006 for sociological accounts on embodied experiences of early fathering) – at least beyond acknowledgement of the differing reproductive capacities of mothers’/fathers’ and the (assumed) inability of fathers’ bodies to conceive, carry, birth and (breast)feed a child (Holt, 2017; Longhurst, 2017, 2008). However, there still has not been much consideration of the embodied geographies of fathering. Aitken’s initial (2000) work offers a partial exception here, revealing the (inter)entanglements of fathers’ bodies and their emotional experiences (albeit very briefly) in describing his recollection of his feelings of shame while holding his “hard, breastless chest” after being unable to comfort his crying infant son (p.581). His narrative thus highlights the powerful ways in which bodily differences can elicit profound emotions from fathers.

I argue in this thesis how multisensory encounters constitute anticipatory acts of love/intimacy between father and unborn child, allowing for the development of an ontological sense of (emotional) closeness and proximity to someone not yet here, transcending temporal distances and bringing the future into the present (cf. Meah, 2017; Evans, 2014). In so doing, it interrogates the importance of these encounters for how fathers anticipate and attempt to build an emotional connection of love/intimacy with their child, who has not yet been born (Meah, 2017), constituting anticipatory modes of ‘doing family’ with foetuses (Hamper and Nash, 2021) via the geographies of pre-parenting.

2.5.3. *Fathering, Masculinity and Work*

A significant area for addressing this disconnect between disparate gender relations between mothers/fathers has been through the encouragement of fathers' use of parental leave, which is linked to the greater involvement of fathers in the practical aspects of caring *for* children, as well as the emotional dimensions of caring *about* them (Dermott, 2008, see Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Twamley and Schober, 2019). However, even with shifts toward involved fathering ideals, the uptake of leave remains highly gendered along traditional gender lines.

Moreover, despite a wealth of geographic work on parents' experiences of being on leave (Brandth and Kvande, 2018, 1998; Luzia, 2013, 2010; Aitken, 2000), geographers have not yet tended to consider the experiences of how such leave is actually negotiated and arranged (though see Menzel, under review). A partial exception here includes Boyer et al.'s (2017a) feminist review of contemporary childcare in the UK in the aftermath of the recession, which argues how the low up-take of leave by fathers (even with the recent implementation of Shared Parental Leave, considered more fully in Chapter 7) perpetuates highly gendered 'uneven geographies' of care, critiquing especially the unevenness of accessibility, eligibility and affordability of leave for many parents, despite policy innovation. The spatialities of this are teased out, perhaps more effectively, in the response papers to Boyer et al.'s (2017a) review, revealing how this unevenness is grounded in social and cultural expectations around caregiving (and enactments of gender more broadly), in particular through hegemonic discourses of masculinity which often go against performances of male-caregiving (Gorman-Murray, 2017), perpetuating highly gendered forms of leave-taking between mothers and fathers (Locke, 2017). These, I suggest, are grounded in gendered societal expectations of 'good

parenting’ practices, particularly the expectation for fathers to be ‘good workers’ (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021).

Longhurst (2017) in particular extends the spatial focus in Boyer et al.’s (2017a) review, arguing for the need to go beyond a focus on national policy contexts, which, though important, are but one scale of parental leave negotiations. Longhurst (2017) thus highlights, instead, the need for research which attends critically to the overlapping scales of national policy, communities, homes and bodies which mediate gendered arrangements of leave. Her paper also draws further attention to the need for examination of emotions – at these various scales – in understanding *why* caregiving remains so deeply gendered. I extend this in Chapter 7 of this thesis to explore the central role of workplace spaces in perpetuating such gendered dynamics – places which are curiously absent within Longhurst’s (2017) commentary.

Indeed, researchers agree that the gendered organisation of workplaces are amongst the greatest obstacles to gender equality across society more broadly (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Kaufman, 2018). This is through the perpetuation of disparate gendered expectations about (and subsequent uptake of) leave between mothers/fathers; mediated via scales of national legislation, community expectations of ‘good parenting’ practices, and embodied labours of infant care (Longhurst, 2017). I argue in Chapter 7 for centrality of fathers’ emotions in shaping the negotiation and arrangement of leave, grounded primarily in pressures/anxieties to fulfil workplace expectations of being of being a ‘good worker’ (Koslowski, 2022; Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Borgkvist et al., 2021; Haas and Hwang, 2019).

2.6. *Spatialising Expectancy and Emergent Pre-Parenting Geographies*

As noted in Section 2.4., in reviewing the literature on the geographies of parenting there has been a general lack of research on fathering within geography, with much research on parenting focusing primarily on the experiences/accounts of mothers (Jupp and Gallagher, 2013). This disparity is particularly stark within emergent scholarship on ‘pre-parenting’ geographies, attending to the spatialities of practices which constitute active performances and expressions of commitment to parenting *prior* to the arrival of a child (Hamper, 2022; Faircloth and Görtin, 2018).

Within broader literature within cultural geographies, there has been a wealth of scholarship attending to the geographies of hope (Anderson and Fenton, 2008), anticipation, and the future (see Anderson, 2010 for a review). Such work situates how the future is highly emotionally, and affectively, charged (Massumi, 2007), including through reference to children (Kraftl, 2008)¹⁰. Indeed, as discussed earlier in this review,

¹⁰ Such work argues critically how debates surrounding notions of foetal personhood are often given precedence over women’s own agency – such as by managing their consumption of particular fish which may contain high levels of contaminants such as PCBs (Mansfield, 2012) as well as maintaining a healthy weight (Parker and Pausé, 2019) in order to ensure their bodies are as hospitable spaces for conceiving and carrying a future child as possible. This is particularly interesting for how notions of foetal personhood are often given precedence over women’s own agency, with women who fail to conform to these expectations risking being labelled as already ‘bad mothers’ – even if they have no intention of ever having children. This work also points to the complex inter-scalarity of pre-parenting geographies, where the (global) environment becomes entangled with the interior bodily space of the womb (Simms, 2009).

temporalities are intimately entwined with emotions/affects (Kerr et al., 2019), with scholarship on geographies of the future alluding the significance of particular *spaces* which effectively (or more accurately *affectively*) ‘bring forth’ potential futures into the present (see Draper, 2002b), where futures can be intensely *felt* in those spaces (Anderson, 2010; Massumi, 2007). These futures are largely imagined, but reveal the important collapsing of space, time and scales in how they are anticipated and understood in the present (ibid.).

In a recent paper, Holt and Philo (2022) call for greater attention to ‘tiny human geographies’. This call echoes, in many ways, Holt’s earlier writings on the possibilities/potentials of examining, uniquely, the geographies of babies/infants (see Holt, 2017, 2013), emerging largely as a response to the relative absence of work understanding babies/infants as agential beings within geography, babies instead being largely configured as ‘objects’ carried around by parents/carers (Holt and Philo, 2022).

Holt’s (2017, 2013) work draws significantly upon Lupton’s (2013) notion of inter-embodiment. Although used predominantly by feminist scholars to critique the assumed blurring of self/(m)other (ibid.), Holt argues how this notion also provides opportunities for considering babies/infants as individual and agential beings, connected to – but also distinct from – their caregivers. My analysis extends this focus to consider parental experiences of caring for and loving babies *before they are born* – what may even be termed ‘foetal geographies’ to recognise the agency and intensely-felt presence of unborn children within the lives of their future parents.

Within their paper, Holt and Philo (2022) muse briefly about the rather speculative nature of ‘life’ in the womb, and questions of when a ‘foetus’ becomes a ‘baby’. These

questions are incredibly complex and difficult to even begin to untangle¹¹. Indeed, reference to ‘father-foetal’ encounters in Chapter 5 is intended to reflect the temporalities of interacting with a child not yet born. As I will show in Chapter 5 – and will do so further in Chapter 6 – parents’ anticipatory encounters blur the distinctions between what is and isn’t ‘life’. This is enabled via acts of intimacy, which have a rather complex geographical nature, evoking an ontological sense of proximity and closeness, but which can be ‘stretched’ across vast spatial scales, but also over *time* (Meah, 2017). Indeed, as Evans (2014) argues, spatial enactments of family may be embedded within multiple timeframes – including the past (through memory, as for Meah, 2017), but also the *future*, via hope and anticipatory encounters, bringing the future into the present (Draper, 2003a, 2002a, 2002b). As such, I use the terms foetal, unborn child and baby interchangeably in my Analysis chapters to reflect participants’ conception of their experience.

2.6.1. Maternal (and Absent Paternal) Geographies

Within the geographies of parenting, there is an established (and largely feminist) literature on maternities and experiences during the perinatal period (Boyer, 2019, 2014). Emerging from the seminal work of Longhurst (2008) on women’s embodied experiences of pregnancy in and across different spaces, the geographies of maternities has since evolved to encompass examinations of the spatialities of mothers’ (inter)embodied caregiving during pregnancy and into early parenthood (Holt, 2017, 2013; cf. Lupton, 2013).

¹¹ This is not least given the incredibly emotive and political-laden nature of foetal life, as evinced by feminist protest over reproductive rights and mobilities through the overturning of Roe vs Wade in the US in early 2022

Geographers have argued how experiences of space/place are fundamentally shaped by infant caregiving; for example, interrogating the various ways mothers' movement through space is significantly changed when accompanied by babies/infants (see Clement and Waitt, 2018 on pram mobilities; Whittle, 2018 on baby wearing with slings). They have also highlighted the emotionality of such caregiving in different places – most especially the anxieties of navigating the (inter)embodied practice of breastfeeding in public spaces (Lane, 2014) and workplaces (Boyer, 2014). Societal pressures and expectations of 'good mothering' practices have also been explored, with Kerr et al. (2018) describing how apartment homescapes can become spaces of anxiety, particularly at night, when caring for a (crying) baby; with further research examining the use of digital spaces for expressing maternal feelings/frustrations (Madge and O'Connor, 2005).

However, in addition to these works, geographers have also, more recently, begun to turn attention to the multitude of spatial practices and preparatory work which goes into anticipating the arrival of baby, such as during pregnancy (as well as in other forms – see Leinaweaver et al., 2017 on 'home-work' in adoption). This interest reflects the rise of intensive pre-parenting cultures which value enactments of future parenting, and thus commitment, to childrearing *before* the arrival of a child (Hamper, 2022, 2020). For example, within their ethnographic account of parent-infant co-sleeping arrangements, Tomori and Boyer (2019) explore how the material composition of home space evolves during pregnancy in anticipation of the arrival of a child, such as through the decorating of a nursery and preparation of space for a baby to sleep. Arguably, their analysis reflects rather traditional gendered divisions of such labour, with expectant fathers performing more DIY/manual labour, such as building a crib, and mothers the more 'hidden' organisation and planning work. Nevertheless, it usefully reveals how such preparatory work enables expectant couples to begin imagining a sense of personhood for their future

child, and a mutually constituted sense of self as already parents, situating nursery-making as a (pre-parenting) “expression of love and care” (ibid.: 1179). This reveals how such spatial practices enable expectant parents to begin developing a sense of connection and intimacy with their unborn child, imagining them as already present within their home.

Moreover, Hamper and Nash (2021) explore women’s engagement with pregnancy tracking apps: digital spaces which provide weekly updates about foetal development largely via visual materials, such as comparisons between various fruits and the size of the growing baby. Through encounters with these digital foetuses, pregnant mothers are provided with intimate knowledge of their unborn child, inside the womb. This enables expectant mothers to begin imagining and visualising their future baby, and begin developing a sense of intimacy and emotional connection to their unborn child.

However, despite this well-established literature on pregnancy and maternities, and emergent work on mothers’ pre-parenting geographies, the experiences of expectant fathers remain largely unexamined – an absence also present in geographic literature in other modes of becoming a parent (see for example Leinaweaver et al., 2017 on adoption). A partial exception here includes Schurr and Miltz’s (2018) research which briefly details the experiences of homosexual male couples in Mexico selecting and contracting a surrogate. However, their work deals primarily with legal geographies of surrogacy (Mexico being one of the few countries where same-sex male couples may contract a surrogate), discussing expectant fathers’ anticipations of the arrival of their future child almost solely in relation to interactions/perceptions of the surrogate *mother*, with minimal discussion of how these interactions are enrolled into how expectant fathers seek to develop an emotional connection with their future child, as I explore in this thesis.

Scholarship has *alluded* to expectant fathers' experiences, with Tomori and Boyer (2019) discussing their engagement in the preparatory home-work involved in becoming a parent – albeit on rather gender-normative lines – however, the actual voices/experiences of expectant fathers remain rather absent in their analysis. Indeed, broader literature has also noted the absence of work on paternal engagement in such practices, with Davies et al.'s (2009) speculative analysis drawing on the accounts of mothers. This is despite long-standing awareness of the importance for understanding fathers' experiences in the accumulation and interaction with material objects as part of the formation of a pre-parenting identity (Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006).

Moreover, Hamper's (2022) research on fathers' engagement with apps draws solely on the perspectives of mothers. Again, they do *note* the potential for spaces of pregnancy apps to enable mothers to “encourage their partners to ‘connect’ with the pregnancy and bond with the [digital] foetus as a future baby” (p.591), but it is less clear what these spaces might actually *mean* to expectant fathers themselves.

Even within burgeoning work on the geographies of fathering discussed above – which has critically explored the navigation of space/place within contexts of fathers' primary (Aitken, 2009, 2000), shared (Barker, 2008) and sole caregiving (Meah, 2017; Meah and Jackson, 2016) – the focus has remained predicated on relationships/caregiving for *existing* children, resulting in a lack of understanding of the spatialities which comprise pre-parenting enactments of fathering, in particular their emotional and embodied dynamics. Indeed, some of the fathers in my research did, briefly, describe using pregnancy apps in order to feel engaged with pregnancy, but – as my analysis in Chapter 5 will show – it was when discussing their physical, multi-sensory and inter-embodied encounters with their baby that participants became much more animated, gesturing with their hands to mime touches and sounds to indicate their interactions with

their partner and unborn child, suggesting these experiences may be more significant and worthy of examination.

Indeed, new/expectant fatherhood is often conceptualised as a comparatively disembodied experience in relation to motherhood, since men “lack the biological markers of the transition to parenthood” (Draper, 2003b: 744). Within heterosexual dyads¹², the disparate embodied experiences of pregnancy between mothers/fathers permeate conceptions of pregnancy as having “his-and-her starting points” (Kushner et al., 2017: 210). This has consequent implications for societal expectations of gendered parenting roles (Lewis, 2018), with motherhood, and maternal feelings, often being deemed as being more ‘natural’ and instinctual than paternal connections and father’s performances of care – as was revealed by Aitken’s account discussed earlier on the deficiencies of his body – effectively illustrating the often-secondary positioning of fatherhood, and its implicit entanglements with (dis)embodied experiences of pregnancy and early parenthood.

Within the broader literature on expectant fatherhood, research has interrogated the significance of a range of experiences that facilitate bonding between father and unborn child through what Draper (2003a, 2002a, 2002b) terms ‘body-mediated moments’, such as ultrasound scans and feeling foetal movement (cf. Hamper and Nash, 2021), which I explore in Chapter 5. These practices are frequently enrolled into discourses of pre-parenting enactments, offering significant moments for fathers to actively engage with the embodied experience of pregnancy – via the pregnant mother – developing their own sense of involvement and attachment to the pregnancy, and the

¹² I use this phrasing to reflect the heterosexual composition of my sample, discussed in Chapter

growing foetus as their future child. Importantly, these experiences are inherently spatial – being inter-embodied and mutually constituted through interaction with the pregnant mother and (as I will argue) unborn child (Lupton, 2013; Holt, 2017, 2013) – but also taking place in a range of spaces, not least maternity care spaces and homes; (re)creating these as intimate spaces of father-foetal encounter and bonding.

Moving beyond Draper's (2003a) more clinical list of 'milestone moments', within the empirical chapters of this thesis I also showcase the significance of preparatory home-work of nursery preparation (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Leinaweaver et al., 2017 – Chapter 6) to how expectant fathers feel involved in pregnancy and expectancy. Indeed, the incorporation of a new child into the home entails significant material (and indeed, architectural) adjustments to the homescape (Leinaweaver et al., 2017), with emergent research (in and beyond geography) drawing particular attention to how contemporary parenting practices are inextricably bound up with materialities (Waight, 2013). Moreover, the accumulation of these various materialities very often begins several months before the actual arrival of child, such that even before the arrival of a child, their material presence may be intensely felt within the home (Owen and Boyer, 2022).

As the wealth of emergent work within cultural geographies will attest, domestic objects are more than mere 'things', but act as "material testaments...to who we are, where we have been and...where we are heading" (Hecht, 2001: 123, cited in Owen, 2022: 991-992). Indeed, within the literature on the geographies of home (see Brickell, 2012; Blunt and Dowling, 2006), there has emerged a wealth of literature examining the significant role of materialities and material culture in the construction of home (Woodward, 2021; Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Tarrant, 2016; Luzia, 2011). This has included the role of materialities within the formation and performances of particular identities, as well as via the day-to-day emotional, experiences of 'living with' things

(ibid.; Collins and Stanes, 2021). Such practices become particularly significant during intense life-course events and transitions (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Owen, 2022; Horton and Kraftl, 2012), through practices and processes of ‘unmaking’ and remaking home at these junctures – highlighting “temporal, material and spatial fluidity of home” (Owen, 2022: 993). This is often through emotional connections to the past (see Horton and Kraftl, 2012, 2006), with domestic spaces and materialities even being situated as ‘environments of memory’ (Bondi et al., 2005: 9); for example, enabling the maintenance of active relationships with absent (even deceased) loved ones (see Hockey et al., 2005)¹³.

However, in a recent paper, Anderson (2023) considers the possibility for geographies of attachment, drawing on Berlant’s (2011) notion of ‘promissory objects’, objects of emotional/affective attachment which hold *promise* of a (better) future, bringing this promise, materially and affectively, into the present. Though I depart here from Anderson’s (2023) following of Berlant, in Chapter 6 of this thesis, I attend to the *anticipatory* potential of objects in the lives of expectant parents. In it, I explore the ways the affective capacities baby things (often by their very material, sensory affective properties) work to elicit expectant parents’ emotional connection with their future child, and an emergent sense of parental identity (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). This is particularly articulated through work undertaken in the accumulation of these objects in making promises – whether to oneself, partner, future child or society – of future caregiving practices (cf. Waight and Boyer, 2018, see also Holloway, 1998 on moral childcare cultures).

¹³ See also literature on indigenous/ethnic objects in the home in eliciting a sense of emotional belonging and connection to ancestry, cultural heritages and national homelands (Sandu, 2013; Olesen, 2010).

The accumulation of baby things is an intensely emotional experience, navigated against moral judgements around the ‘appropriate’ parenting practices. These judgements are, importantly, not universal but are culturally and context-specific, however, in the UK, there are highly regulated expectations for parents to spend considerable time, energy and usually money, to obtain the ‘right’ things, from the right places, and to do so well in advance of the arrival of a child – as a demonstration of commitment and preparedness for impending parenthood (Waight and Boyer, 2018; Prothero, 2002). As such, it is reflective of increasing expectations of *pre*-parental expressions of love and devotion to a future child (Hamper and Nash, 2021).

Within the literature on contemporary consumption habits/practices, there has been a growing interest in parents’ engagement with alternative consumption spaces, such as localised share economies and second-hand consumption networks – in particular Waight’s fascinating research on use of ‘Nearly New Sales’ (Waight, 2019, 2017, 2015, 2014, 2013, Waight and Boyer, 2018). This work emerges largely as a response to recent crises in the cost-of-living (see Briggs and Hall, 2023) and in light of neoliberal and austerity politics which has seen many parents ‘tightening their belts’; including those from more middle-class and affluent backgrounds (see broader volumes Hall and Ince, 2017; Casey and Taylor, 2015, 2014).

However, drawing primarily on the experiences of relatively experienced parents (and particularly mothers) of toddlers, Waight’s work largely explores these second-hand parenting economies in relation to what parents *do* with objects *after* use – when these objects are no longer *needed*, but still have considerable use value (Waight, 2017). This is because the bodies and needs of babies change so drastically, and so quickly (Waight and Boyer, 2018), that the life-span of these objects very often outlasts parents’ actual use and need for them (Waight, 2014, 2013). Indeed, Waight is primarily concerned with

spatial practices and the considerable (emotional/domestic) labour involved in caring for and re-housing baby things – in *removing* baby things from the home – as entrepreneurial spaces/networks through which to ‘pass on’ pre-loved toys and clothes (Waight and Boyer, 2018; Waight, 2017). This connects with composite work on spatial practices of storage and encounters with ‘clutter’ (see Owen and Boyer, 2022; Owen, 2022; Collins and Stanes, 2021; Woodward, 2021, 2016).

Consequently, there remains a general absence of work on first-time and, indeed, *expectant* parents use of consumption spaces, within which parents look to bring baby things into their home for the first time. Moreover, there is a distinct absence of understanding expectant *fathers’* engagement in such practices, even as scholarship beyond geography has long noted how research could be usefully extended by the inclusion of the experiences of fathers (Davies et al., 2009; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). I address these gaps in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

2.7. Situating the Thesis: Towards Emotional Geographies of Expectant Fathering

Through this thesis, I explore the gendered, emotional experiences of expectant fathers – parental experiences which have, heretofore, been largely unexamined – examining how societal expectations of ‘good parenting’ are negotiated and managed by expectant fathers in different spaces/places *prior* to the arrival of a child, in highly emotionalised ways. I thus make an important and novel contribution to the field of the geographies of parenting through consideration of how fathers, specifically, engage in and negotiate practices of *pre-parenting*.

This chapter has reviewed literature of the three central pillars of this research: of emotional geographies, geographic research on fathering (and related family/parenting) and the spatialities of expectancy and anticipation via emergent work on what I term 'pre-parenting geographies'. Further, it has identified areas for which there is potential to more fully consider the experiences of expectant fathering, thus showing where this research will importantly extend extant literature. Through this research, I seek to address the absence of expectant fathering within geography, drawing primarily on the voices/experiences of expectant fathers, gathered via periodic, in-depth semi-structured interviews, which I discuss further in the next chapter.

3 Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Data for this thesis derives from a (qualitative) research project conducted with expectant fathers living in the UK. It was guided by the general (phenomenologically-inspired) research questions ‘*What are expectant fathers’ lived (emotional) experiences of various spaces and places during pregnancy and into early parenthood?*’ and ‘*How are the emotional (and relatedly, embodied) encounters within these spaces – including practices, interactions and (care) labour – enrolled in the forging of an individual, evolving sense of be(com)ing a father?*’ (see Charlick et al., 2016 for an overview of phenomenological research questions). These guiding questions were then translated into the (more specific) research aims/objectives identified in Chapter 1.

Data collection for this research was conducted over December 2020 – May 2022, amidst the coronavirus pandemic, which had important ramifications for doing research, requiring substantial adaptations to research design within the context of remote working – as well as significant challenges of (re)negotiating access to, and recruiting, research participants (see Kobakhidze et al., 2021 for an extensive overview; also Buckle, 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). In particular, it raised heightened ethical considerations – including the ethics of whether to even *do* research, due to awareness of the heightened stresses/anxieties of the pandemic on potential participants (Rahman et al., 2021).

This chapter, therefore, provides the methodological and ethical rationale for this project, detailing the research design, recruitment and overview of my participants as well as the methods of data collection and analysis. Importantly, ethics is a foundational part of the design and execution of research, which should be considered at all stages (Thomas, 2017). Therefore, in reporting on the research process in the remainder of this chapter, ethical considerations are necessarily discussed throughout. However, a dedicated section

is devoted to procedural ethics of longitudinal research design, demonstrating how this research has conformed to good ethical standards – but, in being grounded in my research design, this section is presented (unusually) towards the start of this chapter.

Data collection for the project was undertaken in two parts. It involved, primarily, working with nine expectant fathers living in the UK through a series of periodic, in-depth interviews (Part 1). However, with the unique context of the extreme circumstances of the pandemic (and awareness of the potential challenges of recruiting, and retaining, interview participants), further, social media data were also gathered (Part 2). Although this latter part of data collection, chronologically, took place first – providing useful emotional immersion into expectant fathering during the pandemic (discussed in Menzel, 2022) – this thesis draws primarily upon my periodic, in-depth interview data. I therefore focus on these interviews in outlining the research design of this project. Moreover, for coherency of narrative, I discuss these social media data second in terms of data collection.

3.2. Feminist Philosophy and Ethical Research Praxis

Feminist research emerged within geography in the 1990s, seeking to contest and critique the historical privileging of ‘masculinist epistemology’ within the discipline, which implied universalist understandings of the socio-spatial world and privileged ‘rational’ ways of knowing and objectivity within research (Dixon and Jones, 2006). Feminist scholarship, by contrast, may be regarded as being broadly epistemologically interpretivist (Thomas, 2017: 110-113), emphasising instead the subjective nature of knowledge and experience (Hiemstra and Billo, 2017), arguing that our knowledge of the world is always partial, always situated within our particular context (Rose, 1997). Thus, within feminist research there is often an important emphasis on positionality, of writing

oneself into the research – particularly within research on emotional geographies (Bondi, 2014; 2005b), attending to our own emotions and bodies within research encounters.

As noted in the Introduction chapter, this research is motivated by the fundamentally feminist aim to ‘give voice to’ the ‘hidden’ voices/experiences of expectant fathers, as a previously overlooked group in family/parenting research – particularly within Geography (after Hiemstra and Billo, 2017; McHugh, 2014). Whilst for some feminist commentators, centring men’s experiences can present something of a dilemma, seemingly at-odds with commitments towards the emancipation of women (Gatrell, 2006), others have argued that researching the lives of men is essential in order to understand, and address, the gendered nature of social life; deconstructing gendered expectations with a view to moving towards a more socially just and equitable future where such expectations hold less significance (McDowell, 1997).

In the design and execution of my research, I adopt a distinctly feminist ethical care praxis, grounded in the feminist tenets of empathy, rapport and listening (McDowell, 1997). Brought to prominence by Carol Gilligan (1993), feminist care ethics pertain to the ideal of foregrounding care, and care-fullness in all relationships and interactions, “of seeing and responding to need...so that no one is left alone” (p. 62) (Branicki, 2020:873). It is “an ethic grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect” (Gilligan, 2011:n.p.). For me, feminist care ethics is ultimately a framework thus founded on *listening*, though one which is generally less applied to men¹⁴. Through this chapter – and this thesis as a whole – I show the possibilities, potentials and (most

¹⁴ This is perhaps an important acknowledgement of the significant marginalisation of the voices/experiences of women throughout history (Dixon and Jones, 2006).

importantly) the *need* for listening to men and their emotional experiences, specifically within the context of expectant fatherhood (Menzel, 2022).

Moreover, as a feminist researcher – and emotional geographer – I pay particular attention to the foundational nature of emotions as critical processes of ethical relationality and reflexivity, embedded within all aspects of research (Ellingson, 2017; Fois, 2017; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). Indeed, as well as significant challenges, conducting this research during the pandemic also presented possibilities to develop critical methodological, epistemological and reflexive insights of research praxis – particularly with regards to modes of encounter and (online) mediations of connecting with participants (Tarrant et al., 2021), which blurred the emotional and spatial boundaries of the ‘field’ during the pandemic. Moreover, as Laliberté and Schurr (2016) note, “analysis of emotional entanglements in research pose critical questions with regard to power relations, research ethics and the wellbeing of research participants and researchers alike” (p.72) which are of crucial importance within pandemic research (Averett, 2021). Embracing the emotional messiness of research (Ellingson, 2017), in this chapter, I additionally attend to the ‘blurring’ of research spaces, researcher identities/positionalities and emotions during pandemic research, as well as the role of empathy as a critical tool within feminist research praxis (Bondi, 2014).

3.3. Research Design

In order to address my research questions and uncover expectant fathers’ lived, emotional experiences of different spatial contexts of pregnancy/expectancy – in accordance with phenomenological inquiry (Braun and Clarke, 2021) – the research design of this project entailed, primarily, undertaking a series of four, periodic in-depth interviews with each of my nine participating expectant fathers.

Indeed, much previous research on fathers' experiences of the transition to parenthood has tended to be largely cross-sectional in design, examining changes to their experiences simply between two points of time – typically from one point during pregnancy and then again after the birth (e.g., Deave et al., 2008). Similarly, other studies have tended to be conducted retrospectively after the arrival of a child, where narratives may be significantly influenced by the vantage point of having become a parent and adapted to this role (e.g., Dolan and Coe, 2011), resulting in an ongoing absence of the voices/experiences of currently expecting fathers in research, which my thesis seeks to address (Hiemstra and Billo, 2017; McHugh, 2014). Even Miller's (2010) formative work on the transition to fatherhood only involved one interview during pregnancy (at 6-8 months). Consequently, research has developed limited insight into expectant fathers' *changing* experiences *during* periods of expectancy, missing out on the potentially more ephemeral, and emergent, emotional nuances of anticipation/expectancy, as well as a lack of detailing of the everyday spatial practices/interactions such periods might entail (though see Draper, 2003a, 2003b, 2002a, 2002b for partial exceptions).

Addressing these shortfalls – especially the general absence of expectant fathers' voices – this research therefore adopted a qualitative, 'mini-longitudinal' design strategy. It is longitudinal in the sense that it involved multiple interviews with participants at various points, tracking and gaining detailed insight into their changing and evolving emotional experiences during the period of expectancy and into early parenthood, (see Vincent, 2013 on advantages of repeat interviews in social research on pregnancy). However, I use the term 'mini-longitudinal' to denote the more compressed timeframe this study examines (approximately one year, working with participants, typically, from

the second trimester of pregnancy, to six months after the arrival of the child)¹⁵. This design was especially suited to my feminist ethical care praxis, allowing for emphasis on relationship-building and rapport, to help foster trust and space for expectant fathers to feel comfortable discussing emotionally-laden experiences (Knox and Burkhard, 2009; Birch and Miller, 2000) – particularly during the pandemic, a time of emotional turbulence.

Indeed, the flexibility of qualitative longitudinal research allows for critical insight into ‘microsocial experiences’ as part of the transition to parenthood (Holland et al., 2006), captured “in real time” (Tarrant et al., 2021: 3, after Neale, 2021), with an emphasis on *depth* of experience, resonating with phenomenological inquiry (Braun and Clarke, 2021); thus producing rich, novel insights into the social and emotional impact of the pandemic.

Participation in this project was open to anyone who identified as an ‘expectant father’, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, or nature of their expectancy – hence the inclusion of John, who was becoming a father through adoption. This was stated clearly on all recruitment documentation, including Research Poster (Appendix A) and Participant Information Sheets (Appendix B). Ethically, it was also important that participation would only begin following the initial (NHS) scan, typically at 12-weeks, to confirm the health-status of the foetus, or after passing the first Stage of adoption training.

¹⁵ Some commentators recommend using the alternative phrase ‘diachronic design’ – meaning change of time – in place of ‘longitudinal’ to avoid confusion with the perceived truism which associates longitudinal research with (quantitative) panel/cohort studies, typically lasting several years (on longitudinal research design, see Neale, 2012; Matthews and Ross, 2010: 124-128; Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2010; Ruspini, 2000).

This was to minimise the risk of participants becoming emotionally involved in the project before their ‘expectancy’ status was well-established. Interviews therefore took place during the second trimester of pregnancy, during the third trimester, as soon after the child’s arrival as possible, along with a follow-up interview approximately six months later (with John’s interviews taking place at equivalent points in his adoption journey).

3.3.1 Ethics of Longitudinal Research During the Pandemic: Emotional Considerations, Attrition and Care-fullness

Given the lengthy proposed nature of this project, and its longitudinal design, attrition – where participants drop out between contact points – was expected, beginning from the point of initial contact (Tarrant et al., 2021; Ployhart and Vandenberg., 2010; Elliot et al., 2008). This was particularly given the sensitive nature of pregnancy, compounded with the fact that the pandemic had heightened stress and pressures for many expectant parents. As part of the recruitment and data collection process, I was especially sensitive to the demands of participating in such a time-intensive research project, particularly during the pandemic (as I will discuss, in the next section). Therefore, during recruitment communication, my emphasis was on inclusion, welcoming participants to take part in as much, or as little, of the project as they felt able, framing this as an opportunity to *share* their experiences – even if this was only one interview (as was the case for Frank).

Due to the typically lengthy nature of longitudinal research, there are also often important ethical questions surrounding the ongoing negotiation of consent, and the need to ensure that this is continually gained, rather than assumed (see Neale, 2012; Matthews and Ross, 2010: 124-128; Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2010; Ruspini, 2000). Before taking part in their first interview, participants were provided with an Information Sheet (Appendix B) and asked to sign and return a consent form (Appendix C). They were also asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) for the purposes of

describing my participant sample. All potential participants were offered the opportunity to discuss the research with me in advance (typically via telephone), in which I answered any questions they had about participating.

On the day of the (initial) interview, I summarised for each participant the key details covered in the Information Sheet and briefly discussed their involvement in the project again, providing an opportunity for final questions. They were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they did not have to answer any questions or discuss any topics they did not wish. Once participants had provided (written) informed consent to take part in the *initial* interview, consent during consecutive interviews was taken on a more ‘rolling basis’. This was to avoid overloading participants with paperwork, whilst still gaining their active and ongoing consent (Böök and Mykkänen, 2019). At the start of any following interviews, I again recapped the key elements of participants’ rights around participating in the project, seeking their *verbal consent* for continued participation, which was audio-recorded (see Interview Guides affixed as Appendix E). This ensured participants’ ongoing understanding and acknowledgment about the usage of their data and the voluntary nature of their involvement in the project.

Participants were assured that their data would always be handled with the upmost confidentiality and that their identity would not be revealed to anyone by myself. Their data was kept securely in an electronic, anonymised format via a password-protected device, stored on the University’s secure data server. Participants’ names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

3.4. Recruiting Interview Participants

Due to the desired points of data collection, it was originally intended that participants be recruited largely from workplaces, as a place expectant fathers in the second trimester of

pregnancy could be found with relative ease^{16,17}. However, this recruitment strategy was largely unsuccessful, after several months of advertising yielded only one participant, through their partner's organisation (see Kobakhidze et al., 2021 on the difficulties of recruiting participants during the pandemic). These difficulties, and a concern that repeated requests to share would be burdensome for gatekeepers – particularly with the ongoing pressures of the pandemic, including stresses of care-work and continued adaptations to working from home – meant that alternative recruitment strategies were adopted.

Participants were therefore majorly recruited via online adverts of the research posted on social media (Kobakhidze et al., 2021). More specifically, I contacted a number of 'closed' Facebook groups for – and often set up by – expectant parents. Usefully, these groups often gave information about approximate due dates and geographic location, as well as highlighting who such groups were aimed at (typically along the lines of 'Due

¹⁶ For example, research on expectant parenting generally tends to report having recruited participants via antenatal classes (Das and Hodkinson, 2020; McKay and Doucet, 2010) – as spaces expectant parents can actually be found – however, such classes typically take place from 30 weeks' gestation, during the third trimester of pregnancy and therefore too late for my intended research design.

¹⁷ Arguably, there is potential for this recruitment strategy to lead only to participants who were employed, thus potentially neglecting the experiences of younger (or older), or potentially impoverished fathers (for this, see Hughes and Tarrant, 2023; Tarrant, 2021). Nevertheless, it was anticipated that employees of these organisations could share the research with their own contacts, including friends/family who may be expecting, thus allowing for a 'snowballing' of potential participants beyond the organisations' employees (see Valentine, 2005 on snowballing)

June 2021 UK – mummies only!¹⁸) which allowed me to target groups which would likely contain my desired participants, focusing particularly on groups aimed at expectant fathers. Some expectant mothers’ groups were also contacted, based on proximate due date, however, no participants were recruited from these spaces.

Due to their closed – and thus private – nature, I messaged group admins explaining the nature of the research, requesting permission to ‘join’ their group, temporarily, to post about my research, allowing potential participants to contact me directly. From previous experience contacting such parenting groups, as part of Masters’ projects (Menzel, 2018), I was aware that my access to these groups (as a woman, and a non-mother) would likely be denied, in order to maintain their role as ‘safe’ spaces for talking about sensitive aspects of pregnancy, labour/birth and becoming a parent. As part of this initial contact, I therefore also included a copy of my research poster (Appendix A), in the hope that amenable admins would at least be willing to post this in the group on my behalf¹⁹. The research brief provided a summary of the project and an outline of the desired participants along with information about how potential participants could contact me if they were interested in the project and would like to know more information.

Contacting online parenting groups in this way was arguably akin to ‘cold calling’, however, it had the benefit of allowing group admins to ‘see’ my personal profile (which identified me as a researcher at the University of Birmingham), and that I am a

¹⁸ At times these gendered lines were more extreme including statements of ‘NO MEN ALLOWED’. This was often due to the nature of content discussed specific to pregnancy and birthing (see Hickman-Dunne et al., 2022)

¹⁹ Indeed, whilst no gatekeeper permitted me to join their group, those that responded to my request instead offered to post about the project themselves.

real person, therefore feeling confident in the sincerity of my request. Moreover, mindful of the potential for harassment in the field – particularly as a woman researching men (Soilevuo-Grønnerød, 2004) – this technique also enabled me to ‘block’, or report, any illegitimate, unwanted contact; although this was, fortunately, never necessary during the project.

In total, four participants were recruited through online parenting groups, including two from an expectant dads’ group, and two through a parenting course aimed at expectant fathers. A further two participants were recruited through the sharing of a research poster on Twitter (retweeted by followers). In addition to these online advertisements, and to reflect the diverse contemporary landscape of parenting (Luzia, 2013; Aitken, 2009: ch. 6), an adoption organisation was also contacted with a similar request to share information about the project, yielding one further participant. Finally, one participant was recruited through a personal contact of mine by word of mouth. These various recruitment avenues are visualised in Figure 1 for accessibility.

3.5. Interview Participants

In total, thirteen fathers expressed an interest in participating in this research, although only nine were actually interviewed (and only these presented in Figure 1), perhaps reflecting the emotional intensity of the pandemic²⁰. This thesis therefore draws upon the experiences of nine expectant fathers (most of whom lived in England). A summary of

²⁰ One potential participant was, for example, a medical student, and I was particularly aware of the pressures the pandemic, as a health crisis would have on him. Although he signed the consent form, we were not able to arrange an interview together after several weeks. I therefore took this as a withdrawal from the project.

these participants is presented in Table 1, which includes details of when they began participating in the project, and which interviews they participated in. This table also presents further significant details as they relate to the empirical chapters of my thesis (including how much leave each participant took, employment circumstances and working arrangements during COVID). This table is also affixed as Appendix F for ease of reference.

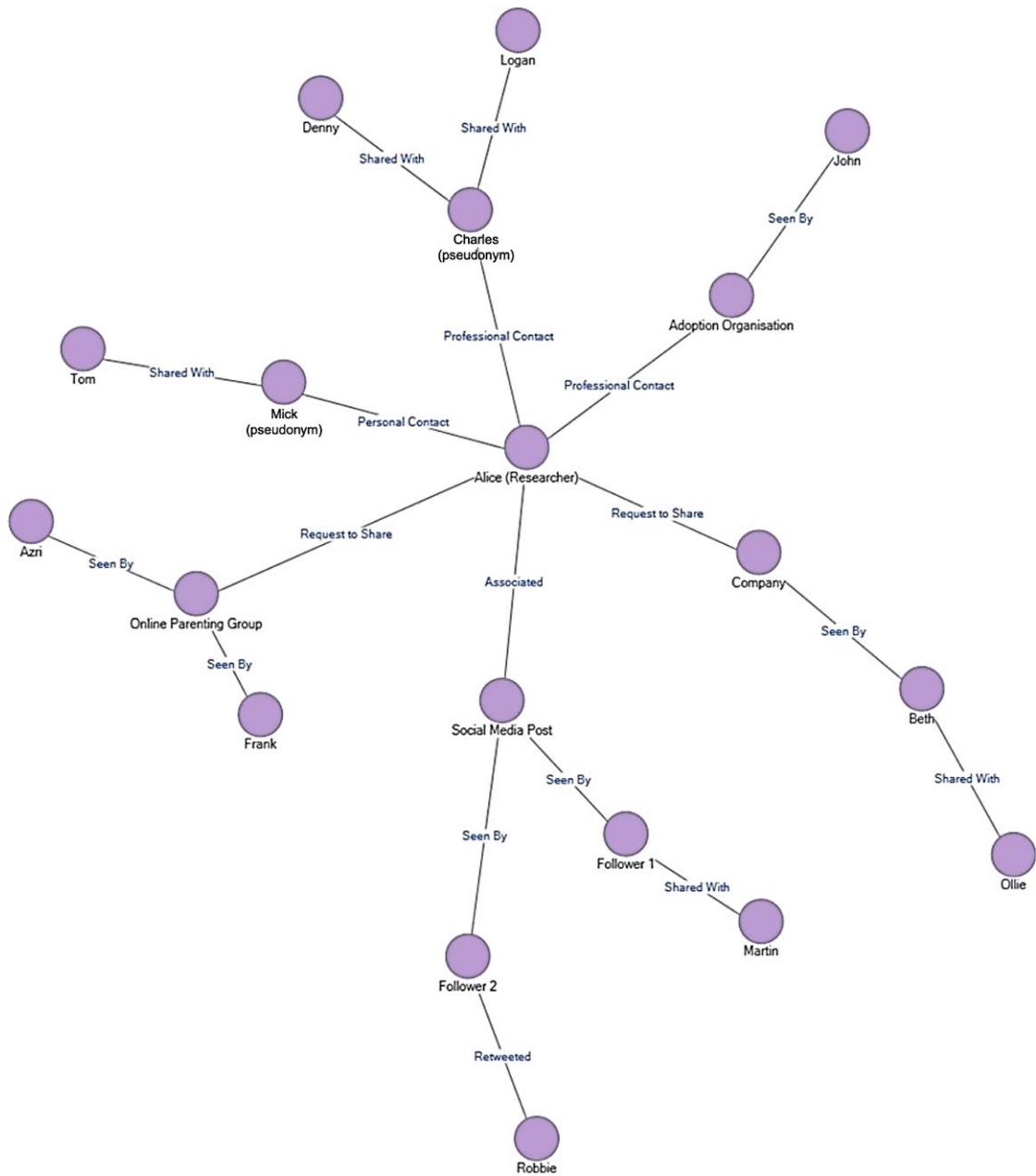


Figure 1: A Network Sociogram Showing Participant Recruitment Avenues.
Constructed using Nvivo12.

	Weeks Along when Contacted	Interviews Participated in	Job Sector and Pandemic Work Style	Initial Hopes for Leave	Leave Taken	Notes
Ollie (32 years old)	22 (Dec 2020)	Second Trimester (25 weeks) Third Trimester (36 weeks) Post-Birth (4-weeks post-birth) Follow-up (8-months post-birth)	Charity Sector Working-from-home	4 weeks (+ possible SPL later)	4 weeks	
Azri (31 years old)	33 (Jan 2021)	Second Trimester (34 weeks) Third Trimester (36 weeks)	Self-employed Copywriter Working-from-home	No strict plan discussed		
Frank (54 years old)	12 (Feb 2021)	Second Trimester (17 weeks)	Self-employed physio-therapist Working-from-home <i>where possible</i>	6 months		
Tom (31 years old)	17 (Mar 2021)	Second Trimester (17 weeks) Third Trimester (38 weeks) Post-Birth (14 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (9-months post-birth)	Engineering Analyst (Simulations Research) Working-from-home	SPL	5 weeks*	Started new job (after finishing PhD) *signed off on sick leave following appendicitis following birth of child
Logan (38 years old)	32 (May 2021)	Second Trimester (33 weeks) Third Trimester (35 weeks) Post-Birth (6 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (10-months post-birth)	E-Commerce Working-from-home (for over 3 years)	1 week	1 week leave + 1 week flexi	Experienced dad, expecting 3 rd child Partner had C-section
Denny (41 years old)	27 (June 2021)	Second Trimester (29 weeks) Post-Birth (7 weeks post-birth)	Events Industry Working-from-home <i>where possible</i>	4 weeks (+ 1 month SPL)	4 weeks	
Robbie (29 years old)	21 (June 2021)	Second Trimester (23 weeks) Post-Birth (3 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (6 months post-birth)	Law Enforcement Analyst Working-from-home	2-3 weeks	2 weeks + 3 days flexi	Started new job (for more security after post-doc)
Martin (37 years old)	23 (July 2021)	Second Trimester (25 weeks) Third Trimester (36 weeks) Post-Birth (4 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (5 months post-birth)	Law Enforcement Working-from-home <i>where possible</i>	2 weeks paternity (+ 3 months SPL later)	2 weeks	Started new role (with more home-based work)
John (42 years old)	Stage 2 (Apr 2021)	Stage 2 Stage 3 Post-'Matched' Post-Arrival (12 weeks post-arrival) Follow-up (9 months post-arrival)	Events Industry Going into Work	6-8 weeks	6 weeks	Adoptive father Completed additional 'post-match' interview

Table 1: A Summary of Interview Participants

Despite efforts to include the experiences of expectant fathering in all its wealth and diversity (as noted in my research design), my participant sample comprises rather gender-and-heteronormative experiences of parenting. Participants were majority-white (although Azri identified as Filipino), with ages ranging from 26-54 years at the time of the first interview. All were employed on a full-time basis (although Denny, who worked in the events industry, had been furloughed for much of the pandemic). Some stated that their partners were on similar, and in some cases more, income than themselves (as discussed briefly in Chapter 7), and all seemed economically comfortable, with many owning – or soon hoping to own – their homes (discussed in Chapter 5). All described themselves as heterosexual, and all were in a relationship with the relevant expectant mother, which were generally long-term – only Frank had been in a relationship with his partner for less than a year, and all but Azri were married by the end of the data collection. All pregnancies were wanted and planned. For the vast majority, this was their first child, with Logan being the only ‘experienced’ dad, having had two children previously.

All participants identified their preferred gender identity as ‘male’ in the Demographic Questionnaire and referred to their partner using the gender pronouns ‘she/her’ during interviews. I therefore use these pronouns throughout this thesis, to reflect participants’ preferences, rather than assume gender normativity.

While this demographic composition of my sample is arguably a limitation of this dataset, my sample is reflective of the general methodological challenges of recruiting fathers for research (a challenge arguably exacerbated during the pandemic). Indeed, research suggests that fathers often do not volunteer to participate in research unless they are *named*, specifically, as the desired participants – a factor that is arguably indicative of the secondary positioning of fathers within many cultural contexts (with the gender-neutral term ‘parent’ generally being read as ‘mother’ in many cases – see Atkinson,

2017; McKay and Doucet, 2010). As such, although speaking to the experiences of a more diverse sample of expectant fathers is beyond the scope of this thesis, it nevertheless highlights the possibilities and potentials for incorporating expectant fathers more equitably into feminist, geographic, research. I return to this limitation in the Conclusion chapter of this thesis in proposing directions for future research.

Of the nine expectant fathers who participated in this research, most took part in all four of the interviews. However, due to the nature of longitudinal research design (as discussed previously) – and particularly pregnancy and early parenthood – some attrition occurred. Frank only participated in the initial interview (during the second trimester), though he did respond to follow-up communications and announced the birth of his child months later. Azri participated only in interviews during the pregnancy – we arranged a number of meeting times for a post-birth interview but were never able to meet (see Rahman et al., 2021, noting how the remote nature of online interviews potentially makes it easier to re-schedule last minute). Robbie and Denny were not able to participate in the second planned interview (during the third trimester), due to their babies arriving earlier than expected. However, they did participate in post-birth interviews, so we were able to revisit key experiences. Despite this attrition, the accounts of these participants are still empirically rich, , as the empirical chapters reveal.

3.6. Periodic In-Depth Interviews

Periodic, in-depth interviews were conducted with all nine participants, on a one-to-one basis, taking place over January 2021 – May 2022, conducted online via Zoom²¹ (see Archibald et al., 2019; Hanna, 2012 for benefits and concessions of video interviews, and Oliffe et al., 2021; Howlett, 2021 on use during the pandemic).

As a longitudinal study, the timing of data collection points was importantly theoretically informed, to allow for insight into changes over time to emerge (Baxter, 2016). Interviews therefore took place during the *second trimester* of pregnancy, during the *third trimester*, as *soon after the birth* as possible (typically 2-4 weeks post-birth, once participants had finished their paternity leave), along with a follow-up interview approximately 6-9 months later²². For John – the adopting father – his participation followed a similar structure as other participants, with an interview during Stage 2 of adoption (see Appendix G for adoption process roadmap) during Stage 3, as well as similar interviews as soon after the child's arrival as possible (post-transition), and follow-up – however, we also had an additional interview (at John's suggestion) when they were 'matched' with a child.

²¹ By the time of data collection, several months into the pandemic, most had experienced adaptations to remote working/socialising and all participants demonstrated familiarity with the platform, although during initial communications, I volunteered to talk them through this if they were not.

²² This varied from 5-months post-birth to 10 months. It was originally intended that these follow-up interviews take place closer to 3-months post-birth, however, this was, understandably, difficult to arrange with participants who were still adapting to parenthood.

This sequence of data collection points was particularly useful, being clearly understandable for participants, whilst also allowing for flexibility in participation – one interview over an approximately three-month period – which was intended to reduce the pressure and burden of the project (Tarrant et al., 2021; Buckle, 2021).

The second trimester interview explored participants’ experiences and ‘journey’ as an expectant father to date, including initial feelings about becoming a father, as well as key moments such as ultrasound scans (see Draper, 2002b)²³. The third trimester interview sought to capture participants’ growing sense of anticipation and connection to their future child, and preparations for their arrival – including changing composition to home (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Leinaweaver et al., 2017) – birth-preparation and negotiations of leave from work (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Twamley and Schober, 2019). The post-birth interview was designed to cover experiences of late pregnancy, the labour and birth: the immediate feeling/sensation of ‘becoming’ a father, early bonding/care interactions with the infant, and (where applicable) experiences of returning to work. The follow-up interview provided an opportunity to revisit participants’ thoughts and experiences discussed previously, reflecting on these to consolidate how their lives have actually changed, in particular the success of establishing a (new) healthy work-family balance and home-life routine (see Miller, 2010). Interview guides are attached as Appendix E. For transparency, when presenting empirical material from these interviews in my discussion chapters, I signpost which of the interviews this data derives from, in brackets at the end of the quote.

²³ Some participants came to the project during their third trimester, in which circumstances we arranged to do an initial interview early on to cover the second trimester experiences, and then a later one for the third trimester.

Interviews were broadly phenomenological in design (see Høffding and Martiny, 2016; Bevan, 2014), employing open questions about participants' lived experiences of becoming a father, using follow-up questions to generate detailed insight into their emotions and personal meaning about these experiences "in their own words" (Valentine, 2005: 111; Roulston and Choi, 2018; Vasquez-Tokos, 2017). They were necessarily semi-structured, allowing for fluidity of questioning to respond to participants' narratives; particularly imperative as pregnancy/parenthood are uniquely personal experiences (Jupp and Gallagher, 2013).

However, researching emotional life raises significant methodological conundrums of how to capture these emotions and experiences – especially when these are not our own; when the emotions and experiences may not be easily accessible to the researcher. Indeed, since the advent of emotional geographies, there have been questions of "how researchers [can] produce knowledge about the feelings of others" (Bondi, 2014: 44; Bondi et al., 2005). In my interviews therefore, I employed two key sensory interviewing strategies to help capture the more elusive, embodied and emotional dimensions of my participants' experiences (see Chadwick, 2017; Ellingson, 2017). This is especially since, as a woman and non-mother, I do not share these experiences with my participants.

The initial interview began with an elicitation-style exercise, where participants were asked to make – or bring – an image/object which captured their experience as an expectant father to date. This acted as a 'sensory prompt' (see Harris and Guillemin, 2012; Sparkes and Smith, 2012), designed to elicit further in-depth discussion (Henwood et al., 2018; Chadwick, 2017; Phoenix and Brannen, 2014), and to help invite participants to "communicate emotionally" (Bondi, 2005b: 443), using the image/object to (visually) express how they *feel* in relation to being an expectant father. Participants were given

some brief guiding instructions about this to help reduce anxiety/stress over ideas (Appendix E), but this was left intentionally open to encourage personal interpretation. Indeed, I was delighted with the range, with participants producing drawings to reflect their ‘role’ and bringing objects which were personal – and, indeed, somewhat ethereal, as demonstrated by Frank’s object, discussed in Section 6.5. I draw upon these within the empirical chapters of this thesis where useful (images shared with permission, and in an anonymised form).

Following this brief (though optional) exercise, interviews began with a broad, open-ended question asking participants to “Describe for me, in your own words, your ‘journey’ as an expectant father so far (you can use the image/object to help you)”. This provided an opportunity for participants to ‘soliloquise’ and emote their experience with minimal input from myself, providing space for them to highlight things which were particularly important to them (Dick, 2017; Longworth and Kingdon, 2011; Premberg et al., 2011). Throughout the rest of the interviews, I also employed a variety of verbal ‘sensory interviewing’ prompts as question-probes (Chadwick, 2017), such as “How did that make you *physically feel*?”, “What were you thinking/*feeling* at that time?”, or “What was that like emotionally [to be there]?”. These strategies were designed to centre and draw attention to emotions (and relatedly the body) as they emerged through expectant fathers’ narratives; including their significance to particular spaces, as well as encounters with other beings/materialities within these, and feelings which are more ephemeral (Ellingson, 2017; Chadwick, 2017), reflecting and capturing experiences examined in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

Consistent with phenomenological research design (see Englander, 2012), interviews lasted, on average one and a half hours, ranging from 52 minutes to over two hours, totalling 41 hours of recordings, and over 550 pages of text once transcribed, speaking to the depth of experiences. Additionally, Ollie also produced two solicited diary entries in between interviews as an additional ‘opt-in activity’²⁴. Since only Ollie participated in this activity, for coherency of narrative, and in the interest of space, I therefore do not provide a detailed overview of these methods here (for methodological discussions of solicited diaries, see Morrison, 2012b; Latham, 2010 – for implementation of solicited diaries in working with fathers, see Menzel, 2018).

3.6.1. Zoom Interviews: Intimate Spatialities, Absent-Presences and Blurred Boundaries of ‘Field’ Space

Qualitative longitudinal research commonly emphasises how the prolonged nature of contact with participants can facilitate intimate research relationships, facilitating the ability for them to share detailed aspects of their lives (Birch and Miller, 2000). However, interviews are also importantly shaped by their *spatial* context, in particular for ensuring participants feel comfortable and at-ease (Longhurst, 2010; Sin, 2003; Elwood and Martin, 2000). Indeed, the pandemic saw a surge of literature querying notions of the ‘field’ (see Eggeling, 2022; Howlett, 2021; Silverman, 2020); although feminist geographers have long contested assumptions of the field as a coherently identifiable

²⁴ This was an additional ‘opt-in’ activity, intended to provide further insight into expectant fathering, explained in-detail in the *Advanced* Information Sheet (Appendix H) – see also Appendix I for the Diary Consent Form.

space (Hiemstra and Billo, 2017). They have instead situated field sites as fundamentally ‘leaky spaces’ (Cupples and Kindon, 2003, cited in de Silva and Ghandi, 2018), comprising relational ‘spaces of betweenness’ (Katz, 1994), and ultimately deconstructing assumptions of ‘here’ of ‘there’ (Till, 2001, cited in Howlett, 2021). Nevertheless, the spatialities of these field spaces were particularly interesting during the pandemic.

For example, although interviews were arranged at a date/time that was convenient for participants, I had little input into where participants would be, with many joining the Zoom whilst sitting at their dining tables, in a spare room, or on the sofa – although some interviews took place whilst participants were at work. This certainly blurred the boundaries of intimacy within the interview space – not least because *I* was interviewing people from the private space of my bedroom office. However, this also had important implications for the privacy of the interview encounter itself (Self, 2021; Silverman, 2020). Due to the focused lens of Zoom, I could not wholly guarantee that the interview was being conducted on a one-to-one basis, as I could not see if someone else was in the room with them. On rare occasions, participants’ partners would walk past them, or colleagues would engage them in (brief) conversations. When asking questions about participants’ relationships – see Appendix E– I always reiterated the confidential nature of the interview, but felt aware that their partner *could* be in the room with them, off-screen; something I would be aware of if I was actually *there* (Silverman, 2020). This created a paradox of privacy within the intimate space of the interview encounter.

The Zoom lens was not always a barrier, however, with the video nature providing opportunities for ethnographic observations, importantly, on participants' terms, only allowing me to see things they wanted me to. During interviews, participants would sometimes take me on a 'tour' of the space they were in, carrying their tablet/phone (and by extension me) about, turning their camera to show me artefacts of expectancy – including boxes and clothes, packed away in cupboards (as I discuss in Chapter 6) – or showing me pictures/videos on their phones as moments beyond the interview (see Kindon, 2003 on participatory video).

Zoom thus provided a field space which was both intimate, yet separate; my simultaneous presence in the interview – nodding along with the customary 'mhms' and 'ahhs' (and, I find, usually gasps and giggles) to signal listening and engagement – was contrasted by my physical absence from the space participants were in. The liminality of this space, its in-between nature, seemed particularly conducive for participants feeling able to talk openly about their experiences and share their feelings/vulnerabilities about becoming a father, particularly during the pandemic, provided especially due to the pseudo-anonymity this space provided (see also Oliffe et al., 2021 on remote interviewing and researching sensitive, emotional topics with men). We were together, but we were also apart, and in some ways there was potential for us to never really have met, with the possibility for participants to keep their cameras off if they wanted (though none of them did). Through interviews I got to know my participants quite intimately, gaining detailed insight into their lives (Birch and Miller, 2000) – I felt close to them, but I also remained effectively a stranger to them; someone to whom they could talk to openly within the space-time of the interview, but who they would likely never actually meet in their 'normal' life (many living several hours' distance from me).

Many participants commented how much they valued being able to talk about their experiences, particularly during the pregnancy because there was “a lot of anxiety and because we couldn’t really see our families, [so] having the opportunity to talk about it, about the situation, the pregnancy and everything was really cathartic” (comment from Ollie at the end of our final interview). In fact, one participant, Tom, even described how when he was feeling “particularly stressed and anxious about things” his partner even suggested he arrange another interview with me. Although there is a particular feminist critique here over Tara trying to facilitate an opportunity for Tom to talk, and me embodying the role of ‘sympathetic female listener’ to a male interviewee – and the gendered emotion work involved in this (McDowell, 1997: 392) – what is more significant here is how it highlights the important need for spaces of empathy and listening as a process of care-fullness.

Indeed, a central concern of this research was seeking to provide a safe space for participants to talk openly about their experiences as expectant fathers, and to have these experiences, their emotions and feelings acknowledged and heard, reflective of my framework of feminist care ethics (Branicki, 2020). Thus, whilst this research provides unique, cutting-edge insight into the emotional experiences of expectant fathering during the pandemic, perhaps more importantly from an ethical perspective, it provided participants with an opportunity for someone to bear witness to their experiences, to be there and simply *listen* to them (Averett, 2021). As Irigaray (2008) argues, listening requires more than just simply hearing and acknowledging the words used by participants, but rather requires a fundamental process of being open to the voices and experiences of others; it thus involves the perceptive process of hearing *mixed with feeling*, in order to properly *hear* the emotions of the other (Hart, 2021) – which I discuss further in the next section.

In interviews, we talked about participants' uncertainties about the immediate future, anxieties of COVID, frustrations with work, etc., with the interview embodying a much needed (and arguably therapeutic) space of human connection during the loneliness/isolation of the pandemic (Kobakhidze et al., 2021). Potentially, participants' openness may have been further fostered by my identity as a woman, previous research indicating that men are often more likely to discuss emotional experiences with a female researcher, perhaps due to feeling less pressure to conform to standards of hegemonic masculinities (see Chapter 4).

3.6.2. Feminist Reflections on Empathy, Care and Emotional Reflexivity During Pandemic Research with Men

There is often an important emphasis on empathy, rapport and listening within feminist research (Averett, 2021; McDowell, 1997). However, empathy is often conceptualised as being founded upon *shared* experience. Yet, despite not being a parent, I often felt intensely and reacted strongly to my participants' experiences. I would therefore instead consider empathy more to be a fundamental process of opening oneself up to being affected, emotionally/bodily, to the experiences of another, providing the potential for blurring preconceived boundaries of (differing) positionalities, overcoming dichotomies of self/other within interview encounters.

Throughout this research, I adopt what Ellingson (2017) – following La Jevic and Springgay (2008) – refers to as an '*ethic of being-with*', embracing the emotional/embodied *intersubjectivities* and *differences* which abound within my research encounters. This framework draws upon the work of feminist cultural theorist Ahmed (2000) and phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1968), firstly through its understanding of ethics – in particular *feminist* ethics – as a “question of how one encounters others *as other*” (Ahmed, 2000: 138) and secondly by outlining how ‘being-

with’ emerges not (only) through common experience/characteristics (i.e., gender), but rather through an openness of the self *to* the other and to their/our vulnerabilities; emerging through the imbricated, reciprocal *intersubjective* nature of the encounter (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) between researcher and participant (see Ellingson, 2017: 46; La Jevic and Springgay, 2008 for overviews). I see this as a fundamental process of constructing *spaces of betweenness* (Katz, 1992), recognising that individuals are constantly negotiating multiple subject positions (and power relations) and thus seeking to overcome the spatial binaries of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ by creating spaces where similarities and differences can be explored and reflexively embraced (Tarrant, 2014b; Sin, 2003).

Resonating with feminist, poststructuralist standpoints, this ‘ethic of being-with’ framework is premised on the epistemological view that, as researchers, we do not “obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are part *of* the world”, always already embroiled within encounters with others, never purely or objectively attached from them (Barad, 2007: 185, cited in Ellingson, 2017: 45; see also Haraway 1988 for a critique of the ‘God trick’). It therefore offers a way to attend to how (qualitative) researchers may use *themselves* as research instruments in order to ‘see’ the world through somebody else’s eyes via processes of ethical relationality (Ellingson, 2017; Gilbert, 2001, cited in Dickson-Swift et al. 2009). Indeed, the very notion of *intersubjectivity* – one of the central tenets of emotional/embodied life outlined in the previous chapter – presumes that *individuals differ* and therefore that it always requires imagination to *go beyond* one’s own experiences (Råsmark et al. 2014: 10), *holding sameness and difference in productive tension* (Ellingson, 2017:22). This demonstrates how ‘shopping list’ positionality denotes a rather ‘thin’ reflexive praxis; as a feminist Geographer, I follow Wilkinson and Wilkinson (2022) in embracing the messiness of

positionality, recognising that my relational positioning in the field is always fluid and dynamic, which may provide unique spaces of betweenness to emerge (Hiemstra and Billo, 2017) in fruitful, but unexpected ways.

Indeed, through the interviews (and indeed analysis), I felt I developed a deep emotional (and in many ways embodied) connection with my participants, an experience which is particularly interesting given my positionality as a young woman and non-mother: I have never been (nor tried to get) pregnant. I don't know, nor can I truly imagine, what that must feel like, to be growing a life inside my body, just as my participants could not (a point which I return to later in my analysis). Yet I often found myself getting goosebumps at the profoundness of the experiences participants were describing, viscerally reacting to the sensations they were trying to convey, for example, getting tingling in my fingers when they talked about foetal movement, or tears in my eyes at the love/connection they were experiencing. In other words, I could often *feel*, quite palpably, their excitement.

3.7. Social Media Data: Extant Narratives of Pandemic Parenting

The pandemic heralded a unique period for expectant parenting, with profound ramifications on the spatialities of expectancy. Throughout the design and execution of the interview phase of this project, government/institutional restriction policies meant that many expectant fathers were largely *not* going to places they might ordinarily expect, heightening fathers' feelings of stress and anxiety, along with implications for the fulfilment of their perceived 'role' (Menzel, 2022 – see Chapter 4).

The above interview narratives are therefore contextualised in this thesis amidst those of a number of expectant mothers/fathers in the UK, reported in online news articles between March-December 2020, and shared via social media posts as part of the #ButNotMaternity Campaign²⁵. These latter narratives were posted over several months particularly between September-November 2020. Additionally, further narratives were gathered from an anonymous forum for ‘paternal/fatherly feelings’²⁶ – also on a popular social media platform – posted throughout 2021. These data provided powerful, emotional insight into the impact of restrictions on expectant parents, thus offering a valuable precursor to interviews by beginning my immersion and building empathy for their emotions during the pandemic.

Importantly, narratives were only collected if they made explicit *reference* to expectant fathers’ experiences. As such, some of the experiences conveyed derive from the second-hand accounts of mothers – arguably a limitation of the dataset. Indeed, interestingly – although perhaps not surprisingly – it was only mothers who made actual posts as part of the #ButNotMaternity campaign, with fathers’ accounts usually being fairly ‘hidden’ in comments or made anonymously through the ‘fatherly feelings forum’, highlighting the gendered nature of these online parenting spaces (Pedersen and Lupton, 2018; Madge and O’Connor, 2005).

²⁵ This online campaign encouraged new/expectant mothers to write #ButNotMaternity on their bodies, in protest of the emotional distress caused by institutional restrictions to maternity care spaces, with many parents – both mothers and fathers – also sharing their emotional experiences of these restrictions.

²⁶ Synonyms used to anonymise.

Data were gathered through manual copy-and-pasting of narratives from online sources into separate word documents for analysis (see Mayr and Weller, 2017: 108 on this as a valid technique). News articles were searched using key phrases (including *pandemic*, *pregnancy*, *COVID/coronavirus*, *expectant parents/fathers*), and social media by scrolling through the public hashtag #ButNotMaternity over one day (10th December 2020), providing a snapshot of posts that were visible on that day (see Gunnarsson Lorentzen and Nolin, 2017 on algorithms and problems of sampling and completeness with social media data). The newspaper search yielded 11 online news articles from both local and national sources across the political spectrum – including BBC News Online, The Guardian and Daily Mail²⁷ – presenting a mix of accounts from individual parents and parenting couples, eliciting 33 stories. A total of 25 narratives were gathered from public posts/comments from #ButNotMaternity, along with a further 35 posts from ‘fatherly feelings’.

These various narratives varied in length, with some providing extremely detailed accounts, describing fathers having PTSD²⁸ and mothers being alone in hospital, crying on the phone to their partner, and even experiences of being told they had lost their baby during check-ups. Though they may represent rather extreme (and largely negative) cases, they still meaningfully capture the raw, emotional experiences of expectant parents during the pandemic, which often resonated strongly with others who viewed them shown through the comments and reactions.

²⁷ For anonymity, local sources are not named.

²⁸ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which can be diagnosed following experience of birth.

Importantly, these are all ‘extant data’ “created independent of any intervention, influence or prompts by the researcher...[with] no direct contact with users” (Salmons, 2017: 182). They were all accessible through public – rather than private or ‘closed’ internet spaces, as with the Facebook groups discussed above for recruitment – with some posts receiving 10,000+ reactions, making clear their public visibility. Moreover, given the nature of the various sources of these data, these parents arguably *want* their stories to be heard (de Boise, 2018), importantly being shared in a format they felt comfortable with: in the news, as part of an online campaign or anonymously. However, to protect the privacy of these individuals, the exact wording of original data has been slightly adjusted (without altering meaning) to avoid them being ‘traced back’ and potentially identified (see Beninger, 2017). All potentially-identifying information has been removed – although the nature of some sources meant that much demographic information was not available, particularly as some data were posted anonymously. It is not stated whether a quotation is from a news article, social media post or comment. As with interview participants, any names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

3.8. Data Analysis

Earlier in this chapter, I acknowledged how feminist tenets of ethical research praxis had informed the design and practice of this research, grounded fundamentally on the feminist principals of empathy, rapport and listening (Averett, 2021; McDowell, 1997). These principals were also important in undertaking my data analysis, which, as a feminist emotional geographer, I regard as a deeply emotional process (Holtan et al., 2014). I now turn to a discussion of how these data were analysed, outlining how they have influenced the discussion themes of my empirical chapters, beginning with the process of transcribing interview data.

3.8.1. *Emotional Immersion through Transcription*

Data transcription involves transferring spoken words captured in a recording into written text on a page. In other words, it is inherently a process of *translating* and interpreting meaning “between two vastly different modes of communication” (Ellingson, 2017: 137). Far from being a neutral, objective process, transcription therefore involves a series of significant (epistemological) choices about *how* to translate this meaning and what is worth conveying. As such, it may be understood as constituting an initial phase of data analysis (Cope, 2010; Longhurst, 2010). However, it is a commonly overlooked process, rarely examined in-detail within research outputs.

As part of its recording function, through the University license, Zoom can provide an automated transcription service (using Otter.ai), however, it was felt that using this service would mean missing out on an important first-stage of data (pre)analysis, which allows for deep immersion in the data (Cope, 2010). Interviews were therefore fully transcribed by myself, aided by the voice-recognition software Dragon NaturallySpeaking, which has been ‘trained’ to recognise my individual speech patterns, pronunciation and intonation, honed over previous projects (Menzel 2018). This process entailed what Dunn (2016) describes as ‘parrotting’: listening to the original interview recording (through headphones) and recording myself repeating back the dialogue, allowing me to adjust content as I went, anonymising the transcript and including non-verbal cues such as laughter (see Soilevuo-Grønnerød, 2004) or participants’ embodied reactions, enriching the transcript.

Whilst some have situated this technique as ‘embodied transcription’ (Ellingson, 2017; Perrier and Kirkby, 2013; Brooks, 2010), providing a sensorially immersive and visceral re-experiencing of the interview encounter (Hawkins, 2017), I would argue that it better constitutes a fully *emotional* form of transcription. It provided a means of developing a deep connection to my participants, their stories and experiences through a sense of empathy – allowing myself to be openly affected by their words, entangling them with my own embodied experiences of speaking, contributing to an ethical sense of ‘being-with’ them and their stories beyond the interview encounter itself (Ellingson, 2017; Bondi, 2014). By ‘speaking’ my participants’ words, I was opened to a heightened awareness of the emotional depth of their experiences through the (emotional) reactions/thoughts their stories viscerally evoked *in me*; how I *felt* speaking from *their* perspective (cf. Perrier and Kirkby, 2013). Moreover, it elicited a distinct blurring of identity, with me speaking participants’ words almost *as if they were my own*, allowing me to physically feel, or at least sense, what they felt when recounting their experiences (Reed and Towers, 2021). This allowed for a further blurring of positionality as discussed earlier, for example, describing what ‘I’ could feel as ‘I’ felt the baby moving inside ‘my’ partner’s body, and getting goosebumps at recalling how it felt to feel them pushing back (see Chapter 5). I even had dreams in transcription notation, further blurring the perceived (conscious) boundaries of field space!

3.8.2. *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: A Framework*

Following transcription, interview data were then analysed – with the assistance of NVivo12 – following an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework, consistent with my methodological design (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Smith et al., 2009), and, as I will show in this section, my feminist philosophy. IPA entails reading, making

notes and identifying themes for *each* participant, ensuring that themes not only emerge from the data itself, but importantly ‘do justice’ to the individual experiences of participants (Smith et al., 2009). It thus offers a framework of deep, emotional immersion into individual experiences, which was particularly useful in aiding my immersion into the life-worlds of my participants – emotionally, fully, and empathetically – particularly important as I do not share these life experiences.

Importantly, within IPA, the emphasis is on *interpretation*, seeking to understand participants’ experiences, by getting ‘as close to’ their view as possible in order to understand ‘what it is like’, whilst recognising that accessing these experiences is “always partial and complex” (Larkin et al., 2006: 104), resonating with feminist epistemologies of knowledge production. Indeed, as Larkin et al. (2006) argues:

“our success as phenomenologists will not ultimately be dependent upon our revealing the ‘pure’ experience of a participant; it will be dependent upon our being prepared to do the most sensitive and responsive job we can, given our inherent epistemological and methodological limitations.”

(Larkin et al., 2006: 108)

IPA enables “detailed examination of individual lived experience” and understanding of “how individuals...[make] sense of that experience” (Frost et al., 2010: 445; Charlick et al. 2016). It therefore advocates approaching analysis on a case-by-case basis, undertaking full analytical interpretation of their unique experiences before moving on to the next case (Connerty et al., 2016), in order to allow full immersion into a participant’s individual lifeworld and to facilitate “data intimacy” (Saldana, 2011: 95) – extending that already developed through the transcription process (Cope, 2010).

My analysis involved conducting an initial re-reading of a participant's initial interview transcript, making descriptive notes on meaning of participants' stories using NVivo's annotation function, allowing interpretive notes/comments to be directly attached to specific segments of text (Saillard, 2011), documenting my initial interpretations of meaning (Connerty et al., 2016). This was then similarly undertaken for subsequent interviews for that participant, allowing for deep understanding of their individual changing/evolving experiences as an expectant father over time, and developing a list of "emergent [inductive] themes for the same participant" (Braun and Clarke, 2021: 41, parentheses in original). After repeating this process for every participant, and each of their interview transcripts, I then condensed these initial themes into 'super-ordinate' themes *across* cases (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Charlick et al., 2016) which form the basis of my coding framework. Interview transcripts were then read through again to code segments of text into these 'nodes'. These themes form the scaffolding of my discussion chapters, visualised in the (nested) Hierarchical Chart in Figure 2.

As an analytical framework, IPA thus resonates nicely, in my view, with central epistemological concerns of feminist research praxis. I strongly feel that my feminist emphasis on empathy has been vital to understanding my participants' life-worlds, and I hope that my interpretations of their narratives –which I have had the privilege to have been shared with me – are evident by them being faithful and true. However, to confirm the trustworthiness of my interpretations and presentations of this data, I present here a word cloud of my data (Figure 3), which reveals core themes which emerged in my interviews with expectant fathers (and which are present in the focus and organisation of my empirical chapters).

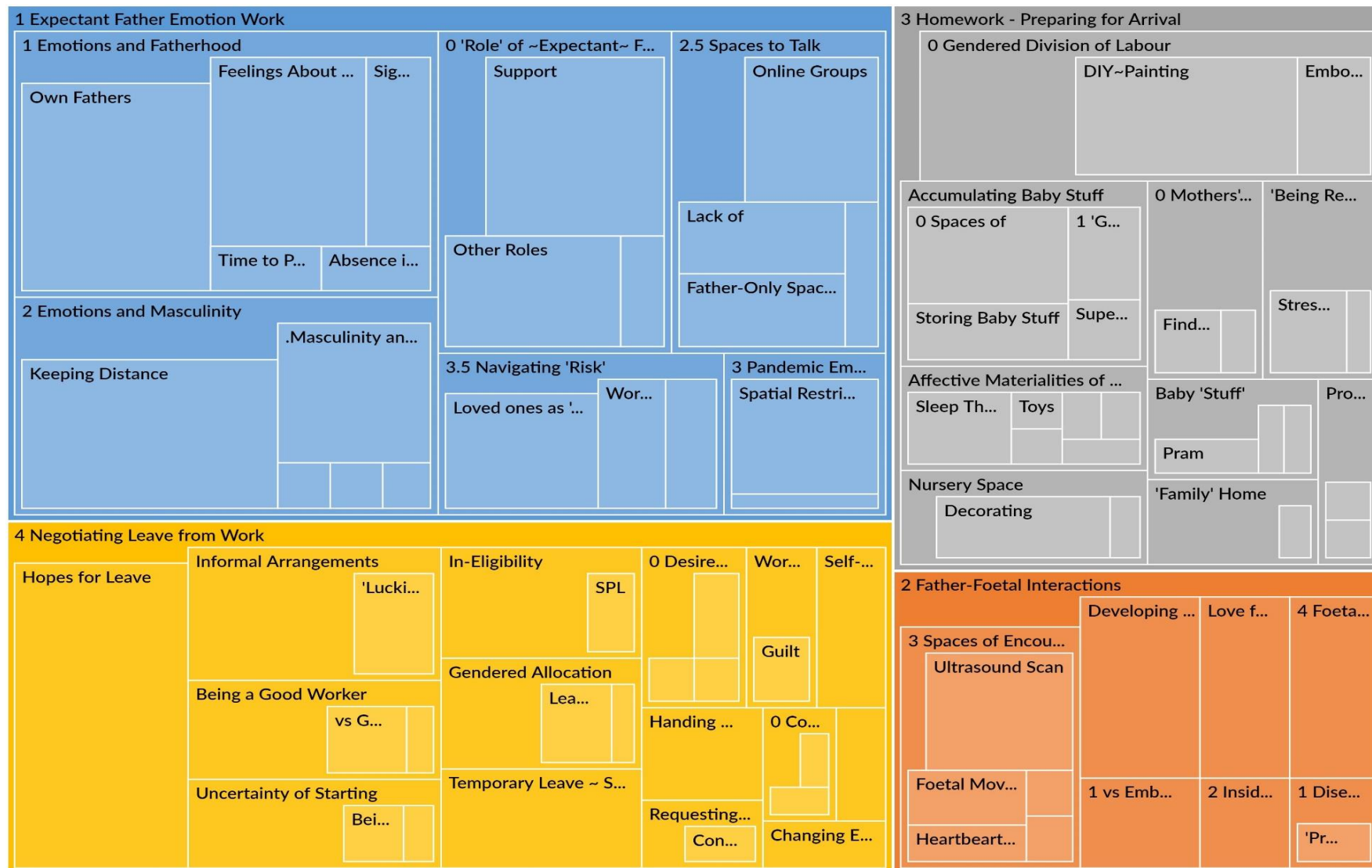


Figure 2: A Nested Hierarchical Coding Chart Visualising Codes Used in Data Analysis. Constructed Using NVivo12.

(with men) during times of crisis, outlining the value of empathy and *listening* as research tools, grounded in a fundamentally feminist ethic of care praxis (Averett, 2021) – a framework which has rarely been applied to seeking to understand men’s experiences.

In the chapters that follow, I draw upon these rich, emotional narratives from nine expectant fathers, gathered through periodic in-depth, semi-structured interviews, as outlined in this chapter. I show through these chapters the emotional richness of their experiences, captured in both interviews and social media data.

Importantly – and with my foundational, feminist, aim of ‘giving voice’ to expectant fathers, as a largely ‘hidden’ and overlooked group within research (specifically within geographical literature on family/parenting) – I rely heavily on quotes from my participants, rather than summarising their experiences myself. This is because these are not *my* stories; these are *their* stories, the stories of my participants, and these stories are very important, emotional and powerful. I wish, through my empirical chapters for people to *see* and hear these stories, and to begin to understand *what it is like to be an expectant father in various spaces/places*.

3.9.1 Empirical Chapter Outline

The Analysis chapters of this thesis are structured to reflect how the experiences of expectant fatherhood evolve over time, whilst also revealing the intensely scalar nature of these experiences, beginning with the close, personal/individual scale and extrapolating outwards to wider spaces.

Chapter 4 explores expectant fathers’ (self)management of emotional expression, and the (self)-imposed emotional distance to protect themselves from becoming too attached to their future child during the early stages of expectancy, when there was much uncertainty.

Chapter 5 examines expectant fathers' encounters with their unborn child, growing within the womb of their partner's pregnant body. I demonstrate how various (inter)embodied interactions between expectant father, pregnant mother and unborn child constitute anticipatory acts of love/intimacy and 'doing family' with foetuses (cf. Meah, 2017).

I build on this focus on intimacy and sensory encounters in Chapter 6, where I explore expectant fathers' performance of 'home-work' (Leinaweaver et al., 2017) in anticipation of the arrival of a child, paying particular attention to the accumulation, storage and multi-sensory interactions with various 'baby things'; including clothes, toys and care equipment as part of pre-parenting enactments of 'good parenting'. I analyse how the affective properties of 'baby things' elicit a sense of proximity/closeness, and how sensory interactions with these various actants – which become inscribed onto homescapes, reflecting changing material landscape of home – mobilised expectant fathers' feelings of connection to their future child, bringing forth future imaginings of caregiving within spaces of the home, and ultimately a sense of identity as a father; bringing forth future imaginings of caregiving within the home.

Keeping with the theme of performances/enactments of 'good parenting', Chapter 7 explores fathers' emotional negotiation of leave from work as the arrival of their child looms closer, interrogating the (often competing) demands of workplace and home responsibilities for expectant fathers and expectations to be 'good workers' and 'good fathers' – conflicts which are spatially manifest, and which culminate in the 'falling back into gender' (Miller, 2010) and reification of traditional gender roles (Menzel, under review).

In a thesis on the transition to parenting, it may seem remiss to not explore fathers' experiences of labour/birth – indeed, we did discuss anticipations and experiences of this at length in our interviews. However, for reasons of space – and to maintain a focus on *expectant* fathering, I do not include an extended discussion of this here. I instead end each chapter by 'arriving at arrival', to articulate how the empirical focus of each chapter is useful for

understanding the emotio-spatialities which comprise participants experiences of becoming fathers, highlighting the significance of attending to these experiences in order to understanding how expectant fathers may connect with – or feel excluded from – the parenting team. In other words, these sections situate how, through these emotional, and spatial practices, expectant fathers anticipate and attempt to build an emotional bond with their future child, and, subsequently, how the evolving meaning and identities of (expectant) *father* emerges and ‘becomes’ in particular spaces, at overlapping spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017).

4 Putting on a Brave Face: The Gendered Emotion Work of Expectant Fathering

4.1. Introduction

This thesis is concerned with examining the everyday emotional geographies of expectant fathering, which has heretofore not been subject to geographical consideration. Extending extant scholarship on the geographies of fathering reviewed in Chapter 2 – in especially Aitken’s conception of fathering – it situates, empirically, *expectant* fathering as an emotional, embodied *spatial* practice, one which is ‘negotiated, contested, reworked and resisted differently in different spaces’ (Aitken, 2009: 230). As I highlighted in the Literature Review of Chapter 2, this understanding of fathering has important connotations of emotion work²⁹ (Macht, 2020a, 2017), which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, are importantly imbricated within space/place (Davidson et al., 2005, Anderson and Smith, 2001), mediated over a number of important, overlapping, spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017).

Building upon multi-disciplinary accounts of masculinity and emotion reviewed in Chapter 2, this chapter examines the performance of emotional work by expectant fathers during pregnancy/expectancy. It draws together extant debates on the ‘stickiness’ of emotion, hegemonic ideals of masculinity and emotional geographies to extend Macht’s (2020a) notion of ‘emotional bordering’, by revealing the geographies through which emotions (and expectations of emotional management) become ‘stuck’ onto expectant fathers’ bodies, and the formation of their identities. It thus builds also on an Ahmed-inspired conceptualisation of

²⁹ In this chapter, I use the term ‘emotion work’ – rather than ‘emotional labour’ – to distinguish between informal performances of emotion management dictated by ‘feeling rules’ as opposed to formalised forms of emotion management entailed in neoliberal and capitalist systems, such as through the performance of paid or volunteer work (Hochschild, 1983).

masculinity as ‘sticky’ (Berggren, 2014), a conception which posits that emotions may become attached to objects, bodies – and importantly, spaces – (Ahmed, 2004), and how, through their repeated enactment, ‘cultural codes’ and ‘feeling rules’ (Hochschild, 1983) of masculinity become ‘stuck’ onto bodies (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Berggren, 2014). This gives rise to a discrepancy between actual emotions, versus their display, with the expectation for men to demonstrate emotional control, encapsulated by the cultural expectation that ‘boys don’t cry’ (McQueen, 2017). Indeed, men’s emotional expression is particularly subject to close social scrutiny (ibid.; de Boise and Hearn, 2017) entailing performances of emotion work which is spatially manifest, since “men perform emotional labour to suit the emotional demands of the spaces they enter and interact with” (Giazitzoglu, 2019: 68).

My focus in this chapter is on the scale of the individual (Bluman et al., 2013), attending to how performances of emotion work are largely self-imposed via conceptions of participants’ ‘roles’ as expectant fathers (Das and Hodkinson, 2020). However, I argue how these are also, importantly, navigated and reinforced at broader spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017; Valentine, 2013). This is particularly through spatial interactions of inter-personal relationships (McQueen, 2022, 2017), and societal expectations around masculinity (Elliot, 2016), especially in relation to (traditional) forms of fathering such as breadwinning and emotional stoicism (Meah and Jackson, 2016). This negotiation of emotions in different spaces and spatial contexts is then explored further in subsequent chapters.

Through this chapter, I draw upon, primarily, the voices/experiences of my interview participants – thus serving the secondary aim of introducing the reader to my interview participants, giving important context to their emotional habitus (Burkitt, 2014) as expectant fathers. These narratives are intermingled with the broader experiences of other expectant mothers/fathers during the coronavirus pandemic, captured via social media posts/comments and online news stories. These social media data are significant not only for contextualising

the experiences of my interview participants within the broader context of expectant parenting (and specifically expectant fathering) during the pandemic, but also for highlighting the general *silencing* of expectant fathers, and particularly their emotions across society more broadly. Though this silencing is largely through the performance of emotional work and (self)expectation of conforming to hegemonic forms of masculinity through emotional control and stoicism (Macht, 2020a, McQueen, 2017), this is also through the secondary positioning of expectant fathers within pregnancy/expectancy; evinced especially through the exclusion of expectant fathers – and specifically their non-pregnant bodies – from the spaces of pregnancy/expectancy through national lockdown restrictions (Menzel, 2022). This explication of silencing thus provides a further methodological rationale for foregrounding the actual voices of expectant fathers through interview quotes in the remainder of my analysis chapters.

In examining the emotion work which comprises expectant fathering, I begin this chapter by situating, empirically, the fundamental entanglements between emotions, masculinity and fathering. I do this firstly through critical interrogation of how participants in this study conceptualised their primary ‘role’ during pregnancy, with many describing this as one of support. I highlight how fulfilling this role entails the significant performance of emotion work, with expectant fathers having to manage (and indeed, conceal) their own emotions in order to be a supportive partner. I then take this further to secondly highlight how these (self)expectations of emotion management are reified across generations through participants own experiences of being fathered (Jessee and Adamsons, 2018; Brannen and Nilsen, 2006), revealing the inter-generational mediation (and contestation) of emotion work within (expectant fathering). This is even as many participants sought to resist and contest hegemonic forms of masculinity, in favour of more emotional ones as part of intimate, involved fathering ideals and societal discourse of the ‘new man’.

I demonstrate how such performances of emotion work begin from the very moment of pregnancy confirmation, through taking a pregnancy test (Draper, 2002a), but which were especially heightened during the coronavirus pandemic due to ‘visitor’ restriction policies within maternity care spaces (Menzel, 2022), as well as heightened risks of workplaces; interrogating the substantial emotion and spatial navigation of these anxieties in the expectation for expectant fathers to be able to ‘deal with it’ (ibid.) – an expectation mediated by different spaces and places.

4.2. The ‘Role’ of Expectant Fathering

Many participants in this research situated their ‘role’ as expectant fathers as being primarily one of providing support for their partner, particularly in the early stages of pregnancy (Widarsson et al, 2015; Åsenhed et al., 2013). This is through demonstrating (emotional) pre-parental commitment to ‘being there’ as a father by ‘being there’ for one’s partner during pregnancy/expectancy, thus demonstrating commitment to parenting/family life. In other words, the caring for one’s partner acts as an extension of caring for one’s future baby (Hamper and Nash, 2021; Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

...it’s not about me, it’s about being a supportive husband...Because she’s [my wife] the most important thing

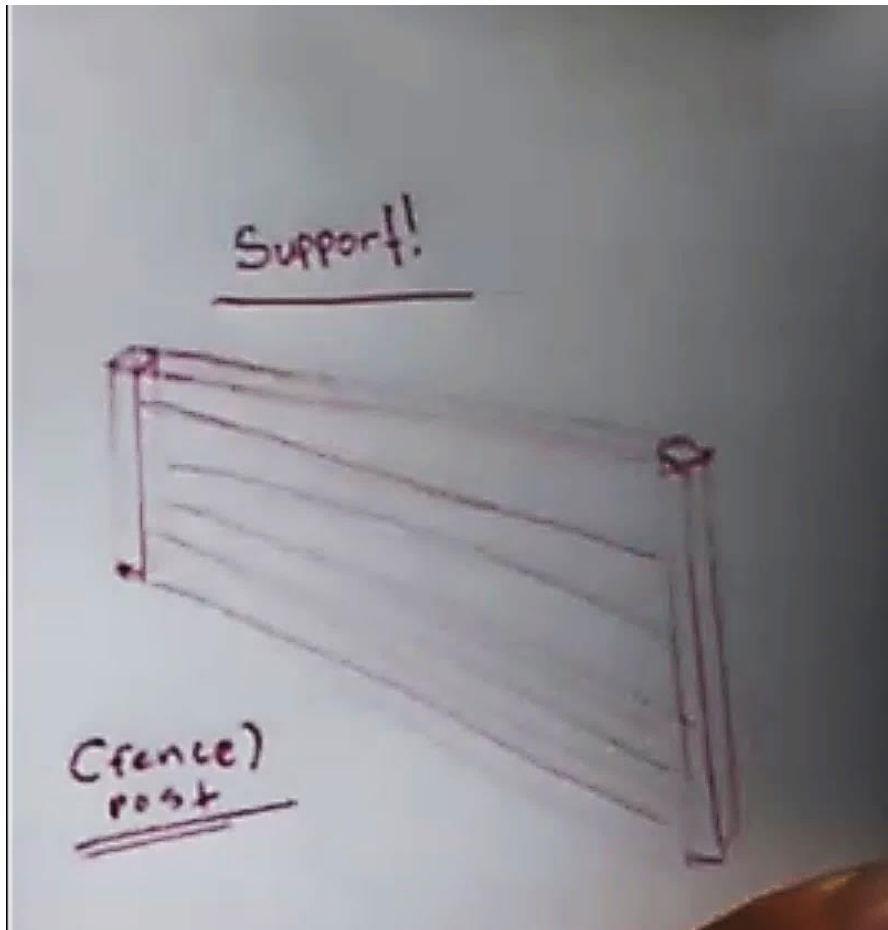
Denny (second trimester)

I see my role very much as (short pause) primarily for support. So obviously is a massive deal for me to become a dad, but I’m very aware that it is Beth who’s carrying the baby – and the things, the physical changes and you know hormonal changes, emotional changes are mainly being felt by her. So, primarily, it’s for me to make sure that I’m doing my bit to help Beth have what she needs. To keep her happy and healthy and then – as a result of that – same for the baby.

Ollie (second trimester)

This emphasis on providing support is to partially acknowledge the primacy of their partner, and her physical, embodied experience of pregnancy and relatedly bodily changes (discussed further in Chapter 5). While this may, arguably perpetuate cultural assumptions of mothers as primary caregivers – with fathers taking on more secondary, supportive roles in caregiving (Longhurst, 2017; Aitken, 2000) – it also seeks to reflect anticipatory forms of intimate, involved fatherhood (Dermott, 2008).

Indeed, as part of our creative exercise, Azri sketched an image of a fence which, for him, encapsulated his responsibility for the provision of support for his partner Aila during pregnancy, emphasising the significance of this role for expectant fathers.



first thing that came to mind was sort of like, like a prop or like, something supportive.

Azri (second trimester)

Though having some potentially physical connotations of support/caregiving, Azri's image resonates strongly with Hodkinson and Das' (2021) conception of new/expectant fathers' experience being heavily underpinned by the communicative metaphor of embodying a 'pillar of strength'; an unemotional 'rock', able to cope with their own anxieties/concerns in order to provide unwavering support and reassurance to one's partner (Menzel, 2022). Indeed, although this responsibility to be supportive may be equally significant for female/non-binary partners, the metaphor of being a 'pillar of support' is highly gendered, imbued with discursive assumptions of hegemonic displays of masculinity (ibid.; Hodkinson and Das, 2021; Das and Hodkinson, 2020). This is especially through its association with strength, impermeability, protection, (self)control and emotional discipline (Dolan and Coe, 2011).

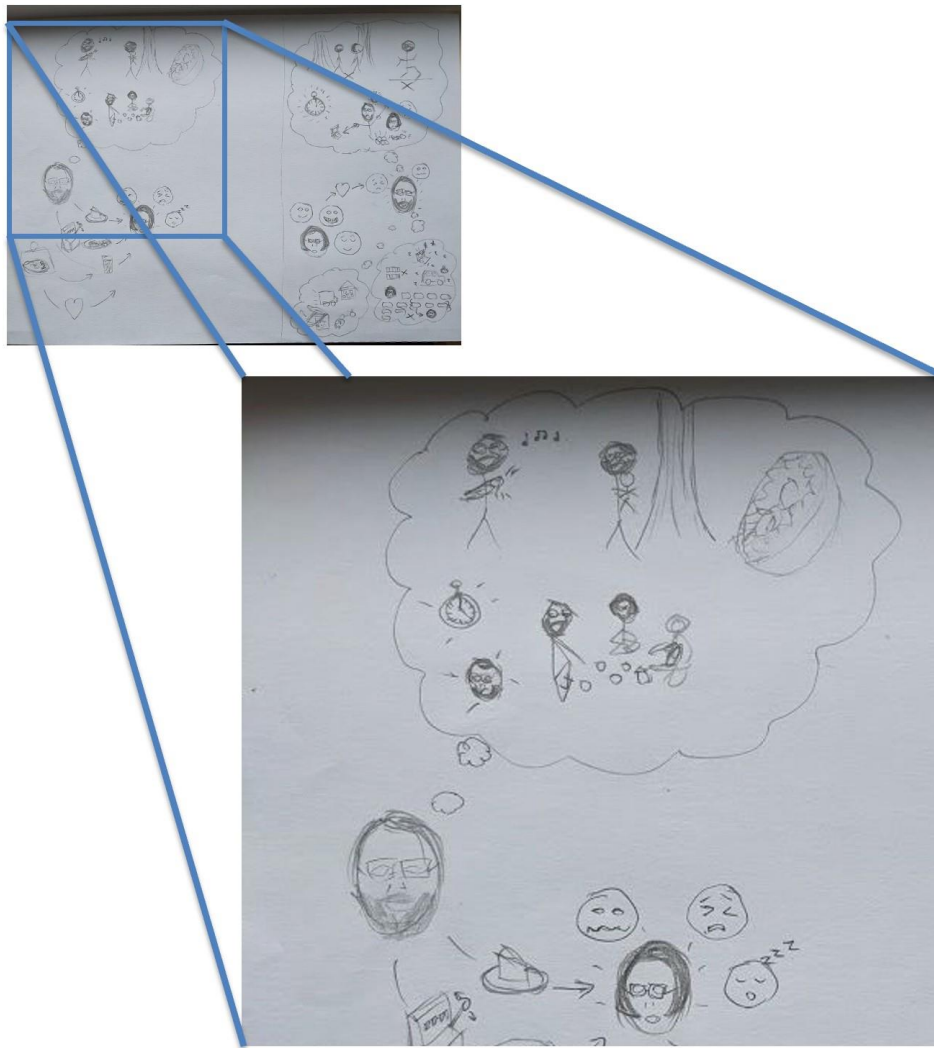
However, in striving to fulfil their supportive role, there are significant implications for expectant fathers' performance of gendered emotion work during pregnancy; work which is navigated in different spaces (cf. Aitken, 2009). This was illustrated especially by Tom in his creative exercise, where he sought to capture various moments of needing to provide support for his partner Tara (Widarsson et al, 2015; Åsenhed et al., 2013). He explained how the left-hand side of his drawing reflects when Tara is feeling particularly down/anxious about the pressures/demands of raising a child (depicted bottom left); in response to which, Tom describes various tactics to bolster Tara's happiness. This was sometimes through the provision of food, navigated against the variability of what Tara feels able to eat on a particular day, represented by Tom's illustration of a fruit machine, representative of the lottery of navigating what Tara would feel interested and able to eat, as well as navigating what food would hold the most 'love value' (similarly see Meah, 2017 on how fathers 'do love' towards their child through food).



I was trying to represent the different things.... Yeah, how I'm feeling at various points and kind of thoughts and worries at different points...often Tara will be feeling tired or stressed or worried about things and my role is kind of supporting her and trying to be kind of positive and upbeat about things...So there's little diagrams – there's me providing cake. The next ones like a meal... just general sort of love and support, as she's, you know, feeling tired and feeling sick and stuff

Tom (second trimester)

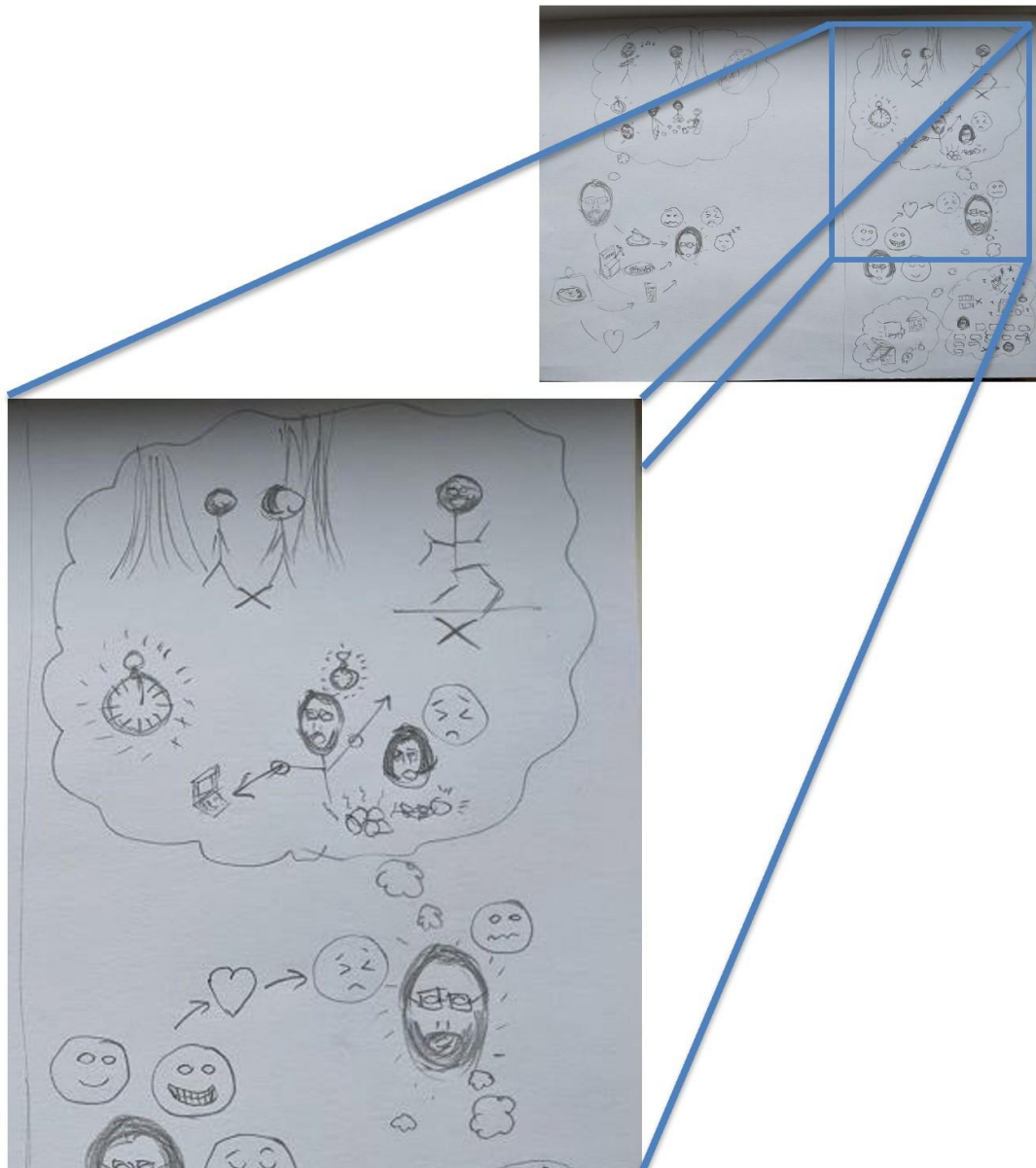
He explained how a key way to bolster Tara's spirit was by imagining, and then describing to Tara, various things they had to look forward to as parents, using these imagined experiences to elicit a sense of excitement about becoming a parent.



the bit at the top is kind of my thoughts, you know, when I'm in a kind of positive, upbeat place, which, yeah, I like to think of – not this complete, idyllic picture...But ultimately, yeah, seeing very positive experiences of playing with them, going out for walks, showing them things that we're interested in, you know? Comforting them when they're crying and sort of generally supporting and kind of *cocooning* them, I guess, as they go, "what is this big bad world you've brought me into?" kind of thing.

Tom (second trimester)

However, he also explained how it was only when Tara was feeling positive, and relaxed about the pregnancy, that Tom was able to acknowledge (although not necessarily outwardly express) *his* own anxieties/stresses about becoming a father, including pressures on his time and conflicts with work, as depicted on the right-hand side of his drawing.



So that's kind of when I'm feeling positive, and Tara's you know, feeling a bit more stressed about it...And then the kind of flip side of that is times when Tara's feeling more positive and more relaxed about things. And then that almost, yeah, means I'm not trying to kind of put a brave face on it, and I go, 'Oh shit. What is happening??' and I can then, you know, start to worry about things and get stressed about things.

Tom (second trimester)

These narratives reveal how the management of emotion is part of the 'work' of being an expectant father (after Aitken, 2009, 2000; Das and Hodkinson, 2020), with participants describing this work as almost being an act of love, managing their emotions in order to prioritise their partner's feelings and her (emotional) wellbeing (Åsenhed et al., 2013). This

emotion work is fundamentally embedded in pervasive notions of masculinity, attached to particular masculine subjectivities (Giazitzoglu, 2019), with participants describing having to ‘put on a brave face’ so as to not burden their partner with their feelings – particularly at an already stressful time (Hodkinson and Das, 2021). This is particularly interesting in revealing the inter-entanglements between expectant fathers’ emotions/feelings and those of their partner, reflective of the flow of emotions between people as part of intimate relationships (McQueen, 2017; Burkitt, 2014, 1997; Bondi et al., 2005) – indeed, Tom’s emotions were heavily influenced by how *Tara* was feeling. However, it also powerfully illustrates the gendered emotion work performed by expectant fathers during pregnancy. Indeed, encapsulating the force, intensity and pressure of this emotion work, Widarsson et al. (2015) subsequently describe fathers’ navigation of this time as ‘paddling upstream’ (p.1059). This motif thus situates the awkwardness of expectant fathering – perhaps even helplessness (cf. Aitken, 2000) – particularly against such competing discourses of intimate, involved fathering and emotional stoicism and hegemonic masculinities (Macht, 2020a, 2017).

This analysis has established the significant inter-entanglements between emotions and expectant fathering, highlighting especially the intrinsic performance of emotion work within participants’ (self-prescribed) understanding of their ‘role’ during this time. Expectations of the performance of emotion-work – in particular the expectation for men to (self)manage their emotions – derives significantly from the socialisation around emotions, which are intensely gendered (McQueen, 2017; Hochschild, 1983). However, importantly, it is through everyday forms and repeated acts of socialisation – which take place in different spaces/places (Giazitzoglu, 2019) – that expectations of emotion-management become reinforced and internalised (Hochschild, 1983, 1979). This is particularly well-encapsulated by the well-known social adage of ‘boys don’t cry’ (see McQueen, 2017; Elliot, 2016). Moreover, through such gendering of emotions, expectations of emotion-management may, subsequently, become

‘stuck’ onto particular bodies (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Berggren, 2014; Ahmed, 2004), at particular times – in this case, those of expectant fathers.

For expectant fathers, the societal rhetoric of ‘boys don’t cry’ becomes embedded within the (partially self-imposed) expectation to exhibit displays of being an unemotional ‘rock’, self-managing their own emotions (particularly anxieties) in order to fulfil their primary responsibility of being able to support their pregnant partner (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020; Åsenhed et al., 2013). Furthermore, these internalised assumptions around emotion work in relation to expectant fathering emerge via broader societal assumptions around fatherhood and gendered parenting roles. This was revealed especially through participants reflections on their relationships/experiences with their own fathers (Jessee and Adamsons, 2018), to which I now (briefly) turn, situating participants’ experiences within the broader complex, emotional, landscapes of fathering within contemporary parenting (Meah and Jackson, 2016) – which are significant contexts through which fathering practices are negotiated and contested (Menzel, 2022; Aitken, 2009, 2005, 2000) – and to reveal the ‘stickiness’ of masculinities and emotion within expectant fathering (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Berggren, 2014).

4.3. Sticky Emotions, Sticky Masculinities: Reflections and Aspirations on Emotions and Masculinity During the Transition to Fatherhood

Becoming a father is tightly bound up with particular cultural discourses/understandings, largely mediated by social expectations of what actually and already being a father means and what practices/roles this entails. These are often in relation (and often in tension) with dominant discourses of masculinity, manliness and traditional assumptions around fatherhood (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Aitken, 2009, 2005). It is widely acknowledged in the literature that one’s own parental relationships have significant implications on aspirations and ideals of future parenting; this is particularly the case in relation to men, with many scholars having argued

that a man's relationship with his father has significant implications on how he models his own fathering (see Jessee and Adamsons, 2018; Brannen and Nilsen, 2006, for example).³⁰

Indeed, many participants in this project described how becoming a father themselves had prompted explicit reflection of their own child-father relationships.

Over the past couple of years, those sort of thoughts have intensified um...about how I would be as a father...[my sister and I have said] how we would be different to our parents – who again are brilliant, (he squints, not wanting to give the wrong impression) but we'd do things a little bit differently perhaps.

Martin (second trimester)

Importantly, this influence can be through both positive and negative experiences of father-child relationships. For example, Azri explained how the absence of a father in his life³¹ had influenced his desire to not only want to have children himself, but to ensure that he was intimately involved in their lives (Dermott, 2008).

I never really had a father figure in my life. I had to figure out a lot of things, as far as being a guy, I guess, myself. But it's also helped me develop a strong sense of who I want to be and what kind of father I'd want to be, just, you know, through the lack of having one

Azri (second trimester)

³⁰ Although at the beginning of the interview it was stressed to participants they did not have to answer any questions or discuss topics if they did not want to, all participants were explicitly asked if they were happy to discuss their childhood before further questions, due to ethical concerns this could potentially upset interviewees (see Appendix E, Question 9 in bold).

³¹ Azri had been born in the Philippines and then adopted and raised in New Zealand. His adoptive father left when he was three years old, after which he had no contact. While he later made contact and established a relationship with his birth mother (still living in the Philippines), he made no mention of his birth father.

However, the majority of participants in this study described having largely positive relationships with their fathers (and indeed with their mothers), describing their fathers as ‘involved’, but also still fairly ‘traditional’ in their fathering practices. This was particularly through being emotionally reserved (see Macht, 2017 on stoicism and masculinity in traditional forms of fathering, which she terms ‘emotional bordering’).

My dad, he was of that generation where a man is a man, and, you know, you didn’t sort of indulge in emotions really.

Frank (second trimester)

This is particularly revealing of the ways in which the gendered nature of emotions are fundamentally learned (Burkitt 2014, 1999; Bondi et al., 2005), reified via societal expectations of hegemonic forms of masculinity and gendered parenting roles (Menzel, 2022; Aitken, 2009, 2005), mediated across generations (cf. Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Brannan and Nilsen, 2006). Emotions, in other words are internalised via ‘sticky webs of culture’ through everyday social interactions and practices (Ellingson, 2017; Berggren, 2014; Ahmed, 2004); most notably here through the gendered parenting roles exhibited by their own fathers (Jessee and Adamsons, 2018; Meah and Jackson, 2016). This was revealed especially by Martin, in reflecting on how his own father’s emotional stoicism derives from his relationship with *his* father (Martin’s grandfather).

My dad is very old fashioned, not very good with emotions, in the sense that he, when you’re talking to him about a personal issue – he will tolerate it, he’ll give sort of verbal encouragements....and then he’ll just go (laughing) “talk to your mother,” you know, (he gestures his hands about) “she can deal with the emotional complexities of something” better than he can. He’s, he’s like that – his brothers and sisters are like that. His father was like that.

Martin (second trimester)

Indeed, the inter-generationality between how emotion work becomes entangled with masculinity (particularly through expectant fathering) was similarly echoed by Robbie:

...certainly males are finally catching up in terms of you know, emotional intelligence...because you know that will have been instilled upon my dad, you know not to show emotion or, you know that that's a feminine thing. Whereas now, we understand that's not okay, you know, and that it can lead to all sorts of things.

Robbie (second trimester)

Both Robbie's and Martin's explanation here speaks to a certain inter-generational shift in emotional forms of masculinity (Elliot, 2016) – and intergenerational shifts towards more intimate, involved fathering ideals in recent decades (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Dermott, 2008) – with Martin's father being “very old fashioned” (learned from his father), but willing/able to at least *try* to listen and engage with Martin on an emotional level. These intergenerational aspects highlight how relational geographies of age (Hopkins and Pain, 2007) shape aspirations and hopes (as well as practices) of fathering (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006), with participants expressing a hope and desire to further contest and decouple emotional stoicism from masculinity in their fathering.

Indeed, many participants in this project described how becoming a father themselves had prompted explicit reflection of their own child-father relationships, particularly in terms of how their experiences of being fathered had shaped their own aspirations of fathering (Jessee and Adamsons, 2018). For one participant, Martin, this was through reflecting on how, for much of his childhood, his dad had been very busy with work, running his own business, meaning that he was not always (physically/mentally/emotionally) around, particularly during evenings and weekends.

My dad, for most of my childhood...owned and ran a restaurant, so he was working six days and nights a week.

Matin (second trimester)

This is somewhat reflective of Brandth and Kvande's (1998) assertion of fathering often taking place away from the home, and by extension from children (Aitken, 2005). Moreover, although his father strove to still be involved, often taking on routinised childcare such as doing the morning school run (cf. Barker, 2011, 2008), Martin further described the regrets his father had about how much time he had spent at work.

It's one of my, my dad's regrets, that he worked so hard – one of mum's regrets as well was that he did, and so she, sometimes she argues that she was kind of raising us two, alone.

Martin (second trimester)

Martin subsequently explained the influence of this experience on his aspirations as a father in the near future, in particular in relation to having a better work-family balance than his father had.

The main thing is work-life balance. I don't want to make the mistakes that my dad did – that he acknowledges he did, [when I was] growing up...At the moment, so I work odd hours and sometimes very long hours and weekends...and I said to Mel, you know "I know this is what I'm like at the moment, but once we have this kid, I'm going to rein it in" because, again that's my dad's one and only main bits of advice "this is the best bits of your life, don't waste it stuck in an office somewhere".

Martin (second trimester)

Martin's narrative here reveals how traditional gendered expectations around fathering – in particular through the cultural affiliation between fathering and breadwinning – created certain barriers to his fathers' equitable participation in childcare and childrearing. These barriers largely derived from societal expectations of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Dermott, 2008; Aitken, 2005), discussed more in Chapter 7.

Importantly for this chapter, however, other participants described their hopes/aspirations for doing fathering differently through explicit reference to emotions, in particular the rejection of the association between masculinity and emotional (in)expression (de Boise, 2018).

Well, I suppose, I suppose I'll be, I'll be sort of almost like double what my dad was, because I'm quite open to my feelings and emotions.

Frank (second trimester)

...my dad wasn't necessarily like that emotional or anything. Not that he was *un*-emotional, but it didn't kind of come across, whereas now almost, he's been retired a couple of years, but kind of, you know, winding down a bit.

Tom (second trimester)

While these are indicative of the inter-generational shifts in hopes and aspirations of fathering (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006) – albeit which have still been slow to change in practice (Doucet, 2006) – Tom's narrative is also particularly interesting for further revealing generational shifts in emotions, reflective of the general 'softening' of masculinity into old age as Mann et al. (2016) argue in relation to grandfathering.

Moreover, each of these narratives are important for considering the entanglements between emotions and masculinities in relation to (expectant) fathering, with many participants describing wanting to be, subsequently, more emotionally 'present' and available to their children than their father had necessarily been for them (Jessee and Adamsons, 2018). This is arguably reflective of the 'new man' discourse (Gorman-Murray, 2008) and generational shifts towards more emotional forms of masculinity, of which intimate/involved fathering is often regarded as a catalyst (Elliot, 2016; Gorman-Murray, 2013; Dermott, 2008).

However, as has been acknowledged by scholars of emotion and masculinity, the rhetoric of the 'new man' has still largely not come to fruition (McQueen, 2022, 2017; Elliot, 2016), due largely to continued and pervasive societal expectations surrounding masculinity through the expectation for men to (self)manage their emotions, particularly in relation to expectant fatherhood, as evidenced by participants in this chapter so far. This was eloquently articulated by Tom when reflecting upon the gendered nature of emotions, and the hopeful desire to contest these through his fathering – albeit while suggesting that speaking about his emotions is something he finds difficult, thus speaking to the overhang of hegemonic

expectations of masculinity which continue to pervade society, particularly in terms of fathers' emotional stoicism (Macht, 2020a, 2017).

Just trying think about yeah, having a child and wanting to kind of break down some of those, like gender stereotypes that, you know, men can't talk about these things, or can't be open, can't be emotional, you know, and [to show] that these things are not true. And so wanting to kind of, yeah, be a kind of role model in that sense, but equally, finding it hard, because it's not something, yeah, I naturally do very well

Tom (second trimester)

Tom's point about wanting to be a 'role model' – specifically by exhibiting more emotional forms of masculinity (Elliot, 2016) is particularly interesting, given that he was having a daughter, rather than a son. His concern is therefore less about wanting to be emotionally available in order to instil this in his child, but seemingly to redress future gender relations, providing a role model for his daughter of what a man should – or could – be like (McQueen, 2022; 2017), contesting hegemonic assumptions of emotional stoicism (Macht, 2020; de Boise and Hearn, 2017), with implications for the future of gender parity.

Tom further reflected upon the importance of emotions in terms of fatherhood, recognising the significance of this in relation to paternal mental health (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020).

I think I think it's really important. Yeah. I feel like... you know, boys are kind of not necessarily taught directly, but you know the social pressures are that it's not, not something boys do. And that sort of thing. So yeah, I think it's really important.

But also, yeah, that I think it's really important, in life, I guess, you know...that people are able to be open with it, and kind of dealing with that for their mental health and wellbeing and that sort of thing.... And I guess, you know, those, those things tie together, like, it's important that I show that, you know, men can talk about their emotions, and be open with that.

Tom (third trimester)

Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that striving to fulfil hegemonic forms of masculinities – particularly in terms of emotional stoicism – can be potentially very damaging to fathers’ mental health (see Hodkinson and Das, 2021; Waling, 2019). Tom’s narrative here highlights the fundamental importance of attending to expectant fathers’ emotions, and further still to the importance of providing spaces (in research, but also across society as a whole) for *listening* to these feelings.

In some cases, reflections about fathering aspirations involved seeking out and having a conversation with their father about his experiences, as described by Robbie.

I’ve been more interested to find out about [my dad’s] experiences now I’m expecting. Which is not that I didn’t want to know before, but it just never, it was never on my wavelength to talk about....a month ago, I’d been in the pub with my dad and I sort of asked ‘do you remember when I was born?’ So yeah, that was that was just nice to hear his perspectives and just, just be able to ask him about it.

Because I guess maybe no one has. Maybe no one had asked him before, I don’t know. And yeah, I guess you know, at this point, I’ve got reason to ask him, whereas without, without having a child or anything, maybe you know, I don’t know whether I would ask that

Robbie (post-birth)

Robbie’s narrative here demonstrates the significant entanglements between emotions and expectant fatherhood, with Robbie showing quite a different interest in his fathers’ emotional experience, due to the impending arrival of his own child. Moreover, his suspicion that perhaps nobody had ever asked his father about his experiences is reflective of the overhang of traditional societal understandings of fathering during pregnancy, in particular assumptions that fathers would be rather absent and detached from these experiences (see Menzel, 2022 for a discussion; also Herrera, 2020; King, 2016). The spatialities of this conversation are not insignificant here, with the (rather masculine) space of the pub being used to facilitate – indeed even offset – the emotionality of this intimate, and potentially sensitive conversation between Robbie and his father (Kneale, 2021; cf. King, 2016 on expectant fathering from the pub).

However, the significant influence of participants' own fathers was also particularly prominent when such conversations were not possible. Two participants in this study, Denny and Frank had recently lost their fathers, within a few months of the first interview³², which prompted particularly poignant reflections about their anticipations and aspirations of fathering.

My situation is probably a little different. Well, in May, my father died unexpectedly...So, my journey so far has, it's been – well, I suppose I was ecstatically happy when I found out, I mean, that have been related to the loss of my father being replaced by something positive...

Frank (second trimester)

my dad, he's no longer with us...So obviously, that's really pertinent. It's like to, to lose, to lose my dad in September. And then to know that I was becoming a father in November, that time period in between... the grieving process of my dad, naturally you start to think, it brings up so many emotions. I'm going to be a father for the first time. And I've lost my father.

Denny (second trimester)

Indeed, the object that Denny brought to our first interview was a paper ornament made by his father. He explained how these material objects prompted reflections about the meaning of fathering for him, even in the absence of his actual father to talk to. In order to be true to Denny's feelings of bereavement, I would like to quote him here at length.

³² Indeed, I somewhat suspect that this was their main motivation for wanting to participate, with the interviews providing a space to reflect upon and talk about their father (Denny noting in our interview how “often don't do bereavement counselling until 12 months after the death” perhaps further indication of (self)management of emotions within the context of expectant fathering, particularly in relation to the emphasis on supporting their partner, discussed earlier.

Now you might be thinking, Why? Why have you chosen this?... So I've got like three or four of these, like dotted about, almost like decorations in the house. Because it's a tiny signifier of you know, my dad.

So I suppose coming back to the kind of metaphor of what this represents, is that it takes a lot of design and a lot of kind of practice and forethought to create something like this. And, you know, it's a lot of skill is involved. But, mainly a lot of forethought in order to want to achieve it. And so that kind of makes me think, you know, that's what's needed in fatherhood.

Denny (second trimester)

Denny's narrative reveals here how everyday spatial practices and interactions can prompt feelings of connection with absent loved ones (cf. Meah, 2017). These narratives are particularly interesting here for revealing the presence-in-absence of loved ones, which is an important theme in this thesis, largely in relation to absence in *anticipation*, as I draw out more thoroughly in Chapter 5. However, it reveals the important, complex, inter-entanglements between emotional geographies of anticipation, loss and grief – recalling from the literature review that emotions are not discrete entities but are fluid and dynamic (Burkitt, 2014). I explore this theme of the entanglements of anticipation and loss in the next section of this chapter, returning to the significance of material objects as re-presentations of absent loved ones, inscribed into the space of home in Chapter 6 (Davies, 2019; Pasternak, 2013; McDowell, 2007).

4.4. Emotional Geographies of Pregnancy Confirmation: The Entanglements Between Grief, Loss and Anticipation

Becoming a father was, for many participants, regarded as a deeply emotional time, characterised by a variety of mixed emotions and contradictory feelings, reflective of understandings of expectant fatherhood as an 'emotional rollercoaster' (Widarsson et al, 2015; Åsenhed, et al., 2013).

I think definitely very excited – and it comes and goes, but you know, I have reasonably felt, yes, quite daunted by it, and quite anxious about it. That it was this big thing, You know, it feels like it's gonna be, yeah, a big change in life. And it's easy to kind of focus on that.

Tom (third trimester)

So yeah, there's a feeling of being ecstatically happy that I'm going to be bringing this child into the world...[but also]....feel a little scared. I feel scared. I feel fearful, yeah, I feel that I won't be up to it. I won't be up to, you know...

Frank (second trimester)

In particular, the anticipation, joy and excitement about becoming parents was significantly tempered with caution, relating to the precarity of the early stages of pregnancy (see McNiven, 2016 on geographies of death in relation to pregnancy loss; also, Kaufman, 2021), with some fathers deliberately seeking to remain detached during the early stages of pregnancy, and not get too attached to the possibility of having a child. Such feelings of cautiousness were especially heightened for participants who had previously been through a miscarriage with their partner. Many were therefore hesitant to allow themselves to 'get carried away' by their emotions and feelings about the pregnancy.

Obviously it was amazing news but I kind of (interlocks his fingers, resting his chin on them) because of the experiences we had with the two miscarriages I was kind of trying to emotionally not let myself get too carried away because you always worry that we've been there before and we were so obviously over the moon both times, as we were this time as well, then you start to worry what if we, what if it's the same thing again?

Ollie (second trimester)

This constitutes emotion work due to (self-imposed) management of particular emotional states in order to exude another (Hochschild, 1983), in this case suppressing excitement in order to be more tempered and cautious, stoicism being particularly associated with masculinity (McQueen, 2017; Elliot, 2016), what Macht (2020a) refers to as 'emotional bordering'. Importantly, this management of emotions emerged right from the outset of their

experiences of expectant fatherhood, from the experiences of pregnancy confirmation (Draper, 2002a).

4.4.1. Taking Tests

Following from the above, a number of participants described similarly feeling the need to exert caution and maintain some form of emotional distance from the pregnancy – at least until this was medically confirmed at the first ultrasound scan, which, through the NHS, is typically conducted at 12-weeks' gestation³³ (NHS, 2023). This was illustrated especially by Denny in describing their previous experience of miscarriage, explaining how while advancements in technology can enable the detection of pregnancy increasingly soon, this can perhaps be done *too* soon, giving parents false confirmation of pregnancy before it has been able to properly take hold.

The problem is – you can get so many early tests now, there's so many things on the market where you can find out that you're pregnant, like four days afterwards...we had what's called a chemical miscarriage...So we were told that the test thinks that you are pregnant, but in reality, it was never going to be – like it's, like a week or two weeks later, it's kind of a miscarriage – but it's not really [a miscarriage, in the proper medical sense], that's perhaps that's too strong a word. It's just the fact that like, in modern times, you're able to detect these things more than you would have done even 5-10 years ago.

Denny (second trimester)

³³ Ultrasound scans *can* be performed earlier (e.g., at eight-weeks' gestation) through the contracting of privatised healthcare services. However, in the UK these services incur a fee and so are not available to everyone – although many participants in this study did have the financial means to utilise these.

Denny's narrative here is also indicative of the entanglements between expectant parenting and materialities – which, as discussed in the literature review, have the affective capacity to elicit emotions (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Burkitt, 2014 – discussed further in Chapter 6). Pregnancy tests are variably imbued with emotions, including hope, fear and dread (see Perrotta and Hamper, 2021 on intermingling of hope and despair in relation to IVF treatment). These feelings emerge concurrently, dependent on the intention/desire to get pregnant and have a child. For example, when trying for a baby, taking a pregnancy test may elicit hope (potentially even desperation) for a positive result, with anxieties also being provoked by the nerve-racking experience of waiting for the chemical reaction to process. There is also fear of the result, in particular, the sadness, heartbreak, even failure if it comes back negative and the dread at potentially having to start over and try again – emotions which are perpetuated by taken-for-granted assumptions over reproductive capabilities (see Hanna and Gough, 2016 on emotional navigation of infertility in online space).

Moreover, doing a pregnancy test is an inherently spatial experience. Draper (2002a), for example, notes how while pregnancy tests are often bought in rather familiar spaces of supermarkets or pharmacies, the specific aisle or shelf where these are found is usually much more unfamiliar territory. This is particularly for expectant fathers, given the gendered nature of such spaces, often being situated within a designated 'feminine care' aisle. While for participants in Draper's research this was a site of uncertainty – particularly in navigating picking out the 'right' test – Frank described his experience of going out to a pregnancy test as a moment of pride.

With previous girlfriends, I was used to shopping in the feminine aisle. I felt very proud though, going up to the counter with my pregnancy test (he holds his hand up, clenched as though to mime holding the test in his hand, almost triumphantly). It was a moment of pride. Definitely. I actually still have a photo on my phone of me holding this test, the moment I bought it.

Frank (second trimester)

He explained how going to purchase this test was a response to Faith having taken a relatively cheap test earlier that day and thus not ‘believing’ the result – speaking also to the rather classed geographies of pre-parenting practices (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Faircloth and Murray, 2015).

She bought a cheap pregnancy test, you know, one that was about three quid or something, and she came home and she did it, and it came back positive. And she was like, ‘Oh, God, this is such a crappy test. I wish I’d bought the expensive one’. So I said, ‘Okay, I’ll go to Waitrose. And I’ll go and get the £14 one.’ So, yeah, I went to Waitrose.... And it was almost like, ‘No, she’s pregnant’. It was almost like I already somehow knew. And she was telling me that she wasn’t because she couldn’t be. And then we had the other test and that came back positive.

Frank (second trimester)

Frank’s experience is particularly indicative of the complex and conflicting emotional geographies surrounding taking a pregnancy test, with his anticipation of ‘knowing’ that Faith was pregnant contrasting heavily with her dis-believing the results of the ‘cheap’ test, which could only be believable with a more expensive (and thus seemingly more credible) one. However, it is also indicative of expectant fathers’ emotion work, Frank having to manage his emotional excitement until Faith also accepts that she was, indeed, pregnant.

Interestingly, due to the frequent (indeed, almost routinised) taking of pregnancy tests, many expectant couples in this study already had a number of tests in the home, having bulk-bought cheap tests online, such as via Amazon, eliminating the need to go out to purchase a test (particularly significant within the context of the pandemic). This was also significant given the general expense of purchasing tests individually.

She’d been taking regular pregnancy tests for a couple of months, so we had a load in...just bought them in bulk from Amazon...and then just one morning...she said, ‘I think I’m pregnant’...she did a bit of like jump for joy sort of thing, and then she went and did like three or four more to check and did like another two the next day...

Robbie (second trimester)

Indeed, Tom even remarked on the banality of purchasing pregnancy tests while trying for a baby, with tests becoming mixed in with everyday items within their online grocery delivery order, revealing how such materialities of pregnancy become ‘in place’ within the lives of expectant parents.

Because we’d kind of decided to start trying it was like ‘well, we should probably get one’ and because we weren’t like going to the supermarket, what with COVID lockdown and stuff, so we were kind of doing orders... So we yeah, we did have one in the house... I think it was just from the food shop... you can just buy them in the supermarket. So yeah. Just yeah: carrots, pregnancy tests, broccoli, you know? (both laugh)

Tom (second trimester)

However, even with the seeming banality of the presence of pregnancy tests within the home, the actual taking of such tests was often still a highly emotional experience, with some expectant fathers describing being present during, and actively involved in, this experience (Draper, 2002a). This was especially the case when there was a real suspicion of a potential pregnancy, due to a late period (as opposed to a routinised check).

However, although fathers were generally not present during the actual doing of the test, they were generally invited to *look* at the test afterwards, which was considered exciting (Draper, 2002a). This provides an interesting insight into the (re)negotiation of bodily borders/boundaries within the context of expectant fathering (discussed further in Chapter 5).

She was in the bedroom – so like next door. I can’t remember whether I just sort came into the room anyway, or whether she called me up... But she just sort of you know, was a bit teary and just said, ‘I think I’m pregnant’ so, yeah, that was nice

Robbie (second trimester)

In some cases, expectant fathers were even *tasked* with the responsibility of being the one to look at the test first, and communicate the results to their partner.

She did a test, and she was – we talked a bit before about who should look at it and I think we had a very brief discussion, perhaps “do I want look at it?” and, yeah, no doubt about that, that I did [want to look]. And then, yeah, I sat on the sofa and she handed me the, the Clear Blue thing and just started looking apprehensively, perched on the corner of the sofa, just staring at me intently (he widens his eyes and gives an intense stare, while laughing)...(He begins grinning somewhat sheepishly, as though he’s unsure he should admit to it)

But then that was followed by “shall I pull a trick on her?” at I was like (he laughs and says, rushing) “No! that’s really inappropriate, I can’t do that!” you know, not gonna do that. So. So, yeah I just, I think – (to himself) did I even say anything? I can’t remember really what happened. I think I said “wow” or something, then handed it to her (he goes quiet).

Martin (second trimester)

Participants’ experiences here were particularly revealing of the ‘emotional bordering’ (Macht 2020a, 2017) of pregnancy confirmation by taking a pregnancy test (Draper, 2002a). Firstly, there are the literal spatial borders involved in taking a pregnancy test, with expectant fathers generally not being present while their partner took the test, the ‘weeing on a stick’ generally being done in private, behind the closed doors of a bedroom, or (ensuite) bathroom (see Gabb, 2012, 2010, 2004 on navigation of borders within the family home, particularly in relation to intimate acts). Secondly, as Martin’s experience above highlights especially, there is the bordering entailed in the relational management of emotions (Macht, 2020a)

This experience illustrates the fundamental inter-entanglements between expectant fathering and emotion work/emotional management (ibid.; Menzel, 2022; Aitken, 2009, 2005, 2000), through how Mel cannot bear to look at the test (out of apprehension of a potentially negative result) with Martin subsequently taking responsibility for doing this as it is understood that he would be better able to cope with (or at least conceal) the emotional impact of this result. In other words, right from the outset of finding out they are expecting, Martin is expected to be able to manage his feelings to support, and protect, Mel (Hodkinson and Das, 2021; Åsenhed et al., 2013), embodying a (literal) border and protective layer (perhaps even a

metaphorical brick wall) between Mel, the result of the test, and her emotions to be a supportive partner and emotional ‘rock’ (Hodkinson and Das, 2021; Das and Hodkinson, 2020).

4.4.2. Emotional Bordering: Keeping an Emotional Distance

Importantly, the aforementioned emotional ‘bordering’ continued – and, indeed, became increasingly prominent – *after* the result of the pregnancy test. During the initial trimester of pregnancy, many expectant fathers described managing their emotions about pregnancy and ‘keeping an emotional distance’; as noted by Ollie earlier in this chapter. For example, having received a tentative confirmation of the pregnancy (and their status as expectant parents), Denny went on to explain how these feelings of cautiousness and not wanting to get too emotionally attached to the pregnancy before it was medically confirmed had implications for managing the announcement to family/friends.

I mean, yeah, I was really, really happy, but I was also really, really cautious. And it’s quite sad really, because what had happened previously [with the miscarriage]...we’d talked about whether we should tell people and stuff and Anni was – my wife wanted to, wanted to tell her mom and sister...because she wanted that immediacy of the support.

Denny (second trimester)

Indeed, this navigation of announcement was seemingly a point of slight tension between Denny and his partner Anni.

So [last time], we told her family, and I was reticent to say “we should wait for 12 weeks” and all that kind of stuff – because that’s the ‘done thing’ and things like that. And so she told them, and then (he pauses) and then it didn’t happen, you know, she, you know, she came home [after the scan], and that was it. And that was upsetting to her, you know, obviously, as it would be – it was upsetting to me, but more so for her, because I was very cautious about it. I thought that, that you know, thought that, you know, you’re always told “you’ve got to wait 12 weeks”.

Denny (second trimester)³⁴

³⁴ I have left in here the hesitations of Denny’s narrative for how they importantly capture the emotion of this harrowing experience.

This alludes to a potential sense of failure sometimes associated with miscarriage. It is also reflective of the general response of silence to experiences of miscarriage, discussed by McNiven (2016), with Denny's narrative being indicative of perhaps not wanting to admit to, or fully acknowledge, this loss.

So, without sounding cold, I suppose [this time] I was perhaps a bit more pragmatic straightaway saying "no, we need to wait and wait"....when we got pregnant. Perhaps I was less jubilant than, than I perhaps could have been, because I was very much like, "Oh, this is great news," but you know, "we can't tell anyone, we've got to wait till 12 weeks" and stuff, we'll keep it under wraps and things like that. So it was exciting. But it wasn't like, "yes! We've done it."

Denny (second trimester)

Denny's narrative here resonates with Draper's (2003a, 2002a) findings that while pregnancy tests offer a first initial indication of pregnancy, it is actually ultrasound scans which are a more emotionally-significant medium for expectant fathers, providing a visual encounter with the unborn child and thus offering the 'first "scientific" evidence' of the existence of their future child (Draper, 2002a: 568), the emotional, embodied, geographies of which are discussed further in Chapter 5.

However, Denny's experience is also particularly revealing of the emotion work of expectant fathering, in particular through fulfilling the role of being a supportive partner (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020; Widarsson et al., 2015). This is alluded to though his explanation that their previous experience of pregnancy which ended in a miscarriage was "upsetting" for him, but was *more* upsetting for Anni. Denny's efforts to keep an emotional distance to this pregnancy thus seems to be about not allowing himself to get 'too close' or 'too attached' to the pregnancy (before the health status of the baby is formally confirmed); in order to protect himself from any disappointment or pain of another miscarriage, so that he would be better able to support Anni, should things go wrong.

In this way, the emotional geographies of anticipation and hope are fundamentally (inter)entwined with those of grief and loss (Anderson and Fenton, 2008:79). Indeed, as

McNiven (2016) argues, experiences of miscarriage and pregnancy loss broadly disrupt normative understandings and expectations of anticipated life-course narratives, with the experience of foetal death – a being not quite wholly alive, having not yet been *born* (Holt and Philo, 2022) – blurring the distinction between life and death. Importantly for this thesis, expectant fathers’ emotion work was especially heightened during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic lockdown restrictions, to which I now turn.

4.5. Pandemic Emotion Work

As outlined in the Introduction chapter of this thesis (see Section 1.1), the coronavirus pandemic oversaw significant alternations to ‘normal’ everyday habits and spatial routines (Bissell, 2020; Straughan et al., 2020), with particular ramifications on the spatialities of pregnancy/expectancy; with many expectant parents (both mothers and fathers) largely *not* going to places they might ordinarily expect. Whilst this included workplace spaces – through work-from-home orders, for example – these restrictions were most especially evident within maternity care spaces (Keely et al., 2023; Menzel, 2022; Greenfield et al., 2021). For much of the pandemic, expectant fathers (along with other birth partners) in the UK – and across Europe more broadly – were subject to severe ‘visitor’ restriction policies, implemented in an important effort to curb viral-spread, but which physically (and also emotionally) ‘barred’ expectant fathers from significant antenatal appointments – and sometimes, even the birth of their child (ibid.; Lista and Bresesti, 2020). In this section, I explore how this severe ‘bordering’ constituted heightened expectations and pressures for expectant fathers’ emotion work during the pandemic.

I have explored expectant parents (mothers’ and fathers’) experiences of these restrictions in a paper elsewhere (Menzel, 2022), utilising emergent social media data from online news articles and posts/comments shared as part of the #ButNotMaternity campaign, which called on the UK government to lift these restrictions. In this section, I draw upon these

online social media data in order to help contextualise the narratives/experiences of my interview participants discussed throughout this thesis – however, as stated in my methodology, these are also important and deeply emotive narratives in their own right (see again Menzel, 2022).

The emergence of these social media narratives highlights the societal significance on antenatal appointments and ultrasound scans, with both expectant mothers and fathers emphasising the importance of these moments, particularly for expectant fathers, being regarded as an early bonding opportunity between expectant fathers and unborn child.

It doesn't seem fair my partner couldn't be there to start to have that bond with our baby – it's hard for fathers to bond during pregnancy since they can't feel the movement and everything.

Lisa

I desperately wanted to go to the scan so I could see my beautiful little girl for the first time and to hear her heartbeat.

Rupert

The importance of these experiences was also echoed by interview participants (discussed further in Chapter 5).

I mean, I've always attended the scans, like, I won't miss a scan

Logan (second trimester)

Fathers' engagement with ultrasound scan appointments is widely regarded as a pre-parental expression of commitment/engagement to fatherhood, enrolled into contemporary societal discourse of 'involved fathering' (Twamley et al., 2013). Ultrasound scans are regarded as a significant, transitional, 'milestone moment' (J Draper, 2003a, 2002b), offering an important 'rite-of-passage' through which the pregnancy (and the future baby), can truly start to 'become real' for expectant fathers (Menzel, 2022; H Draper and Ives, 2013; Widarsson et al., 2012) enabling expectant fathers to begin (to allow themselves) to form an emotional

attachment to their future child (J Draper, 2003a, 2003b, 2002a, 2002b). Within the social media narratives, one mother shared her partners' feelings about how being unable to attend antenatal appointments had affected his ability to properly connect with the pregnancy, highlighting the importance of these experiences to expectant fathers' sense of involvement and engagement with pregnancy/expectancy (Widarsson et al., 2012; Draper, 2003a, 2002b).

The other day my partner told me that it [the pregnancy] doesn't feel real because he hasn't been able to go to anything.

Lizzie

This narrative is particularly important for highlighting the socio-cultural value placed on antenatal appointments in becoming a parent (Draper, 2003a, 2002b; Draper and Ives, 2013), and as a pre-parental expression of commitment to future parenthood. However, in being *unable* to attend these appointments – due to coronavirus-restrictions – this father describes being unable to fully connect with the experience of becoming a father (and possibly emotionally connect with the future child) (ibid.; Widarsson et al., 2012) – an impact which is a very real concern for father-involvement, as I reflect upon in Menzel (2022). This is because, as Draper and Ives (2013) argue, men who have been less able to adopt a sense of (involved) father-identity may have more difficulty in adjusting to parental life, with potentially negative implications on paternal mental health and father-infant bonding (Hodkinson and Das, 2021; Das and Hodkinson, 2020). Furthermore, this may have negative ramifications for maternal mental health/wellbeing if the father continues to maladapt to his parenting responsibility (ibid.), although Lizzie's quote does hint at the fathers' desire to feel (and be) involved.

4.5.1. Emotional Bordering and Waiting Outside

Although by the time of my interviews (which commenced January 2021), COVID restrictions within maternity care spaces had been reportedly eased and removed – with the *Daily Mail* claiming 'victory' in November 2020 (see Mikhailova, 2020) – meaning that many of my

participants *were* largely able to attend (at least one) scan appointment (as discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 5 – though see later). However, restrictions were still, variably, in place at certain times during the project, as I noted in Menzel (2022). These further restrictions were largely reflective of the social distancing and lockdown restrictions implemented within the UK’s ‘tier’ system (see Brown et al., 2021; Institute for Government Analysis, 2021).

The variability of these restrictions meant that expectant fathers’ access to these spaces was highly precarious, varying considerably across local health authorities, creating a ‘post-code lottery’ of maternity care services (Menzel, 2022: 95; Topping and Duncan, 2020). This left many expectant parents with considerable uncertainty over when, if at all, fathers/partners would be allowed into appointments. Importantly, however, this anxiety stemmed not only from uncertainty of whether expectant fathers would be permitted to attend an appointment, but also through how information/guidelines were constantly changing (Greenfield et al., 2021). As I noted in Menzel (2022), this had significant emotional ramifications for expectant parents in this project, creating a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty. This was especially revealed by Tom, with his repetition of the phrase ‘fingers crossed’ speaking to the precarity and uncertainty felt by both himself and Tara.

I think it varies a lot, place to place. But in [our county], they’ve maintained it throughout the whole time that you can go to the two scans, the 11-to-14 week scan and the 20 week scan and be present at the birth...Tara was like “If they change it now. I’d be really angry with them.” You know, having maintained it all this time. So....Fingers crossed. Yeah. Fingers crossed.

Tom (second trimester)

Tom’s anxiety and uncertainty derived not only from variability of further restrictions (and the subsequent precariousness of fathers’ access to these spaces) but also through, at times, the receipt of *conflicting* information from local health authorities; with parents being assured that fathers would be able to attend appointments, but then being denied at the door.

The scan appointment letter had said clearly that I would be allowed to be present for the scan...We arrived at the hospital, parked up and made our way to the building, where the scan would be taking place...When we reached the building, we knew the protocol from previous visits. Even if I was able to go in for the scan itself, I would have to wait outside the building beforehand and Beth would have to sit in the waiting room alone. Five or so minutes later, Beth came out in tears to tell me that I wasn't allowed in for the scan after all, despite the letter advising that I would be.

Ollie (Diary)

Ollie's narrative here reveals how such pandemic restrictions, in particular their variability, were highly stressful for participants – and their partners (Menzel, 2022). However, of particular importance to this chapter, is how Ollie feels he must respond to this situation.

I reassured Beth that the main thing was to go and see how our little man is doing and I would be there when she came out. She went back in and I went for a short walk. I was obviously disappointed not to be able to go in, but I felt worse for Beth as I know how much it means to her to have me with her, particularly for the scans.

Ollie (Diary)

Importantly, as Bissell (2007) argues, attending to the “relative in/activities embodied through waiting” (p.277), waiting and waithood are not static ‘dead’ periods of stasis, or stillness, but can be highly active and mobile. While waiting outside during antenatal appointments, Ollie, for example, described how he would often go for a walk.

It's a little bit strange to just sort of be sitting there not knowing what to do with yourself. I'm not very good at sitting still anyway, I hate the thought of wasting time, so when I'm just sitting in a car and thinking like I wonder if I was at home I could be painting [the nursery – discussed further in Chapter 6] or something, do you know what I mean, so I just feel like I'm not getting anything done...

I just kind of have to wait about, go for a walk around, you know getting your steps in! That kind of thing. So yeah, it's been, it's been okay. Actually, I found I've managed to distract myself...whatever to pass the time that way, I've managed not worry too much while she's in there.

Ollie (second trimester)

This provides an interesting insight into the implicit spatialities of emotional management (cf. Giazitzoglu, 2019), particularly of ‘dealing with’ the anxiety of waiting (discussed in the next section), navigating these borders, and the emotion work they elicit. This is through what Ollie does while waiting outside, using the embodied practice of going for a walk as a way to ‘cope with’ anxiety and uncertainty of what is happening on the inside, and as a distraction for being unable to support Beth.

Though in a very different context of expectancy – another participant, John, who was becoming a father through adoption, similarly described using embodied forms of movement in order to cope with anxieties of waiting for a phone call from their social worker.

we’d finished our first day’s training, then we had to have a phone call with our social worker and her boss and I was as anxious as anything, I could not stop pacing.

John (Stage 2)

However, these embodied tactics of undertaking emotion work may only have temporary affective resonance at helping to cope with anxiety. This is particularly significant given the temporalities of how long participants would sometimes have to wait outside before being reunited with their partner, revealed in an extract of one of Ollie’s diary entries.

[after the scan] Beth was due to go back in for an appointment with the Obstetrician, just a general check up on the pregnancy. In she went and off I went for another walk. As she had been inside for such a short time for the scan, I made this walk a short one and headed back up to wait outside the building. Big mistake! This time she was in there for what seemed like ages, and it was bloody freezing! After a while I found that I started worrying a little more too. Why was she taking so long? Was something wrong?

Ollie (Diary)

This highlights the heightened emotion work performed by expectant fathers during the pandemic, with Ollie concealing his feelings of disappointment in order to be a supportive partner for Beth, providing her with the support and reassurance to go into the scan without him to check on their unborn son. It echoes the theme of emotional bordering (Macht, 2020a,

2017) discussed previously, although here in a more institutionalised form, highlighting the intensely geographical nature of such emotion work; with this bordering being both metaphorical and literal. This is through ‘barring’ expectant fathers (and their non-pregnant bodies) from maternity care spaces, with significant emotional ramifications for expectant fathers. Indeed, these restrictions caused expectant fathers to largely internalise traditional understandings of their rather secondary position as parents (Menzel, 2022; Lista and Bresesti, 2020), actively signalling to fathers a societal understanding of their secondary positioning in the parenting team (Menzel, 2022) – specifically via the active removal of expectant fathers bodies from maternity care spaces. This is revealed in Ollie’s narrative above, with his support and reassurance for Beth positioning her as the primary parent, who must go to the appointment for their child, because she (and her pregnant body) is necessary, while Ollie (and his non-pregnant body) is not. Importantly, these restrictions had implications, emotionally, embodying a complex ‘welfare trade-off’ with expectant fathers’ emotions/experiences within these spaces, with fathers’ emotions being part of the ‘fallout’ of such policies (ibid.) as I now explore.

4.5.2. Masculine Expectations to ‘Dealing with It’

For many expectant fathers, the anguish of being unable to attend antenatal appointments/scans, and ‘missing out’ on these experiences due to coronavirus-restrictions, was coupled with (and arguably even exacerbated by) how visitor-restriction policies left them unable to support their partner having to wait outside and thus being unable to ‘be there for’ her.

The hardest part [about not being able to attend the 20-week scan] was that I wasn’t able to give Daisy that emotional support and that I just couldn’t be there for her.

Damien

This reflects the central importance expectant fathers place on providing unwavering support to their partner during pregnancy, seeing this as their primary responsibility (Das and Hodgkinson, 2020), with many fathers explicitly describing their feelings of helplessness and inadequacy at being unable to fulfil this seemingly basic role (ibid.; similarly see Hildingsson et al. 2011).

The weeks leading up to the birth involved a number of hospital visits and all I could do was sit in the carpark for hours, in the unknown, unable to help.

Jason

I've never felt so useless sitting out there, knowing Rose was struggling and alone...I'd have done anything to have been there with her.

Harry

I just wanted to be there by her side to support her.

Rupert

While many social media narratives were replete with deeply emotional experiences, expressing the pain of 'missing out' on appointments, many expectant fathers also acknowledged the importance of these restrictions as an effort to minimise the spread of coronavirus, particularly within healthcare spaces but also across society as a whole. Indeed, some expectant fathers even explained how knowing their sacrifice would help protect others in society enabled them to cope with the pain and difficulty of their experience.

It's tough. Sometimes waiting outside for over an hour and a half for Aida can feel like a really long time...I can deal with it because I know it's for the greater good.

Russ

Russ' is particularly interesting for how he describes his ability to 'deal with' the difficulty and emotional demands of this situation, demonstrating his (masculine) 'strength' (de Boise, 2018; McQueen, 2017; Dolan and Coe, 2011). He thus implicitly draws upon a discourse of hegemonic masculinity, being able to deny and overcome his emotions and maintain a composed, stoic exterior (ibid.; Macht, 2017).

These expectations derive especially from hegemonic forms of masculinity, and the communicative metaphor of expectant fathers to be an unemotional 'rock' and 'pillar of support' during pregnancy (Das and Hodkinson, 2020). Importantly, this is not to suggest that expectant mothers were not equally (or more) emotionally effected, but rather to draw attention to the gendered and societal expectations of emotion work which were heightened for expectant fathers during the pandemic, through the expectation to (self) manage emotions in order to fulfil the central role of supportive partner (Åsenhed et al., 2013), as a pillar of strength, able to deal with anxieties/fears, particularly within the emotional turbulence of the pandemic (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020). Interestingly, the performance of emotion work as part of expectant fathering was also evident well beyond spaces of direct encounter with their partner, including in spaces of work (cf. Hochschild, 1983).

4.6. Silencing of Emotions: Navigating Covid Restrictions and Workplace Spaces

Societal expectations of hegemonic masculinities and emotional (self)management during the turbulence of the pandemic were further evinced via expectant fathers' experiences of navigating pandemic restrictions within workplace spaces (Das and Hodkinson, 2020). The pandemic had significant implications for workplace geographies (see Reuschke and Felstead, 2020), including changes to spaces of the 'workplace' – disruptions to normal spatial routines of employment. This was perhaps most evident by many participants largely (although not exclusively) working from home for much of the pandemic; although with connection to other spaces and spatial restrictions such as those within maternity care (Menzel, 2022).

4.6.1. Going to Ultrasound Appointments

Since 2014, expectant fathers in the UK have been entitled to take time off in order to attend two antenatal appointments with their partner (GOV.UK, 2023, 2014), implemented as part of employee rights for paternity leave to encourage fathers' involvement and presence during pregnancy (Draper and Ives, 2013). The emotional geographies of expectant fathers' negotiation of parental leave is discussed more explicitly in Chapter 7 – however, pandemic restrictions had significant implications on the emotion work performed by expectant fathers in the workplace, which are worth examining here.

Due to a previous miscarriage, Ollie's partner, Beth, was deemed a relatively high-risk pregnancy, and was therefore having extra ultrasound scan appointments in order to monitor the health of their baby. He explained that, although COVID restrictions meant he often could not attend the appointments with her (as discussed previously), they both found comfort in him driving her to the hospital (Menzel, 2022); with him 'going' to every appointment in order to 'be there for' her in as far as he possibly could.

(he takes in a breath) there's a situation that arose at work...So basically I've been going to every appointment with Beth...I haven't been able to go into the vast majority of them because of the situation with COVID but I've been able to at least take her and wait in the car until she comes back, which, while I'm not really doing anything other than just being there, but I know it's at least a comfort to her that she's not had to go on her own...

Ollie (second trimester)

As a consequence of Beth having so many extra appointments, some of these fell during Ollie's workday.

There have been a lot of appointments because as I say, Beth has been getting a lot of extra checks and stuff and I've be going with her for literally everything – obviously where possible we've been trying to schedule the appointments outside my working day, but that's obviously not always possible and everything.

Ollie (second trimester)

To reduce the disruption caused by him taking time out of his workday, Ollie would inform his workplace of the dates/times of these appointments, letting them know when he would not be available. However, when sending over the schedule of appointments going into their third trimester, his line manager (who was expecting a baby herself around the same time), asked if he could only go to ‘essential’ scans.

So after Christmas I sent through some more appointments that I had coming up and they asked me to only (he pauses), only go to the essential ones. (He takes a breath)

Ollie (second trimester)

Ollie described feeling very emotionally conflicted about this; wanting to be there to support Beth but feeling unable to refuse his managers’ request. This was particularly because he was also uncertain of whether he had any rights to contest this – especially so given the context of COVID and the likelihood of not being able to attend the scan itself.

And I’ve kind of (he says hesitantly) I kind of *agreed* to this. But I’m not really sure, I feel a little bit stuck between a rock and a hard place in terms of my obligations to work, I don’t really know if I have any means to say actually I want to go to these appointments anyway or you know whether I can do that or not, so I feel a little bit frustrated by that, because again I wasn’t, it was like I was taking the time out, I was making up the time, so they weren’t losing any time from me.

Ollie (second trimester)

Ollie’s experience reveals how the navigation of emotion work/emotional management is fundamentally mediated by space – and particularly by borders (Macht, 2020a, 2017). It also highlights the central role of the body in expectant fathers’ emotional navigation of pregnancy, with a clear assumption that because Ollie is not (physically) pregnant, his body is not *needed* at this appointment, with his manager subsequently denying his request for time to attend – a request unlikely to be denied to a pregnant mother.

This is indicative of how pandemic restrictions embodied a re-entrenching of traditional parental roles, reinforced through spaces beyond physical borders of participation in ultrasound scan appointments. This is through Ollie wanting to go to appointments (even if only to wait outside) but being asked by his line manager not to, reifying his ‘place’ being at work, rather than in pre-parenting spaces of maternity care, situating his primary role being as a worker, rather than being involved in bonding with his future child. He subsequently explained feeling frustrated and angry about these conflicting ‘allegiances’ between being a ‘good father’ and a ‘good worker’, which are spatially manifest (Menzel, under review – see also Chapter 7), further describing his feeling that perhaps he was ‘pushing his luck’ in going to these appointments.

When work sort of said that they’d like me to try and only go to essential appointments (he tilts head and begins to rephrase)...That was a bit frustrating as I didn’t quite know how to take that and I felt a little bit angry about it...It’s difficult, the times we’re in – and the fact that you know, I’ve never been through this before, so I don’t know if it’s normal for the birth partner to try and go to all the appointments....I think maybe I was pushing my luck...

Ollie (second trimester)

In feeling unable to argue with this request from his workplace, Ollie’s experience here is indicative of a general silencing of expectant fathers and their emotions/feelings during the pandemic, indicative of a complex ‘welfare trade-off’ as I have argued previously (Menzel, 2022). His narrative illustrates the performance of emotion work through the management of his feelings of frustration and anger to instead (calmly) agree with this request made by his workplace (see de Boise, 2018 on men and emotional stoicism). This performance of emotion work is particularly significant here for Ollie in (re)positioning himself as a ‘good worker’ – with important connections to hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021;

Haas and Hwang, 2019; McDowell, 2004) – agreeing to the request to not attend scans in order to minimise disruptions to his workplace (see later in Chapter 7).

Ollie's experience is further indicative of how institutional restrictions contributed to an emotional bordering of expectant fathering within the pandemic, with Ollie, not only agreeing to, but also *internalising* an understanding that it is not his 'place' to attend a scan. This is indicated through this uncertainty over his rights as an expectant father to be able to be able to go; and acquiescence that going is disruptive to work and thus should be avoided. It is also evinced through the hints of a certain level of apprehension he felt about the amount of time he was taking away from work, admitting to there being "a lot of appointments". Indeed, Ollie acknowledged, quite openly, how taking this time out of work to go to these appointments was rather disruptive to work, and to his productivity.

But it is disruptive, you know going out in the middle of the day is disruptive to my flow,
so if I'm sitting there working on something and I suddenly have to go out for two hours,
so I can't deny that.

Ollie (second trimester)

This is significant for how it illustrates the tension between the desire to be a supportive partner (by going to scans) and Ollie's primary responsibility – as a father – being at work, rather than involved in care or pre-parenting practices; such as 'being there' by being involved in ultrasound scan appointments (Menzel, 2022). I return to these tensions between workplace responsibilities/expectations and fathers' active participation in care in Chapter 7.

4.6.2. The Paradox of Emotional Expression: Banter in Spaces of Hypermasculinity

Within the context of COVID, workplaces were deemed particularly 'risky' spaces, places where one could be exposed to, and spread, the virus. This was a particular point of anxiety for expectant fathers in this project, particularly when there was an expectation from their employer to still be going into work, rather than working from home (Das and Hodkinson,

2020). The riskiness of workplace spaces required careful management of emotions – particularly in relation to gendered expectations of hegemonic masculinities within workplace spaces (Gorman-Murray, 2017, 2008; McDowell, 2004) and gendered expectations of emotion-work (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Hochschild, 1983).

This was revealed especially by Martin, who works in the rather (hyper)masculine environment of law enforcement (Mahalik et al., 2022; Alcadipani, 2020), a job requiring face-to-face work and interaction with members of the public (though he had taken a temporary secondment/promotion which had greater capacity for remote work). He described how going into work made him a potential risk to his partner Mel, who has a congenital heart condition, making him especially sensitive the potential risk COVID may have on her pregnancy.

I'm very much more kind of aware of, you know (he grits his teeth and crunches his fingers in front of him in panic/anxiety) – I'm the weak link in the chain really...If anyone's going to give Mel COVID, it's gonna be me (his face softens as though in guilt) because I'm having to interact with people and going into my daily work

Martin (third trimester)

Martin's narrative here is indicative of the gendered and anticipatory forms of emotional governance employed during the pandemic (see Menzel, 2022 of emotional governance of expectant fathering during the pandemic), with Martin *already* feeling guilty at the *prospect* of giving Mel COVID.

He described his experience of being at work where a number of colleagues were coughing, making him feel particularly anxious about the possibility of contracting COVID, which would potentially pose a significant risk to his pregnant partner Mel, and therefore asking to work from home.

I was in work today and, um, a couple of colleagues were coughing (he quirks a brow, hand still to his temple) and I'm thinking (with an almost imperceptible shake of the head) "I don't like this", "I don't like this"...and so I went to my boss going "I'm really not happy about this", you know, my partner's, she's had one jab, she's not fully vaccinated as such, and "can I work from home, please?" (he tilts his head, looking down, almost sad).

Martin (third trimester)

In response to this request (and in particular the outward expression of his feelings of anxiety)

Martin also described receiving some 'ridicule' from his colleagues at work.

And um, there was a bit of ridicule amongst colleagues at work...I think (he scrunches his face up, looking down) I think some of the people in the office knew why I was going home

Martin (third trimester)

However, when asked what he meant by 'ridicule', he became somewhat vague, laughing this off as "total banter".

Alice: When you say "some ridicule", do you mind if I ask like what, what kind of comments that was?

Martin : Oh, it's total banter.

Martin (third trimester)

Situating this as "total banter" belies the anxiety evident in Martin's embodied expressions, indicative of his ability to 'deal with' this anxiety by downplaying the intensity of feeling, constituting emotion work (Hochschild, 1979). Indeed, it also reflects the prominence for male emotionality to be met with humour as a coping mechanism, particularly within (hyper)masculine spaces such as law enforcement workplaces (see also Giazitzoglu 2019 on banter in rugby spaces).

The silencing of emotions in relation to (hyper)masculinity was further evinced by the account of a new mother, posted on an anonymous forum for fathers, sharing the experience of her partner who had, until very recently, been in the army. While this post is less about navigating COVID-19 restrictions within workplace spaces and the emotion work entailed

within navigations of risk, this still usefully illustrates the highly gendered nature of emotion work – and silencing of emotions – and workplace spaces, particularly around (hyper)masculine forms of employment (Mahalik et al., 2022; Alcadipani, 2020).

We left the army and discovered we were pregnant early 2020 and were so excited to think he could be part of the pregnancy journey this time.

No one could have predicted what was going to happen with COVID, so again he missed out on all the appointments and was allowed to attend one scan. He would spend his time waiting for me in the car park.

All throughout pregnancy the comments (well you were in the army so you'll be fine not going to the appointment, or you can wait in the car park at least you're in the country this time) this was from friends and family.

I didn't know men could get PND but after seeing posts on Instagram I talked to him and he broke down. He cried, he said "how can I tell anyone how I feel? I am a soldier".

(anonymous fathering feeling forum post)

This incredibly poignant narrative powerfully illustrates the heightened emotion work performed by – and expected of – expectant fathers during the pandemic, explored in this section.

Particularly interesting here is how it is the *mother* who makes this post, rather than the father, even on this anonymous forum intended for fathers, reflecting the further silencing of men and emotion work in certain spaces surrounding discourses of (hyper)masculinity. This narrative also reveals the importance of emotions in terms of paternal mental health, demonstrating how the pressures/anxieties of pandemic restrictions – via the societal expectation and assumed ability for fathers to 'deal with it' and be an unemotional 'rock' and pillar of support during pregnancy/expectancy (Menzel, 2022; Hodkinson and Das, 2021). As such, pandemic restrictions embodied a complex 'welfare trade-off' with expectant fathers' emotions, and their mental health/wellbeing being part of the 'fallout' of institutional policies (Menzel, 2022).

This section has examined the silencing of expectant fathers' emotions within the pandemic, particularly the heightened expectation for expectant fathers to be an unemotional 'rock' and 'pillar of strength' during these emotionally turbulent times, managing their feelings in order to be a good and supportive partner (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020; Åsenhed et al., 2013). It has explored the highly gendered forms of emotion work performed by expectant fathers in and across different spaces/places during the pandemic, particularly maternity care and workplace spaces, examining the pressures of the assumed ability for fathers to 'deal with it' (Menzel, 2022; de Boise, 2018). Importantly, this reveals the overlapping scalar nature of emotion work, being internalised through (self)management of emotions, actively evoked through institutional spaces as part of national lockdown restrictions.

4.7. 'Arriving at Arrival' : The Significance of Emotions

Through this chapter I have explored the significance of emotion work performed by expectant fathers in different places, revealing how these are internalised through repeat performances, such that these demonstrations of masculinity become 'sticky' (Giazitzoglu 2019; Berggren, 2014), highlighting also how expectations of the management of emotions were heightened during the emotional turbulence of the pandemic (Menzel, 2022; Das and Hodkinson, 2020). However, in drawing attention to this emotion work, this chapter also implicitly reveals the prominence of emotions within expectant fathering, which are – through emotion work – “negotiated, contested, resisted and reworked differently in different in different spaces” (Aitken, 2009:230). In this final section, I highlight how expectant fathers' own understanding and recognition of their emotions was significant in terms of adjusting to their future as fathers – in particular their hopes/aspirations of being intimate and involved fathers (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Dermott, 2008).

Indeed, earlier in this chapter, I explored how many participants expressed wanting to be more emotionally available to their children than their father had been to them. However, while this highlights the importance of emotions within contemporary forms of (expectant) fathering (Menzel, 2022; Meah and Jackson, 2016; Aitken, 2009, 2005, 2000), participants also talked about the significance of emotions and the need for time to be able to *process* and reflect on these as part of becoming a father.

We're used to sort of everything quite immediate, like, you know, and fast like, whether it's, you know, like, consuming anything, TV, shopping, whatever, you know, it comes immediately. And then this, like, you know, this biological thing has to take nine months – or you know, well, it takes longer from when, you know, when you're trying to have a baby. And it's sort of strange because you've sort of got to go with that. And it's not as quick as maybe we'd like it to be. But then at the same time, I guess, I sort of think it sort of takes nine months – not because, like, biologically, that's probably how long, how long it does take to grow a baby. But also I think mentally, like, you know, for both parents to sort of come to terms with it.

Robbie (second trimester)

They also talked about feeling particular 'pressures' to respond appropriately to becoming a father, interestingly *through* the outward expression of emotion.

I fear that I won't feel anything or, you know, all this pressure on me to have this incredible experience, and cry and all that shit that parents are meant to do when they see their child for the first time.

Frank (second trimester)

Frank's quote is particularly interesting for the conflicting emotional discourses and expectations here, with expectant fathers for much of the pregnancy being expected to manage and conceal their emotions (as I have explored in this chapter); but then this being contrasted heavily with, upon the arrival of their child, an expectation to *show* emotion. While this is arguably reflective of a general understanding of how intimate, involved fathering has become a catalyst for more emotional forms of masculinity (de Bosie, 2017), participants also expressed

an anxiety about their *inability* to manage their emotions, during the birth of their child (Herrera, 2020). This was largely in reference to the (typical) masculine expectation to do so, hinted at by Martin's description of the possibility of crying at the birth of his daughter as 'blubbing', which is suggestive of a rather extreme form of emotional 'outpour', tears 'spilling out', uncontrollably, which contradicts the sentiment that 'boys don't cry' (McQueen, 2017). Indeed, Martin's narrative here gives a sense of his apprehension that, in this moment, in this space, his emotions may 'get the better of him', indicating an inability to maintain control and 'mastery' over his emotions (de Boise and Hearn, 2017; Elliot, 2016).

So I think it [the birth] will go in two ways with me:

particularly when there's risk involved, I become very – I can become very clinical and detached...because it's something that needs to be dealt with, there's no, there'll be time to be emotional (he points his palms in front of him indicating 'now') you've got to do something.

So think either I'll go that way because Mel's in pain and this is happening now, and just think like (he spreads his hands in front of him, as though to encompass the enormity of the situation) this is a really important moment 'focus, focus, focus' and (he pulls a sterner, almost perplexed expression) I won't enjoy it as much, um, but at the same time, I might just be blubbing away (he recoils, laughingly) because everything's going as it should, and things are out of my control, and you know I'll just be over – (he rests his chin on his hand, smiling almost contentedly) just be really teary eyed and, I just don't know. I don't know. I think those are the two extremes um, yeah.

Martin (third trimester)

Although Martin ponders here on two possible scenarios – remaining cool, calm, and detached during the birth (Dolan and Coe, 2011), keeping an emotional distance while navigating the 'risks' involved in birthing (Daniels and Chadwick, 2018), but being aware of the *possibility* of crying – what is particularly interesting here is how this narrative shifts to a *certainty* of crying when he describes the anticipation of holding his newborn daughter.

(his words come out really quickly, jumbled up as though with emotion) I think, I think I know – thinking about it – I, I’m gonna blub probably (he gives a half laugh, putting his finger to his temple as though stressed) You know, I just feel like this is, you know, the big capital letter of like a new chapter, like the right at the start of something (short pause) yeah – I was thinking of a weird metaphor there, like it’s not a sort of full stop, or the end of something, it’s the beginning of something that’s you know – it’s not like my life’s over (he casts his hands beyond him) it’s what I’m looking at (he gestures ahead of him) is the start of something brilliant, rather than the end of something. So um yeah I just, you know, when I have thoughts about it, I always feel like you know (he closes his eyes as he describes this, holding a hand about his head as though drawing out the image he can see behind his eyes)

Martin (third trimester)

Through the processing and expression of these emotions – and importantly, being given a space to do this – Martin ‘arrives at arrival’, feeling a powerful, intimate form of connection to his future child. This is explored more in the next chapter through anticipatory forms of love/intimacy via multisensory encounters with an unborn child, mediated by bodily borders. However, this section importantly illustrates how emotions *matter* to the transition to fathering, as I argue through this thesis.

4.8. Conclusion

Emotions, and emotional management are highly gendered phenomena (Giazitzoglu, 2019; Hochschild, 1983), particularly during moments of significant life transition, such as becoming a parent (Anderson and Smith, 2001). This chapter has explored the gendered performance of emotion management within the experiences of expectant fathers. It began with a discussion of how expectant fathers conceptualise their primary ‘role’ during pregnancy, highlighting how many positioned this centrally as one of emotional support for their partner, resonating with the findings of previous research (Dolan and Coe, 2011). However, it has argued how in striving to fulfil this central role, expectant fathers’ (self)manage their emotions, exhibiting themselves as an unemotional ‘rock’ and unwavering ‘pillar of support’ (Hodkinson and Das,

2021; Menzel, 2022). I have interrogated how this emotional work thus constitutes a ‘bordering’ of emotions, with many striving to keep an emotional distance during the early stages of pregnancy in order to cope with their own anxieties and to ensure their ability to be able to support their partner. It thus extends Macht’s (2020a, 2020b) notion of ‘emotional bordering’, to reveal the geographies through which emotions (and expectations of emotional management) become internalised by expectant fathers’, becoming ‘stuck’ onto their bodies, and the formation of their identities – an expectation particularly heightened during the coronavirus pandemic (Menzel, 2022; Hodkinson and Das, 2021).

Indeed, this chapter has also revealed how even as each new, younger generation of fathers have sought to ‘push back’ on gendered discourses of parenting which reify gendered divides between mothers and fathers (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006), in particular the entanglements between masculinity and emotional stoicism (Macht, 2020a, 2020b) and affiliation between fathering and breadwinning (Aitken, 2005) – as was shown especially by Martin in Section 4.3 – change, in practice, ultimately remains slow (Doucet, 2006). This is not least through how, even as fathers aspire to do parenting differently, various spaces of expectancy (specifically here maternity care and workplace legislation especially) continue to force these expectations onto fathers, pushing them back into traditional gender roles – particularly in times of crisis (Menzel, 2022).

While this chapter was concerned, primarily, with the individual scale of the body – reflecting how these expectations of emotional management are largely self-imposed by expectant fathers – through this chapter, I also revealed how this navigation of emotion-work emerges not only in different spaces and places, but is importantly cross-cut with other spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017). Specifically, I have argued how the performance of emotion work emerges through relational encounters with the bodies of others – particularly those of pregnant mothers/partners, largely embedded in the conception that expectant fathers’ primary ‘role’

during early pregnancy is to be a ‘supportive partner’ (Widarsson et al., 2015; Åsenhed et al., 2013). It is also mediated by spaces of home, and rooms within, specifically through the physical borders they provide, as I explored through the emotional geographies and emotional ‘bordering’ of taking a pregnancy test. Further still, expectant fathers’ performance of emotion work extends well beyond spaces of encounter with their partner, through broader, national lockdown restrictions during the pandemic. Indeed, a core contribution of this chapter is exploring how expectations of expectant fathers’ performance of emotion work were particularly heightened during the pandemic, via the implementation of institutional restrictions primarily within maternity care spaces, but which, I show, were also entailed in the navigation of emotions elsewhere such as through workplace spaces.

Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Menzel, 2022), institutional responses to the pandemic had significant emotional ramifications on expectant fathers embodying a temporary U-turn towards more traditional gendered parenting roles. This is not least through the (temporary) removal of expectant fathers (and their non-pregnant bodies) from spaces of maternity care, a response which effectively repositioned expectant fathers as distant spectators, rather than active participants of pregnancy/expectancy. However, through this chapter I have also shown how these COVID restrictions had ramifications for expectant fathers’ emotion work within workplace spaces, through the simultaneous reinforcement of fathers to not take time away from work in order to still ‘be there’, thus reinforcing their primary obligations and ‘place’ being at work, rather than in spaces of pre-parental care and bonding (a point I return to in Chapter 7). As such, this chapter revealed the need to think geographically about emotions and (pre)parenting, particularly in times of crisis.

5 Expectant Fathers' Inter-embodied, Multi-Sensory Encounters with an Unborn Child: Developing a Sense of Intimacy and Love

5.1. Introduction

Pregnancy and becoming a parent have long been phenomena of interest to feminist geographers, whose work has convincingly situated pregnancy as a fundamentally spatial experience (Longhurst, 2008, 2001); one which is highly gendered, negotiated within a range of spaces/places. It is also an intensely scalar experience, navigated within social spaces, but also manifest across particular spatial scales. The bodily processes of fertilising an egg and gestating a foetus for several months, for example, takes place within the space of the womb, which, as a reproductive organ, is housed within the space of (some) bodies (Longhurst, 2018). As such, and importantly for this chapter, pregnancy is fundamentally 'inter-embodied' (Lupton, 2013); mutually constituted and relationally produced via interconnectedness *between* bodies, an interconnectedness perhaps most evident between mother and unborn child (Holt, 2017).

However, despite the wealth of work on mothers' inter-embodied experiences of pregnancy and early infant care within geography (Holt, 2017; Longhurst, 2008), there has been limited examination of the experiences of (non-pregnant) partners. In particular, the experiences of expectant fathers have been largely unexamined. Indeed, expectant fathers' experiences of pregnancy/expectancy have largely been considered relatively 'disembodied' and thus largely neglected within geographic, and broader social-scientific, research (with the partial exception of a brief musing of Longhurst (2008)).

This chapter critiques this understanding, interrogating the emotional and embodied experiences of expectant fathers. It goes beyond considerations of the body at the individual scale (such as through the performance of emotional (self)management considered in Chapter 4), to consider the emotional encounters *between* bodies (Holt, 2017, 2013; Lupton, 2013).

More specifically, this chapter spotlights how expectant fathers' feelings of love/intimacy are critically mobilised via the bodily borders/boundaries which mediate their interactions with their baby 'inside' the womb, exploring the various, multi-sensory, encounters through which they may anticipate and attempt to build a bond of love/intimacy with their unborn child (Meah, 2017; Morrison et al., 2013), highlighting spatial enactments of 'doing family' with foetuses. It thus extends Holt and Philo's (2022) work on 'tiny human geographies', which I propose could offer fruitful avenues of further enquiry of, specifically, 'foetal geographies'.

Importantly, these encounters are mediated by the threshold of their partner's pregnant body, highlighting the uniquely geographical, and gendered, nature of expectant fathers' experiences of pregnancy. These encounters are both sites of connection and separation, a key theme this chapter will explore. Extending Longhurst's brief (2018) commentary on thinking geographically with the womb, I examine, empirically, expectant fathers' relational and lived inter-embodied encounters with the womb as *a space within* the body of another; an interior bodily space towards which expectant fathers' lives become temporarily gravitated towards, extending feminist geographic work on bodily borders/boundaries (Colls and Fannin, 2013).

This chapter builds especially on Meah's (2017) analysis of father-child intimacy, which highlights the ability for sensory experience to transport us – metaphorically, though in explicitly embodied ways – to different spacetimes, bridging distances between absent loved ones. These distances may be vast, or, as I will show, incredibly small, merely a layer of skin, bridging distances between expectant father and unborn child, inside the womb, via *anticipatory* acts of love/intimacy, examining experiences of fatherly caregiving *before* the arrival of a child. Moreover, while Meah (2017) focuses on taste and smell in eliciting a sense of ontological proximity/closeness with an absent loved one (enabled via foodwork, the preparing and consumption of certain foods), I focus in this chapter on multi-sensory encounters as evoked by sensory geographies of sight (Draper, 2002b), sound (Kerr et al., 2018;

Doughty et al., 2016) and touch (cf. Morrison, 2012a – see also Paterson, 2009; Obrador-Pons, 2007) in eliciting love/intimacy in profoundly inter-embodied ways, mediated via the bodies of others.

By positioning such experiences as inter-embodied (after Lupton, 2013) – though in ways perhaps distinct from those of mothers – I demonstrate how attention to the emotio-spatialities of expectant fathering, through the body, may be significant for facilitating new, critical insight for unpicking assumptions of differing and gendered expectations of care responsibilities performed by mothers/fathers, which feminist geographers, especially, could usefully contribute towards. In particular, I explore how these encounters are bound up with expectant fathers' emotional connection with their future parenting practices, especially for evoking an ontological sense of emotional closeness/proximity with their future, unborn, child; thus constituting anticipatory forms of love/intimacy (cf. Meah, 2017).

Extending findings of Chapter 4, I begin with a brief explication of the significance of 'milestone moments' (Draper, 2003a, 2002b) to expectant fathers' feelings of connection to the pregnancy – and to the future child, inside the womb – establishing, empirically, the connection between bodies and expectant fathers' emotions – particularly feelings of love/intimacy (cf. Meah, 2017). I highlight here how these emotions/experiences, emerge via direct encounters with the body of their pregnant partner, demonstrating how these experiences are thus fundamentally inter-embodied and relationally produced through *shared* moments/experiences (Lupton, 2013). I then situate these inter-embodied experiences as fundamentally geographical, exploring them through notions of bodily borders/boundaries (Colls and Fannin, 2013; Abrahamson and Simpson, 2011). Indeed, I reveal especially how participants articulated the distinct embodied nature of pregnancy between them and their partner via the spatial dichotomy of 'inside'/'outside' and the implications of such borders for fathers' sense of connection to their unborn child and ability to begin developing a sense of

self as a father pre-birth (cf. Tomori and Boyer, 2019). Importantly, these borders were both sites of separation, and connection, for expectant fathers. I therefore unpack this notion of inside/outside further, through critical interrogation of various multi-sensory encounters through which fathers sought to interact with their baby, inside the womb (cf. Longhurst, 2018), which I argue in the final section constitute anticipatory acts of love/intimacy (cf. Meah, 2017).

Importantly, however, this analysis is not to offer a prescriptive list of practices/engagements which may constitute ‘good fathering’ as part of a culturally-specific understanding of intimate and involved fathering ideals currently adopted in the UK (Twamley, 2019; Dermott, 2008). Rather, it presents the narratives of the practices that my participants engaged in and the significance of these encounters (emotionally and practically) for them, as expectant fathers, in bonding with their future child in emotionally powerful and care-fully-laden ways; to foster their involvement in pre-parental care. I return to this point in the conclusion of this chapter by outlining the broader contributions of this focus beyond the experiences of my participants, carried forward into Chapter 6 where I explore expectant fathers’ affective encounters with baby things within the home, going beyond the inter-embodied experiences of pregnancy.

5.2. Embodying (Dis)Connection: Bodies and Expectant Fathers’ Emotions

Although I focus in this chapter on expectant fathers’ inter-embodied encounters with their unborn child, inside the womb, this is not to displace or render invisible expectant mothers (or pregnant people more broadly); nor their bodies, feelings and identities. Rather, in framing these experiences as ‘*inter-embodied*’, I acknowledge explicitly how these encounters are mutually constituted and relationally produced via encounters *between* bodies, most especially that of their pregnant partner (after Lupton, 2013), making mothers’ bodies very much present in this chapter (and indeed, this research as a whole).

Throughout this research, all participants at some point explicitly acknowledged the primacy of their partners' embodied experience of pregnancy, compared to their own:

Beth has obviously been going through more than me, because of the changes she's going through physically...

Ollie (third trimester)

Indeed, there was often considerable emphasis on participants experiencing these moments *with* their partner, as a shared, intimate experience, indicative of contemporary understandings of pregnancy/parenting as a 'collaborative endeavour' between mothers and fathers (see Tomori and Boyer, 2019); which fathers may actively engage in as part of demonstrations of pre-parental commitment to parenting/childrearing. For example, when describing his experience of the first ultrasound scan, Martin described the overwhelming urge to hold his partner, Mel's, hand just as the baby came on screen.

I just grabbed Mel's hand...when the baby came on the screen – I hold my partner's hand all the time – but when I held her hand, for both of us...It just felt different holding her hand

Martin (second trimester)

Martin's narrative highlights the significance of hand-holding as a haptic performance of love/intimacy between himself and Mel as a couple (see Morrison, 2012a). However, he explains how this act took on profound new meaning within the space of the ultrasound scan; the experience of encountering their unborn child bringing forth a sense of themselves as *parents* (cf. Tomori and Boyer, 2019). Indeed, the 'grasping' of Mel's hand reflects both the intense (emotional) reaction to 'seeing' their baby on the screen – and excitement about becoming parents – as well as a metaphorical 'grasping' of Martin's transition to fatherhood through Mel's pregnancy (Draper, 2002b).

The significance of these inter-embodied experiences was illustrated especially by Frank. Frank was the only participant to describe having used a pregnancy app, although, he only noted this very briefly – perhaps as a way of highlighting his active involvement in the pregnancy, particularly given his emphasis on how it is *him* using one, and not Faith (in contrast to Hamper, 2022; Hamper and Nash, 2021). However, Frank went into considerably more detail when describing his *physical* encounters with the pregnancy (discussed later), growing particularly animated when describing how the early progression of Faith’s body at just 17-week’s gestation related to his sense of the pregnancy ‘feeling real’, thus highlighting the role of inter-embodied experiences in mobilising the impending reality of the arrival of their child.

Well actually I’m the one with the baby app on my phone, I’m the one who’s tracking the development of the baby...Faith’s hardly showing a bump, so in that sense it’s on the *cusp* of being real (he waves his hand in front of him, with a curved trajectory, as though brushing his hand along his partners’ bump).

Frank (second trimester)

Here, Frank also draws attention to the prominence of bodily borders/boundaries to his experience as an expectant father, the miming of an intimate caress over Faith’s baby bump highlighting how their baby is growing *within* Faith’s body. This was also highlighted by Denny, who alluded to his sense of anticipation/excitement about the impending arrival of their daughter.

We’re talking about this person – which is currently residing inside my wife and is soon going to be out and about – and she’s going to be our daughter...and we’re going to be in love with her in a way we’re not in love with each other.

Denny (second trimester)

Particularly interesting here is his reference to the love he feels (or will feel) for their daughter, which he distinguishes from the love he has for his partner. This situates this as a distinctly paternal love, revealing a sense of personhood as a father to this child before they are even born (Macht, 2020a, 2017; Meah, 2017).

These various anticipatory (even imagined) encounters, as I explore through this chapter, allow expectant fathers to begin conceptualising the growing foetus, inside the womb, as already a person; as their baby (Holt and Philo, 2022). Indeed, such anticipatory/imagined encounters also mobilised visceral emotional reactions for some participants, highlighting the significance of embodied encounters to their emotions and experiences as expectant fathers (Draper, 2003a, 2002b), as Martin revealed.

When I do *allow* myself to think about holding my daughter (he shrugs, smiling), I do feel really warm and like – (he puts his hands to his chest, explaining where the warmth ‘is’. After a minute pause, he tries to explain differently) – Just welling up basically! (he grows much quieter), by, by emotion, so yeah.

Martin (second trimester)

In a later interview, he clarified how he was literally ‘welling up’ in the interview, thinking about his daughter (as opposed to describing how he *has* felt when imagining this in the past).

When we last spoke, I remember talking to you about um when we were first scan (he mumbles his words, grinning), when we went for our first scan and I held her hand and it felt like a really special moment – and I ended up getting a bit watery-eyed, I didn’t think I would, because I didn’t at the time, (he gestures to the side implying the past) but talking back about it got me, yeah, getting quite emotional

Martin (third trimester)

This clarification not only provides a useful justification of how repeat interviews can provide extremely rich, detailed insight into expectant fathers’ experiences (as I discussed in Chapter 3), but also reveals how emotionally palpable fathers’ imagined encounters with future children can be, literally bringing Martin to (happy) tears during the interview.

What is particularly interesting here is how it is the thought of *holding* his daughter – in his own arms – that provokes this emotion from Martin, revealing the intense emotional capacity of (multi)sensory experience in evoking emotion (Davidson and Milligan, 2004); particularly for facilitating emotional connections of love/intimacy between intimates (Holmes, 2015; Morrison, 2012a). Indeed, his narrative also highlights the intense capacity for such emotional, multi-sensory encounters to blur the boundaries between future/present, through how imagining holding his daughter once she is born elicits an intense emotional reaction at just 23-weeks. As with Denny’s explanation earlier, this experience evokes a distinctly paternal form of care and care-full-ness for a future child, contrasting heavily with participants’ previous feelings about holding babies which many characterised largely through emotions of paranoia and fear.

I’ve held a couple of babies before and been really paranoid that I’m doing it wrong and that I’m going to drop them...when I think about holding him [my son], my first thing is a little pang of fear I guess (Alice nods) because I will then be responsible, I need to know how to hold him properly, because I’m going to be doing it a lot...But I suppose kind of like proud as well – even though it’s not obviously happened yet it will at some point and, you know, I’m going to be proud that he’s my son and that we got there and that we’re going to be bringing him up.

Ollie (second trimester)

other people’s babies I’m always worried about holding in case I drop them, because I’m thinking “Oh God, it’s so precious and what if...?” but with my one (he closes his eyes briefly and then brings his arms to his chest repeatedly), I think the urge to kind of hold my baby will override any, any fears – I’ll still, you know, be worried, but I think the motivation would be, be too great it will override any, you know, concerns

Martin (third trimester)

This reveals how inter-embodied, multi-sensory encounters become enrolled into expectant fathers' anticipatory sense of love and intimacy for their unborn child. Although fear remains present in these narratives – arguably reflective of the prominence of anxiety within contemporary parenting practices (Faircloth and Murray, 2015) – both Ollie and Martin here allude to having an overriding and intense *desire* to hold their future children (cf. Gabb, 2004) and to begin caring for them, blurring the boundaries between future and present (Draper, 2003a, 2002b).

These temporalities are intimately bound up with the spatialities of pregnancy and expectant fathering – which as I show in the remainder of this chapter, occur in explicitly inter-embodied ways.

5.2.1. Inside/Outside: Bodily Borders and Boundaries within Father-Foetal Interactions

As discussed in Chapter 4, in examining the emotion work of expectant fathering, many participants situated their role during pregnancy as secondary, and primarily as being one of support (Widarsson et al., 2015; Åsenhed et al., 2013). This was often through explicit reference to differing reproductive bodily capacities (Mohr and Almeling, 2020; Speranza et al., 2017; Draper, 2002b).

You can only do so much when [the baby's] in the womb

Azri (second trimester)

Your role kicks in more in terms of the actual birth-day, that's when you step up...there's not much you honestly can do between that time apart from support your wife

Logan (second trimester)

These quotes illustrate the prominence of bodily borders, boundaries, and interior bodily spaces in mediating expectant fathers' experiences of pregnancy. Participants positioned pregnancy as an interior experience, with their baby growing inside their partner's womb; a space which

fathers cannot access or know, with many expressing how it is only when their baby is born – and on the ‘outside’ – that they would be able to be involved and actively contribute to the care of their child. As such, Azri and Logan demonstrate how expectant fathers’ experiences are heavily demarcated by the spatial binary of ‘inside/outside’ with their emotions and feelings being powerfully compounded by this dichotomy.

These narratives are reflective of the ‘pervasive and persuasive’ societal rhetoric that ‘men don’t have children, women do’, referring to women’s (assumed) reproductive capacity to carry and birth children, compared to men’s (supposed) biological inability (Mohr and Almeling, 2020: 163). Indeed, both Azri and Logan draw implicitly upon this rhetoric above, these experiences demonstrating a certain sense of emotional aloofness – even emotional detachment – resigning themselves almost completely to the irrefutable ‘fact’ of pregnancy (cf. Aitken, 2000), and using this to explain their limited ability to be involved pre-birth. I actively seek to critique this conception in this chapter, by situating expectant fathering as fundamentally inter-embodied.

This emotional aloofness is distinctly reminiscent of the themes discussed in Chapter 4 around masculinity and emotion (Macht, 2020a, 2017), however, it also importantly highlights the central role of the body in the emotional geographies of expectant fathering (Longhurst, 2017). Fathers commonly described their feelings of being unable to experience embodied moments of pregnancy first-hand. One participant, Tom, even admitted to feeling an odd sense of *jealousy* that his partner, Tara, could experience these intimate, embodied sensations, and that her body can do this ‘amazing thing’ which his could not.

Tara could feel the kicks weeks before, but I couldn’t feel them on the outside...In some ways, I do feel slightly jealous that she can do this, this amazing thing.

Tom (third trimester)

Indeed, Denny, even described a certain sense of ‘guilt’ that he *could* forget about the pregnancy as it is not happening to his body.

I am guilty, as the man in this venture, of kind of – I have let it go out my thoughts on and off for a bit, you know?...and not being pregnant myself– it might just slip out my head. So when things come along, like “Oh, come and feel this kick” I’m like “Oh my god. Yes. We’re having a baby.” And I’ll say things like “We’re having a baby aren’t we?”

Denny (second trimester)

Although, he also expressed his amazement (indeed, even admiration) for the capacities of Anni’s body to be growing a life inside her – not least all the fleshy parts of the body of another person!

Anni was saying the other day, like, you know, “I’m growing like a set of ears inside me”, or a set of feet or you know, sexual organs are growing inside me, all those things, you know, like, wow, you know, these things are happening. So it is, it is amazing.

Denny (second trimester)

Ollie even described his disappointment over when Beth would feel the baby kicking but he could not feel this on the ‘outside’, the force of the baby’s kick (at 25-weeks) not quite yet able to penetrate the interior boundaries of Beth’s body to be felt and experienced by Ollie on the outside. This highlights the fundamental interiority of mothers’ experiences of pregnancy and foetal movement (Holt, 2013), which expectant fathers may only experience on the outside, mediated by the border of their partners’ body: separating them from their unborn child, inside the womb (Draper, 2003a, 2003b, 2002b).

Obviously, Beth will tell me that he’s kicking and I’ll put my hands on her belly to feel him move – I can’t always, because obviously it’s happening inside her and she can feel everything. I can’t always be able to

Ollie (second trimester)

Ollie's experience is particularly interesting for how it reflects an understanding of their partner's (inter)embodied experience of pregnancy as continuous, with constant physical reminders, whereas expectant fathers' experiences were often more fragmented.

Indeed, these borders/boundaries evoked a plethora of emotions from expectant fathers and were particularly prominent in separating expectant fathers' exterior experiences to the interior bodily experiences of their pregnant partner. This was largely as a consequence of the inter-embodied, and inter-scalar, nature of pregnancy; with the baby growing inside the womb, within the body of their pregnant partner (cf. Longhurst, 2018; Holt, 2013). As such, these experiences powerfully demonstrate how expectant fathers largely internalise this societal rhetoric in situating their role during pregnancy (and indeed early infant care) as largely secondary to mothering (cf. Aitken, 2000). Indeed, these differing embodied experiences were so internalised by expectant fathers that they were used to explain the comparative (dis)connection between mothers/fathers and unborn child, with the bodily borders creating an inherent separation – both physically and emotionally – between expectant fathers and their unborn child in ways which were not evident for expectant mothers.

This was alluded to especially by Robbie in our post-birth interview, wherein he explained how the (dis)embodied nature of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood mediated his feelings of connection, positioning his 'bond' as a father as somewhat secondary. He situated Haley's bond as having been more 'naturally' established during the pregnancy, in the carrying of their baby inside her, whilst he was only able to begin 'learning to love' their daughter once she was born, at which point he could more actively participate in caregiving (Kushner et al., 2017).

I think for, for me, for fathers...I think I've got to like learn to love her a bit. Whereas for Haley, because she's been inside her for nine months, maybe that's more, more natural, more, you know, in-built in her. Whereas for me, I think it's just sort of learning to love her a bit, by just being with her and the fact that she's here.

Robbie (post-birth interview)

Indeed, even John, who was becoming a father through adoption, drew comparisons between the perceived 'naturalness' for mothers to form an intimate bond with a child due to the embodied experience of pregnancy.

If she was our own like birth child...Val would have gone through all of the bonding through the birth and time before, when she was stuck in the womb

John (post-match interview)

These narratives are reflective of a certain socio-cultural rhetoric that, as a consequence of the embodied nature of pregnancy, mothering is somehow more 'natural' and instinctive than fathering (cf. Ruddick, 1995, 1992). This societal discourse is arguably highly problematic for combating gendered inequalities of men's participation in care perpetuating an idea that fathers' (male) bodies are not 'equipped' to care (Longhurst, 2017 Aitken, 2000) – reminiscent of Ollie's experience of being denied time off work to attend an antenatal appointment with Beth (discussed in Chapter 4). I return to this point in Chapter 7, where I examine the ways in which the gendered affordances of parental leave are often grounded in a (biologically deterministic) 'embodied logic' around early infant care (Faircloth, 2021; Tomori, 2009).

However, as feminist scholar Ranson (2014) shows in her examination of the embodied caregiving practices of new fathers, care is a fundamentally *learned* phenomenon. Critiquing assumptions of the 'naturalness' of differing bodily capacities for care between mothers and fathers, she argues how infant care involves what – building on Bourdieu (1990) and reminiscent of Burkitt's (2014) emotional habitus – she terms an 'embodied habitus'. In other words, parental care is not wholly 'natural' – for mothers, or fathers – but instead requires

routinised practice in order to become familiar and instinctual. Indeed, to somewhat critique Robbie's suggestion above, during follow-up interviews, a number of participants demonstrated their incredibly adept ability to care for their babies in intensely embodied ways. This included Robbie himself, who went about the kitchen preparing a milk bottle, doing so with such familiarity and efficiency, simultaneously undertaking this (practical) caregiving tasks while talking. Tom, meanwhile, expertly soothed a restless baby (strapped to his chest in a sling – see Whittle, 2018) numerous times during one of our interviews. These experiences reveal how parenting is more of a practice, fundamentally *learned* through routinised engagement, but which may be done so by fathers, rather than necessarily being an innately more 'maternal practice' (Ranson, 2014; Ruddick, 1995, 1992). As such, it is illustrative of the significance of the body, and inter-embodied encounters, in enabling expectant fathers to 'arrive at arrival' in intensely emotionalised ways, as I now explore.

However, even as these bodily borders and differing bodily experiences provided sites of apparent separation between father and unborn child, they also provided important sites of connection, with Denny explaining how Anni's experiences of pregnancy provide a powerful reminder and 'prompt' of the impending transition to fatherhood (Draper, 2003a, 2002a).

You know – Anni's living out the pregnancy, her body is she's, she's got a living human being growing inside of her belly, whereas for me, it's like these things will dawn on me like, 'Oh, we're having a baby' and we you know, so to know that we're not having just a baby, it's, 'We're – *I'm* having a daughter', I think is actually a big thing for a father

Denny (second trimester)

This feeling of anticipation was similarly expressed by Azri, describing his overwhelming excitement towards the end of their third trimester that *the only thing missing now is their baby being on the outside*, and it's just a matter of waiting those extra few weeks.

Just real excited to meet this little baby...everything's – it's all set up, we have everything. Like the only thing missing now is her being on the outside

Azri (third trimester)

While the spatial dichotomy of inside/outside constitutes a degree of *separation* between father and unborn child, these experiences illustrate palpably how they also provide spaces of *connection* and, indeed, anticipation of future fatherhood, with Azri describing his overwhelming excitement towards the end of their third trimester that *the only thing missing now is their baby being on the outside*. He is *ready* – emotionally, and as I will go on to discuss in Chapter 6, practically – for his daughter to arrive: it’s just a matter of waiting those extra few weeks for her to physically arrive into the outside world.

This section has established the primacy of bodily borders/boundaries to fathers’ experiences, which significantly mediate fathers’ emotions/feelings of connection (cf. Aitken, 2000). This is especially demarcated through the spatial dichotomy of inside/outside, which participants drew upon to articulate their ability to engage with, and connect to, their baby inside the womb. In the next section of this chapter, I explore a series of multi-sensory inter-embodied encounters through which fathers interacted with their unborn child in different spaces/places, constituting anticipatory acts of love/intimacy (Meah, 2017).

5.3. Inter-Embodied Encounters: Transcending the Border

This section explores the array of (inter)embodied encounters that participants had with their baby inside the womb, interrogating how these multisensory experiences enabled the transcendence of the (emotional and physical) border between inside/outside and between father and baby (cf. Macht, 2020a; Colls and Fannin, 2013). These experiences thus embody what Draper (2003a, 2002b, 2002b) has referred to as ‘body-mediated moments’ – or ‘physical prompts’ as Robbie explains below – as ways in which the pregnancy begin to ‘feel more real’ and more tangible.

I guess [the reality of] it comes and goes and depends if there’s like a *physical prompt* for it...it’s still happening, but it’s maybe not as tangible

Robbie (second trimester)

Importantly, each of the encounters discussed in this section – including visual, audial and haptic interactions between father and unborn child, took place literally *via* the body of the pregnant mother (Draper, 2003a, 2003b, 2002b) – with Logan explaining how it is just a layer of skin that separates him from their baby.

Yeah, he's like a thin layer from you – that is it. Like. Honestly, it's *just a layer of skin* I guess.

Logan (third trimester)

This situates these encounters as being distinctly inter-embodied (Holt, 2017, 2013; Lupton, 2013), constituted via interactions between multiple bodies – including mother, father and unborn child (Holt and Philo, 2022). These interactions with the baby – a being *inside* the body of another, within the interior bodily space of womb (Longhurst, 2018) – are importantly mediated by various bodily borders/boundaries, involving multi-scalar interior bodily boundaries and interior bodily spaces of organs (Colls and Fannin, 2013), as well as exterior thresholds of the skin (Abrahamson and Simpson, 2011).

As well as being sites of separation, (as discussed in the previous section), this bordering also facilitated intimate spaces of father-foetal encounter. Through the following sections, I now explore the various multi-sensory, (inter)embodied encounters – including visual, audial, and haptic – through which expectant fathers sought to bond and interact with their unborn child. I argue how the (inter)embodied nature of these intimate experiences enabled a ‘transcending’ of the physical bodily borders between father and child; of the mothers’ skin and the womb. These experiences mobilised expectant fathers’ emotions, eliciting feelings of love and connection, which facilitated the creation of intimate family spaces (cf. Daniels and Chadwick, 2018; Meah, 2017) at overlapping spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017). Thus, these (inter)embodied experiences may be understood as anticipatory spatial practices of ‘doing family’ with foetuses (cf. Holt and Philo, 2022).

5.3.1. *Ultrasound Scans: Visual and Audial Encounters*

As noted in Chapter 4, ultrasound scans are widely regarded as highly significant moments for expectant parents (Menzel, 2022; Draper, 2002b) with participants citing them as their ‘strongest’ memory of the pregnancy during our initial second-trimester interviews, often going into great detail about how that moment felt. For many expectant fathers, the significance of this moment was due to how they were able to experience the visual presence of their baby within the space of an ultrasound scan, being able to see them as a whole person – as a ‘tiny human’ to use Holt and Philo’s (2022) term – even if this presence was mediated by a screen. Indeed, for many expectant fathers, this was described as being considerably more emotionally provoking than a positive pregnancy test (Draper, 2002a), which, though still emotional (as discussed in Chapter 4), did not have the same emotional impact as seeing the actual *body* of their future child, as Martin explained.

[Strongest memory has] got to be the 13-week scan...that was a big leap from seeing an indication on the Clear Blue stick to seeing the whole person...that was, that was a real moment.

Martin (second trimester)

This reflects Draper’s (2003a, 2003b, 2002b) contention of the significance of ultrasound scans as significant ‘milestone moments’ for expectant fathers. However, while Draper situates ultrasound scans as primarily visual experiences – which feminist geographers have long been critical of due to how such voyeuristic ways of knowing has often been privileged within masculinist knowledge production (Rose, 1993), ultrasound scans also provided spaces for fathers to encounter their babies in a multitude of other, multi-sensory ways.

Most especially, participants remarked how ultrasound scans afforded profound moments to *hear* their baby’s heartbeat, providing not only visual, but audial, confirmation of their existence. Indeed, their experiences demonstrated the significance of such inter-

embodied, multi-sensory encounters in blurring “temporal and corporal boundaries” (Draper, 2002b: 790), with the space of ultrasound scans, and embodied encounters within, bringing the future into the present. For example, for Frank, it was actually hearing his baby’s heartbeat during an ultrasound scan that was the most profound moment of the pregnancy. He was so overcome that he was unable to articulate how this experience felt; to hear that sound coming through his partners’ body.

And then we heard the heartbeat at the scan, we were able to see a heartbeat and it was like
– (he stops, unable to find the words)

Frank (second trimester)

Frank’s experience highlights the emotional geographies of sound (see Doughty et al., 2016), particularly through its porosity – its ability to permeate seemingly concrete borders – which elicits emotional reactions, as illustrated by Kerr et al. (2018) in examining how apartment soundscapes often evoke feelings of anxiety for new parents, particularly at night. Here, however, Frank describes the unexpected intensity of emotion in terms of the *connection* he felt to his unborn child, even at 17-weeks, by hearing their heartbeat and seeing them on a screen.

...that was amazing...and that sort of *connection* (he pauses, emphasising the enormity of the moment)...I didn’t expect that sort of connection that happened between me and this image on a screen. Yeah, “that’s my baby”, you know.

Frank (second trimester)

Frank’s emphasis on this connection thus illustrates the ability for inter-embodied encounters to elicit emotional reactions, mobilising expectant fathers’ sense of intimacy and closeness to their unborn child (Meah, 2017).

Indeed, participants reflected on the cultural significance of ultrasound scans as spaces for initiating a bond with their unborn child, making reference to the prominence of such moments in popular media (which has increasingly depicted fathers' presence at such moments as indications of involved fathering ideals). Yet, even with this cultural emphasis, many explained how they were often not emotionally prepared for the profound intensity of actually experiencing this for themselves. In fact, the only participant who seemed familiar with the possibility of being able to hear the heartbeat during an ultrasound scan was Robbie, whose partner Haley was a trained midwife. Nevertheless, he still remarked on the significance of these audial encounters, describing how his partner Haley had bought a foetal heartrate detector, the "little doppler thing", to enable them to sit and listen to the baby's heartbeat, together, at any time. He described how this experience facilitated intimate, audial, encounters between parents and unborn child, inside the womb.

We've got like a little doppler thing that you can hear the heartbeat with...she's a midwife so she knows what she's looking for...we were listening to it like everyday.

Robbie (second trimester)

This experience provides an interesting insight into the blurry boundaries and overlapping scales of father-foetal encounters (cf. Longhurst, 2017): being clearly grounded in the body, through the interior-bodily space of the womb, taking place within institutional spaces of maternity care – as is typically referred to in the literature (Dheensa et al., 2013; Draper and Ives, 2013; Draper, 2003a, 2002b) – and within societal discourse. However, it also reveals how these encounters *transcend* these spaces, emerging into less obvious ones, such as the intimate space of the home, in emotionally powerful ways (which I explore further in Chapter 6). As such it, demonstrates the intensely emotional geographies through which wombs are lived and encountered in the lives of expectant fathers (Longhurst, 2018), further

highlighting how these emotional geographies of expectant fathering are mediated at a number of overlapping spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017).

Other participants also described encountering their unborn child in multi-sensory ways within the home, often in very surprising ways. Logan, for example, described the rather bizarre experience of an unborn child hiccupping inside the womb, which can be not only felt but *seen* on the outside, via ripples of the pregnant mother's stomach.

[The baby] gets hiccups quite a bit, actually...[he explains, given his partner's previous pregnancies, that these hiccups may indicate a 'bigger baby']...But yeah, hiccups are weird, like really weird. Like, if you hiccup, you do one, then it's maybe two or three seconds, and you might do another one. But this is like (he rotates his wrist in quick succession) HiccupHiccupHiccup it's really, really quite literally like a heartbeat. And it's like, that's really strange.

Logan (third trimester)

As Logan explained, these foetal hiccups, as knee-jerk reactions, give an unborn child a distinctively life-like quality, making them seem already alive – as already *human* (Holt and Philo, 2022) – able to, and doing, many of the things that a normal human being would be able to.

Yeah, they can [hiccup]. Yeah, massively. They pretty much can do everything that you, you would imagine. I'm not sure if they could sneeze – I'd have to google that one.

Logan (third trimester)

This life-like quality was similarly reflected on by Martin, though in the context of the first ultrasound scan.

When I've seen things on television of babies in the womb, it's always this kind of still, motionless, sort of thing, you know this baby of varying stages. But I was amazed looking at the ultrasound (he makes several exaggerated looks of surprise), about how *much* it moves around and it's just – it's crazy (he gestures his arms about frantically). Like – being really agitated and fluffing around. I thought that was, that was kind of – I found that really emotional because it was – *it was alive it wasn't* (he makes a noise of 'how do I put this?').

Martin (second trimester)

Indeed, he explained explicitly how this emotional reaction was linked specifically to how, in seeing and experiencing this foetal movement during an ultrasound scan, he proclaims that this unborn child is not just an organ, or fleshy matter, but is clearly (to him at least) a *person*.

It wasn't like an organ, let's say (he slants his eyes towards me, looking uncertain, knowing that's not the 'correct' term), it was an actual thing that had its own decisions, you know it's motor functions, and it was it was a per (he settles on this, using both hands to put for emphasis) – a *person*, you know.

Martin (second trimester)

Martin's account here is particularly revealing in demonstrating how, through inter-embodied, multi-sensory encounters with their unborn child, inside the womb – but which take place in a range of different spaces, from ultrasound scans to the home – expectant fathers 'arrive', emotionally at the impending arrival of a future child (cf. Meah, 2017; Draper, 2003a, 2002b – see Menzel, 2024). In next section of this chapter, I turn to a discussion of expectant fathers' haptic encounters with their unborn child via foetal movement.

5.3.2. *Foetal Movement: Haptic Geographies of Encounters with an Unborn Child*

Within the literature on haptic geographies/geographies of touch, there is an interesting debate around how "touching and being touched [can produce] feelings of intimacy and physical closeness and strengthen emotional bonds" (Morrison, 2012a: 12), thus mobilising emotions and feelings. Indeed, as sociologist Holmes (2015) argues when writing about intimate

relationships, touch is often “crucial in communicating emotionally” (p.183). However, touch can be invasive, and it is important to note, in this section, that all participants were invited to touch their partner’s body when the baby was moving:

he kind of kicks and Beth says ‘Oh, you’ve got to feel him!’

Ollie (second trimester)

Many expectant fathers remarked on feeling their baby’s movement during the later stages of pregnancy, Azri in particular marvelling at how *much* he could feel through Aila’s body, being able to distinguish different limbs of his unborn daughter (contrasting significantly to the early experiences of foetal movement described by Ollie previously). He explained how this intimate, and detailed, interaction allows for the imminent arrival of their baby to feel especially real (Draper, 2003a, 2002b, 2002b).

like you can feel her little legs and like her little hands and stuff like that, like you can make our whole body parts...she reacts a lot to touch and stuff like that, so I put my hand on the belly and she’ll usually like kick out and touch it, so yeah, she’s definitely a lot more um – like leading up to it, it definitely makes it feel a lot more real, just from how you actually like physically feel her.

Azri (third trimester)

Azri further describes how this sense of physical proximity and closeness to his unborn daughter was enabled especially during haptic interactions whilst Aila was having false contractions at 36 weeks, making him especially aware of their baby’s imminent arrival.

you can like fully feel the baby in there...usually after the contractions, she’ll usually start like stretching out and stuff like that, like changes in her position a little bit more and goes a bit deeper, um, and I guess it like sets off the whole contraction process because of that, yeah. It is, it is crazy, yeah, because the baby’s fully just like in there and they’re moving around and yeah, you can feel her moving and like – at this stage, we can definitely feel her, like she kicks really hard, you know, like she’ll push right out, she’ll stretch right out and stuff like that. So it is, it’s really, yeah, it’s quite amazing like feeling the baby inside there

Azri (third trimester)

However, these haptic interactions can also be uncomfortable for expectant fathers. Logan, in particular, explained how feeling his baby inside the womb, particularly *moving* inside the womb was a rather strange sensation. Quite humorously, he even went as far as to associate the experience as akin to the horror movie *Alien*.

I find it a little bit weird. It is weird, I'm not gonna lie to you...It's a lot like Alien, let's be fair.

Logan (third trimester)

Martin similarly described his perception of experiences of his baby moving inside the womb through reference to alien-like qualities.

it does feel a bit weird, its like a (he pauses, then laughingly) – I was gonna say an alien appendage, it's not! – but it's just so different

Martin (third trimester)

Martin's narrative is particularly interesting here through how he is quick to situate how Mel's pregnancy is *not* alien-like, seemingly aware of how this may be interpreted (especially by me as a female researcher).

However, even distinctly feminist scholarship has drawn upon motifs of horror in describing experiences of pregnancy, maternities and childbirth, Herrera's (2020) analysis, for example, describing fathers' experience of childbirth as a "horror movie with a happy ending" (p.251); reflective of the emotional intensity of such experiences, constituting an emotional 'roller-coaster' for expectant fathers (Åsenhed, et al., 2013). Moreover, Chambers' (2017) work on the materialities of childbirth deploys these notions in examining her own experiences of the maternal embodiment, which she situates as fundamentally 'uncanny', as unfamiliar and strange (ibid.; Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

As Chambers' (2017) briefly discusses, the notion of the uncanny is an originally Freudian concept, but one which has been recovered and claimed by feminist scholars in examining experiences of female embodiment, including Julia Kristeva's work on the abject. It has also been deployed in thinking through spaces of the home at moments of life transition, such as becoming a parent, in Tomori and Boyer's (2019) work – a point I will return to in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

This notion of the uncanny (read through a feminist lens) is useful for understanding Logan's experience here, highlighting how through the embodied experience of being pregnant, Jean's body becomes temporarily unfamiliar and, indeed, quite strange to him; especially during moments when the life growing inside her body becomes visible on the outside, able to already move independently of Jean herself.

Male perceptions of the pregnant body have often been conceptualised as being ones of repulsion or disgust, usually through reference to the abject 'leakiness' of maternal bodies and breaking of bodily boundaries (Longhurst, 2008). Indeed, Logan – the only experienced father in this study – noted how his partner believed he thought feeling the baby moving inside her was "gross", an interpretation he contested, explaining that he doesn't think it's "gross", but rather he just finds it *weird*, in being so unfamiliar (Chambers, 2017).

She always thinks I think it's gross. Not weird, but gross...and it's like 'It's not gross, I just find it weird'...

Logan (second trimester)

Logan explains that his feeling is less one of repulsion, but more one of *incomprehension*³⁵; this experience being quite unnerving, not just in terms of the physical sensation, but also for what this *means* for the foetus moving around inside. It is incomprehensible to him, and his

³⁵ A feeling I can sympathise with, having also never been pregnant, as discussed in Chapter 3.

male body, that there could be a real person existing and growing inside her and who is practically already alive without having even been *born* yet (Holt and Philo, 2022).

Like it's not gross, it's my son, but how can you tell me that someone pushing from the internal of you – that's not born yet – that that's not weird. 'Cause it is!

Logan (second trimester)

These encounters through multi-sensory, inter-embodied interactions blur spatial, temporal and bodily boundaries (Draper, 2002b), with the baby simultaneously being *inside* his partner, yet Logan can feel – and literally see, almost touch – them moving on the outside. The baby is *right there*, inside her, through this very thin layer of skin, but is yet not quite *here*, although is moving around as though they are (Holt and Philo, 2022).

Indeed, further reflective of this idea of the uncanny, a number of participants highlighted how carrying the baby had changed the physical *texture* of their partner's body, which they became particularly aware of at certain moments, particularly within everyday intimate interactions (cf. Morrison, 2012a).

[Aila] just gets really sore and the stomach goes really hard. When we were at these like prenatal classes, they pretty much handed around a basketball and then told everybody that's what Braxton Hicks contractions will feel like this, like a basketball, and it really, really does, the stomach just goes super hard and it feels like a basketball.

Azri (third trimester)

If [Mel's] having trouble sleeping I'll always put my arm around her, and I tend to put my arm on her belly, but then it, it's feels so weird because it's so firm, you know, I can never get used to how firm her tummy is, so it does feel a bit weird... it's just so different, I still haven't got used to it, even after all these months.

Martin (third trimester)

These inter-embodied, haptic encounters with their partner's pregnant body – and their unborn child within – often took place during incredibly banal, everyday spaces, such as watching TV, prompting interaction between father and unborn child. These experiences were enrolled

fundamentally into enabling expectant fathers to begin developing a caregiving instinct; Martin described thinking about what changes to the home (or indeed Mel's bodily) environment prompted this awake-ness and activity in their unborn child.

the first couple of times, it was like "oh wow" you know, like "blimey" but now it's just like "oh, what's she up to now?" you know, (he bobs his head from side to side, inquisitively), and you just kind of imagine "why is she like that?", or is it something – you know, I'm not overthinking or thinking something's wrong but kind of like (he put his hand to his chin, considering) "Oh, I wonder why she's more active now? Is it something that we've had for dinner perhaps, or the TV's too loud or, I don't know

Martin (second trimester)

However, the significance of these haptic father-foetal encounters became particularly paramount in moments of *stillness*, being prompted by the *absence* of inter-embodied interaction between foetus and future parents. During such times, fathers explained how they would often engage in tender, care-full encounters in order to 'prompt' the baby awake; a role which was partially bound up with ideals of emotional support in managing the fear and anxiety of this immobility, i.e., 'putting on a brave face' (as discussed in Chapter 4) in order to reassure their partner.

[like] pretty much the whole way through, there's this little like a song that we play...just like a nice little piano song. And one day like the baby hadn't moved for quite a while so we're like, 'oh shit, what's happening?' And then um, I played the song, put it to the belly and then, sure enough, she just like kind of took off and started moving around and kicking. So that was really special because it was like a little bit of anxiety about how the baby was, and then by playing this little song – that she seems to really love – sort of got her moving again. So that was really cool. That was a really nice like experience.

Azri (second trimester)

Azri's experience here is particularly interesting through how he engages, actively, in highly tender care-full encounters with their unborn child, in particular by using sensory stimuli of music which transcends bodily borders (cf. Kerr et al., 2018) to prompt the baby's

movement; thus providing relief for both parents. However, what is useful to note here is how – by engaging in such inter-embodied, multi-sensory and fundamentally care-full encounters – these acts of tenderness and care become increasingly familiar to fathers; indeed, they become routine, even *habitual* (Ranson, 2014). I illustrate this point in the final section of this chapter where I examine how these spatial encounters mark pre-parental encounters of not only loving, but actively living with children before they are born, constituting anticipatory acts of ‘doing family’ with foetuses – what may even be termed ‘foetal geographies’.

5.4. Intimate Care-full Encounters: Doing Family with Foetuses

Writing on the inter-embodied nature of infant-caregiving, Holt (2017) develops an understanding of babies/infants as individual and agential beings, connected to – but also distinct from – their adult caregivers. This is echoed, in many ways, more recently by Holt and Philo (2022), who call for greater attention to ‘tiny human geographies’. In this final discussion section, I explore how these multi-sensory (inter)embodied encounters embody anticipatory enactments of ‘doing family’ with foetuses, creating intimate spaces of (familial) intimacy (Meah, 2017; Morrison, 2012a). My work here extends Holt and Philo’s (2022) work slightly, through consideration of parental encounters of caring for and loving babies *before they are born* – what may even be termed ‘foetal geographies’ – to recognise the agency and intensely-felt presence of unborn children within the lives of their future parents.

For most participants, interactions of foetal movement were particularly prominent at night, enabling performances of intimate caregiving, and facilitating the creation of spaces of pre-parental family intimacy between father, mother and unborn child (cf. Tomori and Boyer, 2019). Participants frequently described experiences of their babies being very active at night, when they were going to bed (itself an intimate space – see Morrison, 2012a).

Yeah, mostly when we're in bed or on the sofa, so kind of bedtime is the most reliable time for when he's kicking

Ollie (second trimester)

Tom described in great detail how his partner Tara would often be awoken by the baby's movement, disrupting her sleep. He described how, in this moment, he would get up to sing to their unborn daughter, soothing her so that Tara could go back to sleep.

There have been times where Tara would wake up in the night and say 'she's having a manic moment, I can't sleep'...So I would sing to [the baby] and she'd often calm down a bit

Tom (third trimester)

This is a profoundly intimate family moment between mother, father and baby (still inside the womb), with Tom touching Tara's stomach, singing to their baby. He explained his certainty that their baby can "definitely" hear him singing, facilitating intimacy between father and foetus (Meah, 2017), with Tom describing his hope and anticipation that, in doing this, when their daughter is born (and on the outside), she will recognise his voice *as* her father from being inside the womb and therefore know who he is, thus facilitating father-infant bonding after her arrival. Indeed, he linked this especially to discourse over father-foetal bonding and attachment during pregnancy, resonating strongly with contemporary cultures of pre-parenting enactments of caregiving (Draper and Ives, 2013), with the emotional and practical performance of care evoking a sense of intimacy (Jamieson, 1998).

We tried a few things like stroking Tara's stomach...but yeah, singing seemed to have a bit more of an impact...she can definitely hear me when I'm singing...I think people sort of recommend it, that you talk to them and sing to them so when they arrive they might recognise your voice and be like 'I know who you are'

Tom (third trimester)

These inter-embodied encounters thus embody intimate emotional spaces of pre-parental foetal bonding. Through these experiences, expectant parents (mothers and fathers) were able to begin imagining their future baby and their presence in the home (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), assigning them particular qualities and personality traits. Ollie, for example, explained how his baby has a cheeky quality, “winding him up” by not kicking as soon as he reaches out to feel the movement.

She’s said “Oh, he’s moving, he’s doing something” and then quite a lot of the time – whether he’s trying to wind us up or something, I don’t know – but as soon as I reach out to feel him kicking, he’s just stopped!

Ollie (second trimester)

Situating this encounter as his baby playing with and *teasing* him, through the womb, this experience illustrates how such encounters enable expectant parents to begin developing a sense of intimacy/love for their (future) child during the pregnancy (Hamper and Nash, 2021; Meah, 2017), beginning to anticipate and develop a sense of personhood for his baby (Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

Through this section, I have explored a series of multi-sensory, inter-embodied, encounters through which fathers interacted with their unborn child, taking place in different spaces/places. I have argued how the inter-embodied nature of these intimate experiences enabled a ‘transcending’ of the (multiple, inter-scalar) physical bodily borders between father and child; of the mothers’ skin and the womb and how these experiences mobilise expectant fathers’ emotions, eliciting feelings of love and connection, which facilitated the creation of intimate family spaces (Meah, 2017; Evans, 2014) – and through which fathers begin performing acts of love and caregiving before their baby is born. These various encounters provided highly emotional opportunities to begin engaging in emotional, and practical, forms of caregiving, facilitating the development of intimate connections to their future child, still

inside the womb, and exhibiting pre-parental enactments of care; culminating in expectant fathers' emotional attachment to fatherhood, and to their future child.

It's definitely, yeah. Gives you a very, very warm, warm feeling. Yeah. It feels like yeah, it touches, it touches you very much, you know, yeah, I think to, yeah, to have this baby, that's your own child, you know? Yeah. And I think, probably something we discussed last time, this is something that I've always, you know, thought I want to do more than anything. You know, it's kind of a big thing for me, as I see it, you know, so? Yeah, it definitely. Yeah, definitely makes me feel kind of very happy and very warm feeling. Yeah.

Tom (third trimester)

These (inter)embodied, multisensory encounters act as intimate spaces of anticipatory father-foetal connection, enabling expectant fathers to transcend the dichotomy of inside/outside and begin developing a sense of intimacy and connection with their unborn child, contrasting with the separation explored earlier. Moreover, by blurring the spatial, temporal and bodily boundaries between impending and active fatherhood – mobilising feelings of love/intimacy and practices of caregiving – these encounters embody unique modes of 'doing family' with foetuses, presenting the capacity for future examination of 'foetal geographies'. This is through how these participants are actively living with and caring for their children, before they are born.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has interrogated the manifold ways in which bodily borders, boundaries, and interior spaces mediate expectant fathers' encounters with their unborn baby. It goes beyond considerations of the body at the individual scale (such as through the performance of emotional (self)management considered in Chapter 4), to explore expectant fathers' *inter*-embodied experiences, and the entanglement of emotions and bodies, in eliciting an anticipatory sense of love and intimacy (cf. Meah, 2017).

It firstly examined how, whilst expectant motherhood is characterised by notions of interiority and (inter)connection with the growing foetus, expectant fathers' experiences are heavily demarcated by the relentless dichotomy of 'inside'/'outside'. Fathers drew on this heavily spatial (but literal) rhetoric when describing their interactions with the foetus 'inside' the womb and their excitement/anticipation of when (following the birth) their child will finally be on the 'outside'. Secondly, the chapter explored an array of multi-sensory inter-embodied interactions fathers had with their unborn child – literally through the body of another person – identifying how these constitute anticipatory acts of love/intimacy. Thus, it has illustrated how expectant parents 'do family' with a baby, before they are even born (Meah, 2017; Holt, 2017).

This chapter has presented nuanced and critical understanding of what these encounters actually mean for expectant fathers themselves, as well as their intrinsic spatialities, extending recent work on the emotional geographies of pre-parenting – and particularly of pre-parental expression of love/intimacy for a future child (Hamper, 2022; Hamper and Nash, 2021) – by addressing the general absence of expectant fathers' voices/experiences within such literature. In especially it has revealed how bodily borders/boundaries present both sites of separation, via the spatial dichotomy of inside/outside, as well as of connection, articulated through analysis of a range of multi-sensory, inter-embodied, encounters through which fathers interacted with their baby, creating intimate moments of pre-parental bonding (Meah, 2017). It extends also Holt and Philo's (2022) consideration of 'tiny human geographies', offering a starting point for future examinations of what may be termed *foetal* geographies, via practices of 'doing family' with children not yet born.

Although in this chapter – and indeed thus far in this thesis – I have considered expectant fathers’ inter-embodied experiences primarily within the context of *pregnancy*, examining the construction of love/intimacy with a future, unborn child via inter-embodied, multi-sensory encounters with interior bodily space of wombs (Longhurst, 2017) – coining these ‘father-foetal relations’ – the conceptual framework I have put forward has a number of important applications which could extend extant foci on expectant fathering within geography, moving towards more inclusive understanding of expectant fathering beyond just pregnancy, via expectant fathers’ multi-sensory encounters with objects as representations of future child, in lieu of their actual presence in the home (Leinwaeaver et al., 2017). I explore this in the next chapter, which examines fathers’ multi-sensory affective encounters with ‘baby things’ as part of the preparatory ‘home-work’ of preparing for the arrival of a child.

6 Preparing the Home: Expectant Fathers' Accumulation and Affective Encounters with Baby Things

6.1. Introduction

With the anticipated arrival of a child comes the need for parents – and new parents especially – to obtain a vast array of stuff, including tiny clothes in which to dress the child, toys with which to entertain them, and vast quantities of other caregiving equipment with which to feed, cleanse and protect a child (Waight, 2014, 2013). These various things are often accumulated by expectant parents over many months, long before the child's arrival, forming part of the preparatory work of becoming a parent. Indeed, the transition to parenthood is largely characterised by significant shifts in the material landscape of home such that, through the accumulation and integration of these new objects, these previously familiar spaces becoming unfamiliar, even strange, via spatial practices of unmaking and *remaking* the home (Tomori and Boyer, 2019) – which Leinaweaver et al. (2017) term 'home-work'.

As discussed in the Literature Review, there exists a wealth of work on the home within geography, examining this as an affective and material space comprised by everyday practices, lived experience of social relations, memories and emotions (Kerr et al., 2018, after Blunt 2005). Through this chapter, I explore the ways in which meanings of home are comprised through *anticipation*, via expectant parents' accumulation and integration of various baby things in the home. It builds on recent work within the geographies of parenting, particularly work which has turned critical attention to the role of matter and materialities to everyday parenting practices (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Boyer and Spinney, 2016), recognising the affective power and agency of materialities in eliciting parents' emotions and their role as critical mediums through which particular subjectivities of parental identity emerge (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Waight and Boyer, 2018; Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016).

It builds also on the discussion of the previous chapter on expectant fathers' inter-embodied encounters with an unborn child, by attending to how expectant fathers' intimate and care-full encounters with baby things – by nature of their material properties – help elicit feelings of intimacy and closeness with their future child (cf. Hamper and Nash, 2021; cf. Meah, 2017). Through this chapter, I extend my focus outwards – from the body, to explore the significance of particular *rooms* within the home, which take on new meaning during the transition to parenthood, through the very objects which inhabit them – thus developing my thesis on the emotional geographies which comprise expectant fathering, which occur – and are reinforced by – intricate and overlapping spatial scales (Longhurst, 2017).

Additionally, I extend extant work within geographies of pre-parental encounters of love/intimacy, developed through intimate encounters with materialities (primarily within the home, but also beyond), revealing how such encounters facilitate the emergence of a distinctly *paternal* sense of subjectivity (cf. Hamper and Nash, 2021; Tomori and Boyer, 2019). The chapter does this specifically through examination of expectant fathers' intimate and multi-sensory, emotional and embodied, encounters with objects in eliciting a sense proximity to a future child (cf. Meah, 2017), building on the findings of Chapter 5.

Following this introduction, this chapter firstly situates the significance of home within pre-parenting and the foundation of engaging in home-work (Leinaweaver et al., 2017). It then explores the moral geographies of parenting in the accumulation of baby things, interrogating how the various spatial practices of obtaining baby things are enrolled into the gendered, emotional work of pre-parenting displays of love for a future child and gendered, moral enactments of 'good parenting'; such as through the management and navigation of risk. It then turns to the emotional and embodied work 'done' on the home in preparing for the arrival of a child, and the role of such practices in demonstrating suitability and commitment to parenthood. Ultimately, it reveals how living with, and encountering, baby things in intimate,

care-full ways enables anticipation of living with, and caring, for a future child – along with an emergence of a distinct paternal subjectivity. Thus, it contributes the comparative neglect on expectant fathers’ gendered emotional experiences of ‘collaborating’ in the emotional embodied work of preparing the home (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), extending this work by revealing also the intimate and deeply emotional individual identity-work in which they engage through affective encounters with baby things as part of anticipating the arrival of a child (Davies et al., 2009), developing a distinctly paternal subjectivity (Meah and Jackson, 2016).

6.2 The ‘Family’ Home

For many participants, the home embodied a critical environment for anticipating and understanding parental and (imagined) infant personhood (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), with emotions about their home being intimately entangled with their anticipation of fatherhood (Davies et al., 2009; similarly see Tarrant, 2016 on grandfathering). Indeed, for many participants, the anticipated arrival of a child was an important motivating factor for considering moving home, and even *buying* a home for the first time.

Parallel to this, we’re sort of like going through to buy your first house. So, along with the journey of being an expectant father like there’s this sort of parallel journey of getting on the property ladder and becoming first time buyers – so if we weren’t having a baby, we probably wouldn’t be buying a house, and likewise we wouldn’t be buying a house if we weren’t having a baby. So those two things are joined off really.

(Robbie, second trimester)

Here, Robbie highlights the significance of the home to enactments of ‘good parenting’ prior to the arrival of a child, deploying home-ownership as an important demonstration of his capacity to be a ‘good parent’ (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Tomori and Boyer, 2019), particularly through reference to the (financial) security provided by owning their own home, rather than the perceived precarity of renting.

a few years back, when, you know, when we first started talking about it, I was of the position that I didn't want to have a child, if we were, if we were renting somewhere. I wanted the security of maybe owning somewhere.

Robbie (second trimester)

For another participant, Tom (who was already a home-owner), the consideration of moving house was based on the desire for a larger-sized home in which to raise a child, (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Dowling and Power, 2012) and having more room to accommodate his growing family – and the stuff which comes with having a child (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Dowling, 2008).

we currently live in like a two-bed terrace, so there's not loads of space. It would be fine. You know, if we were here, it's not an issue. But yeah, we would like somewhere with a bit more space.

Tom (second trimester)

Robbie further framed the importance of buying a home in terms of size, which he felt would provide his family with long-term stability of home, through potentially *not* needing to move house again in the future. He described this especially through reference to navigating the play-off between the location of the home and the property itself (Dowling and Power, 2012, Dowling, 2008).

we're looking for something with three bedrooms, an Office/spare room for the child and then we found somewhere that was a bit bigger – just because the area wasn't as nice, the houses are cheaper, so you could get a bigger property...It's like a four bedroom house, it's bigger than what we're renting...

Robbie (second trimester)

This was reflected more explicitly by Ollie in our follow-up interview, indicative of the changing meaning of home through the transition to parenthood.

I suppose home, home is, you know it was always important, but home is now *his* home as well, and that, so I want it to *be* a home for him, I don't want to just be a house. So home is number one, it's where he spends most of his time and we want it to be set up *for* him and for him to feel comfortable in and grow into it, you know, as he starts to move around and everything.

(Ollie, follow-up)

Interestingly, Ollie's narrative reveals the emotions around moralities of home-ownership and fatherhood sometimes emerged long before the arrival of a child was at the forefront of participants' minds (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). Ollie, for example, explained how a significant part of the process when he and Beth were looking to buy their first house some years *prior* to the research – and before they began trying for a child – was finding a property in which they could imagine one day raising children in the future.

we weren't talking about it as such but when we bought a house we decided that we wanted to get a house we could see ourselves living in for a long time and that included it being fit for, it being – it having enough space potentially for a couple of kids at some point. So that's probably the first time where we started thinking about kids in earnest

(Ollie, second trimester)

He went on to explain how this home became enrolled into emotionally preparing him for becoming a father.

....and it's funny because in the last couple of years I felt that my mindset has changed a lot...[to]...my focus being about building a home, making this house somewhere where we could raise a family and making it our own and somewhere we want to stay for a long time...So it kind of went from a feeling of "No way am I ready to have kids any time soon" to just, quite naturally, without any kind of you know particular intent, just to, "Yeah, actually. Now we're in a place where I feel like I could be a dad, I feel like if we had a kid, I'm ready. I could handle that. I wouldn't be freaked out. I wouldn't be thinking 'Oh my god, I can't deal with this'.

Ollie (second trimester)

Through his narrative, Ollie reveals how an anticipated sense of ‘doing family’ with infants and unborn children emerges not just through the body (as discussed in the previous chapter), but also via encounters with home spaces (Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

The importance of having – and indeed, owning – a home with enough ‘space’ related especially to pre-parenting aspirations to have a dedicated room for the baby set up and ready for their arrival home, reflective of rather middle-class expectations around the idealised family home (Dowling, 2008), such as through the conversion of an office or spare room (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Leinaweaver et al., 2017). Indeed, some participants even named particular *rooms* of their home after this practice of preparing for the arrival of a child. This was partly in relation to this often being the intended bedroom/nursery space for the future child, as well as – in the meantime – the space where various baby things were stored (cf. Owen and Boyer, 2022 – discussed later in Section 6.4.3). As such, the designation of this space as a ‘getting ready room’, highlights the entanglements between homes, rooms, and materialities within the spatial practices of being ready to become, and be, parents (Luzia, 2011) – the focus of this chapter.

the second bedroom which is Mel’s ‘getting ready’ room that’s now got um a chest of drawers in it and that got a baby changing station on top. So that chest of drawers is now chock-a-block full of baby stuff, and it’s overflowing(!) (he laughs) actually with baby clothes and whatnot

Martin (third trimester)

This section has highlighted the entanglements between the home (and particular rooms) with expectant fathers’ feelings of anticipation/expectancy of the arrival of their child. It has shown how these feelings may emerge (at least partially) even years before the actual anticipations of a child arriving into the home and becoming part of the family begins. However, the immediacy and *intensity* of this anticipation comes from the purposeful accumulation of objects which comprise the shifting material landscape of home, through which the meaning of home as a space begins to evolve and change.

Through the remainder of this chapter, I explore expectant fathers' experiences of accumulating, integrating and encountering baby things within the home. I examine how – and where – attaining these various baby things were enrolled into expectant parents' gendered moral enactments of 'good parenting' in particular ways (Waight, 2014, 2013; Prothero, 2002). I then explore the spatial practices and (emotionally-laden) home-work participants engaged in to integrate these objects into the home, as an inscription of impending parenthood (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; cf. Tarrant, 2016), in ways which were not always neat and contained, but often spill out in uncontrollable ways through storage practices and clutter (Woodward, 2016). I end this chapter with a discussion of expectant fathers' multi-sensory encounters with such materialities in eliciting a sense of intimacy with their future child and through which their sense of identity as a father emerges and becomes (Davies et al., 2009).

6.3. Accumulating Baby Things: Moral Geographies of Consumption Practices as Enactments of 'Good Parenting'

The previous section of this chapter has highlighted the significance of the home in anticipating the (future) arrival of a child (Leinaweaver, et al., 2017), in particular having the space for a child to have their own, designated, room (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). However, prior to undertaking the home-work involved in transforming a particular room of the home into a *child's* room, expectant parents must first acquire the stuff with which to fill such spaces. Thus, before exploring the emotional/embodied work performed by expectant parents in preparing the home for a child's arrival – such as by decorating a baby's room – this section explores the spatial practices through which expectant parents in this study sought to obtain their baby things.

Through examination of spatialities of where expectant parents chose to acquire their baby things, this section also contributes to the literature on moral geographies of parenting practices by exploring the enrolment of particular consumption habits in the formation of particular subjectivities of pre-parental identity and culturally-mediated aspirations of gendered, moral enactments of ‘good parenting’ practices (Waight, 2014, 2013; Prothero, 2002).

6.3.1. Localised Share Economies and Second-hand Goods

Within capitalist economies (such as that of the UK), there has long been a particular expectation for parents to obtain their baby things brand new (Waight, 2017, 2015). These highly consumerist practices are culturally regarded as expressions of *pre*-parental love/devotion (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), such that no expense is too great for one’s future child (Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2004; Prothero, 2002). This may be through the procurement of things which have been most recently recommended by experts, or the purchasing of particular desirable, branded goods which have a considerable, lucrative price tag – thus ensuring that their baby is seen to have ‘the very best’ (Waight, 2015; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006; Prothero, 2002).

However, many participants in this project sought to resist and contest the rhetorical affiliation between (capitalist) consumerism and parental love (see Hall and Ince, 2017; Casey and Taylor, 2015 for recent geographic critiques of consumerist culture and the emergence of post-capitalist economies). This was largely out of recognition for how certain baby things will only be used for a very short period of time, due to how babies grow out of things very quickly; their bodies and needs changing rapidly (Waight 2017; 2014).

Parents get really competitive buying things, you know, Gucci brands, tiny shoes, and things like this, and you think ‘what’s the point?’...Like, really? They won’t be able to wear them after like three four weeks probably, because they’re so small. They [trainers at an online parenting course] said ‘Don’t get sucked into it, because you spend an awful lot of money when you don’t need to at all...and yeah it’s not, it doesn’t reflect badly on you’.

Martin (second trimester)

Martin’s narrative is particularly interesting for how he actively seeks to justify this choice of *not* buying things new as still a legitimate form of ‘good parenting’ (Prothero, 2002), enrolling the advice of ‘experts’ as well as demonstrating his own intimate knowledge of babies and early infancy (cf. Davies et al., 2009). He sought to further legitimise this by asserting how they could *afford* to buy things brand new – thus asserting their status as ‘good parents’, able to provide financially for their child.

Moreover, he also highlighted an awareness of the cost of raising a child, explaining how making the conscious choice to minimise expenditures on things which will only be used temporarily will enable them to save money and thus be able to offer the ‘best’ experiences for their child in the future. He explained this specifically through reference to being able to afford to send their child to a highly-rated pre-school nursery³⁶.

Financially, we could buy everything new, but...we’re, we’re very aware of how much nursery is going to cost us down the road, so we need to be careful with our money from now

Martin (second trimester)

³⁶ The fact that expectant parents were already looking at nurseries at 23 weeks’ gestation, four months before the child will be born, and approximately a year before they will likely even start nursery – speaks to the current childcare crisis in the UK.

Although describing themselves as being fairly well-off and financially secure, the concern – and indeed, the slight apprehension – Martin expresses here about the cost of obtaining baby things derives precisely from the sheer *amount* of stuff new parents are expected to be seen to have bought for their child as an expression of their love/devotion and commitment to parenting (Waight, 2013; Prothero, 2002).

Many participants consequently described the significance of receiving baby things as ‘gifts’ from friends/family (Prothero, 2002; Mauss, 2002), as an inscription of (future) parental identity. This thus enabled expectant parents to amass necessary things for caring for a baby, but at minimal cost to themselves. While this was particularly significant during the period of pregnancy/expectancy – as this section explores – participants did also describe later receiving caregiving equipment as Birthday/Christmas presents during follow-up interviews (see Holdsworth, 2014; Muir and Mason, 2012 on celebratory family occasions).

I recently had my birthday, and Beth bought me one of these backpacks, and it’s almost like a hiking backpack, but he sits in the top for if you want to take him out on more, kind of like rigorous walks then that’s a lot better than having them on your front, it’s like, better, you know, it’s better for you, and probably better for them too

Ollie (follow-up)

my 30th birthday...got I got a bike seat for my bike, and I also got like a running buggy...another present I got which was a backpack that she you know, one of those that she can sit in. So there’s three things...So my birthday presents were just stuff to do with like, for Lissy, which is really, really nice. It’s exactly what I wanted...

Robbie (follow-up)

In stating how receiving these baby things were ‘exactly’ what he wanted, Robbie’s narrative highlights the ongoingness of parents’ accumulation of baby things (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Orrmalm, 2021, 2020; after Horton and Kraftl, 2006). It reveals the intimate entanglements between parental caregiving and materialities and the affective capacities of these objects in eliciting parental subjectivities, and the inscription of these (by self/others) onto one’s sense of

identity (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Clement and Wight, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016).

However, while some of these baby things were gifts obtained brand new, many of the things participants received from family/friends were often second-hand; being given things (often for free) which had been previously used by a family, but which were no longer needed (Waight, 2017; Mauss, 2002). This included many different things, from parentings books, to caregiving equipment, but entailed, most especially the giving of children's clothes (Prothero, 2002).

Denny situated the engagement of these localised networks of second-hand goods as economically savvy forms of parenting (Waight, 2017). This was particularly through explanation of how they had not only obtained clothes for a *newborn* baby, but also clothes for a child of 12-months, storing them away in cupboards knowing that would come in handy and be used in the *future* (cf. Owen and Boyer, 2022; see later discussion on the storage of baby things).

So these are like three-six months, six to 12 months...So when we're ready to get to that stage, it's ready to get that out. So we've you know, we've got, we have some, some planning, you know.

Denny (second trimester)

By accepting these larger clothes early on, long before they are needed, Denny thus demonstrates a particularly shrewd form of parenting: the demonstration of preparedness and future planning, a practice of 'good parenting' which may be considered especially valuable within the context of current austerity and contemporary crises of the rising cost-of-living (Briggs and Hall, 2023; Hall and Ince, 2017).

Azri also situated informal share economies as important networks of connection between parents, understanding these as displays of incredible *care-fullness* (after Collins and Stanes, 2021), framing the receipt of these pre-loved materialities as valuable forms of generosity and support from others (Waight and Boyer, 2018; Barnett and Land, 2007).

We've had a lot of support from like friends and family...we haven't really had to buy anything as well, you know, because we've had like a lot of hand-me-down clothing, etc, – like people giving us a few things. We've had a handful of like second-hand things. [We have also] bought a few good second-hand things, like a bassinet and stuff like that...But yeah, we've got a lot of really good quality things, like for the baby and stuff, it's just been very easy to kind of acquire it all, mostly because of the support.

Azri (second trimester)

Azri's narrative thus reveals the significance of share economies to expectant parenting, the accumulation of second-hand goods and the importance of these in feeling 'part' of local parenting networks (Waight, 2013; Holloway, 1998).

Indeed, for participants where these local support networks were not readily available, the absence of these was a source of particular disappointment. This was especially where, due to COVID lockdown restrictions, they were unable to travel long distances (i.e., across counties) to visit friends/family and collect things from their own childhood, which had been stored at the homes of their parents, the grandparents of the future (see Owen and Boyer, 2022).

There's been a few things that obviously Beth's parents had and my parents have which they couldn't give us because of lockdown.

Ollie, (third trimester)

For such participants, the main way of attaining baby things was, necessarily, having to buy things (largely themselves) – although, even participants for whom second-hand share economies were an important means for obtaining baby things, many did also emphasise the significance of buying at least some items themselves.

We haven't bought any clothes really. I think we bought like, like a token item each just so we feel like we've bought something that's like what we've bought, you know, like for the kid.

Denny (second trimester)

Arguably, the importance placed on this may seem to reinforce connections between ‘good parenting’ and capitalist consumerism, through the purchasing of baby things as a pre-parental expression of love/devotion (Prothero, 2002). However, what seems more significant is how buying things explicitly *for* a future child is a highly affective and intimate experience (Tomori and Boyer, 2019 see also Casey and Taylor, 2015 on affective intimacies of domestic consumption). That is, the purchasing of baby things – and in particular buying specific, personally-desired goods, as opposed to being gifted what may be available from others – elicits feelings of anticipatory connection with the future child, enabling and an imagined sense of personhood for the future child the development of a sense of identity as a parent (see Chapter 5).

6.3.2. Online Second-hand Marketplaces and Environmentally Conscious Consumerism

For many participants, the purchasing of baby things was largely done via online spaces. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the growth in online consumerism in recent years (see Kirby-Hawkins et al., 2019; Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2013; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010a, 2010b), with Robbie noting the generational shift towards buying things online.

I guess it was maybe a generational thing, you know, we’ve been buying things online for so long actually, having it tangibly in front of you doesn’t necessarily matter.

Robbie (second trimester)

However, obtaining baby things online was also largely out of necessity, due to the general inability for participants to physically go to many retail spaces during the various periods of lockdown (see Younes et al., 2022; Young et al., 2022).

While parents utilised online spaces in order to buy baby things brand-new, such as for ordering furniture for the baby’s room, and various other things, many of the things participants described buying online were largely from second-hand economies, such as eBay or Facebook

Marketplace (see Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2013; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010a, 2010b).

Although engagement with these second-hand online marketplaces was largely motivated by cost, some participants also described the importance of these spaces as part of ethical consumption practices (Waight, 2013). This was particularly in relation to an awareness of the impact of single-use consumption habits and concern about the environment (ibid.; Waight, 2015; Prothero, 2002), with Robbie, for example, situating engagement with second-hand share economies as a way of accumulating baby things while engaging in sustainable consumption practices (Peña-Vinces et al., 2020).

I think every, every experienced parent will say to someone else, 'you don't need to buy everything all at once' and 'you don't need to buy everything new'. And then the expectant parents don't listen; don't listen to that and do it anyway. Then they sell it someone else and I think it'll just happen forever, I think you know, like, people will still do it...[so] clothes, [we] just sort of got on eBay...[where]...loads of people are selling like clothes that their kids have worn like once or twice. So that, that for me, like it's all my like value buttons, and yeah, sort of sustainability buttons. So I quite like doing that.

(Robbie, second trimester)

This was further explained by Ollie who made direct reference to how buying things second-hand ensured the re-use and recycling of (plastic) goods which would otherwise go to waste (Waight, 2013).

It's better as well, because it's not, obviously everyone buys things from new, so there's a lot more stuff, so if you can kind of recycle, reuse, then that's good. So, so yeah that you know you can pick up some really good books and toys like really cheap they're in great nick

(Ollie, follow-up)

The extent to which environmentally-conscious consumption configured within their attainment of baby things varied across participants. Within Ollie's narrative, it appears to be a welcome *consequence* rather than necessarily a primary concern (ibid.). Meanwhile Robbie explained the significance of this through reference to his own, personal, moral values (Prothero, 2002). For both participants, ethical/sustainable forms of consumerism were therefore arguably somewhat secondary – something they valued, but which they could sacrifice with relative ease if necessary (Waight, 2013). However, for Martin, the enrolment of environmental consciousness was rather more explicit within moral enactments of 'good parenting'.

We've tried to be environmentally considerate as well – you know, something, if it's perfectly fine, why not just buy the second- hand thing?...Mel's sister is also really into the environment...So I think she would frown on us if we were buying everything new

Martin (second trimester)

Importantly, this enrolment of environmental consideration was largely in relation to navigating the moral judgements and expectations of others (Kerr et al., 2018; Faircloth and Murray, 2015; Holloway, 1998). This was highlighted especially through Martin's description of the moral values of Mel's *sister* in shopping sustainably, and expectations of them to bring these values into their parenting practices – whether or not these values were important to Martin/Mel specifically.

Martin's narrative is thus indicative of the fundamental moral geographies embroiled within expectant parents' accumulation of baby things, informing the spatialities of how and where they sought to do this (Prothero, 2002). As such, his narrative reveals the important moral dimensions of the performance of 'home-work' in preparing for the arrival of a child (Leinaweaver et al., 2017: 563) – and, by extension, the production of a particular kind of family. This is through the enrolment of moral parenting practices into *pre*-parental enactments of 'good parenting', engaging in ethical forms of consumption on behalf of their future child

(cf. Waight, 2013) – importantly before they are even born. By doing this, Martin and Mel demonstrate a certain commitment to teach their child to care for the environment in the future (Menzel, 2018).

6.3.3. Scrolling, Negotiating, Collecting: The Gendered Work of Purchasing Things from Online Marketplaces

Obtaining baby things through second-hand online marketplaces enabled the performance of ‘good parenting’ through demonstrations of commitment to their future child. This is because, when purchasing goods online, there is usually a wealth of choice, with multiples of the same – or very similar – items being available, along with opportunities to compare and contrast prices. However, in looking to obtain things through online marketplaces, where many of the items were second-hand, there was usually only *one* of a particular item available to purchase – or at least only one which was considered to be the ‘best’ deal, going for the ‘best’ price, or being of the ‘best’ quality. Indeed, with Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010a) note how bidding for items on eBay auctions, for example, creates intense feelings of being ‘winners’ or ‘losers’ based on the success, or failure of obtaining a desired good. This is indicative of the intensely emotional geographies embedded within spatial practices of online shopping (cf. Colls, 2006, 2004; Williams et al., 2001).

These emotions may become particularly heightened when purchasing something second-hand, due to its one-time availability (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010a, 2010b). For example, there is the emotional response of affective anticipation of scrolling through listings, searching for something of interest; the excitement of finding something that you want, or that is simply too good a deal to pass up (Sundström et al., 2019). Then there is the adrenaline and feelings of urgency of contacting the seller, the nervousness of wanting to have been the first to have expressed interest in the buying the item, the hope that it will still be available, and anxiously having to wait for a response, constantly refreshing pages (Denegri-Knott and

Molesworth, 2010a, 2010b) and upon being told it is still available, being somewhat frantic/desperate to negotiate a price, and collection time for the item as soon as possible before another potential buyer can ‘steal’ it.

What these various (and at times contradictory) emotions reveal is that there is a certain level of inherent *competitiveness* to expectant parents’ purchasing of baby things from online second-hand markets, a competitiveness which ultimately acts as an expression of their commitment/devotion to their future child by having worked hard to obtain baby things – and having been successful in obtaining them first, before any other expectant parents (ibid. – see also Miller, 1999 cited in Waight, 2019).

Importantly, however, there are highly gendered expectations surrounding involvement in this work, with expectant mothers being largely expected to take primary responsibility for the organisational labour involved in obtaining baby things (Waight, 2013; Davies et al., 2009) – and to be seen to *want* to do this work, in order to demonstrate their commitment and interest in impending motherhood (Prothero, 2002). Indeed, many participants acknowledged the highly gendered division of labour involved within the attainment of baby things from these online, second-hand, marketplace spaces (Waight, 2013; Davies et al., 2009); describing how their partner had spent considerable time browsing the internet in order to identify necessary/desired goods.

Facebook marketplace yeah. My partner does all the, all the shopping around...

Martin (second trimester)

Many, importantly, deferred to their partner’s knowledge/expertise of the things they needed in caring for a new baby.

There's, there's all sorts [we need to get]. Hundreds of things! Which as I say, Beth has a far better idea of than me. But some of the big ones, obviously the cot, so the baby needs somewhere to sleep and pushchair as well...But yeah, there's just, kind of all kinds of things, there's sterilisers...There's all sorts. There's all sorts of stuff, um, and as I say Beth has got these lists and spreadsheets and things that she wants

Ollie (second trimester)

Logan, however, explained how, given his technical expertise working in e-commerce, it was more efficient for him to undertake this work, spending time searching for the 'best deal'. Importantly, he still noted the preparatory work performed by Jean in enabling this, with her producing a list of items she had already identified as having wanted/needed.

My wife is absolutely horrific at the Internet and using it to buy anything, so I have to do it all...I'm into technology, it's what I do. So I have to order everything. But what she is amazing at is, is lists...So in terms of buying stuff, it's not been too bad. Like, obviously, I look for the best deal online. I do a lot of research before I buy anything...it's literally just been scanning the internet and different places.

Logan (second trimester)

Indeed, despite his assertion of Jean being 'horrific' at using the internet, he still described her engagement with social media in browsing for desired baby things.

She uses Instagram quite a bit and there's a lot of mother and baby shops and stuff on Instagram.

Logan, (second trimester)

This is particularly interested in revealing how the spatial practices and 'work' of accumulating baby things is enrolled into the emergence of particular parental identities and subjectivities. While for mothers this was primarily through demonstrations of being a 'good mother' by spending time searching for – and successfully obtaining – baby things as an expression of love/devotion to one's future child (Prothero, 2002), for many participants, enactments of 'good fathering' emerged largely through supporting their partner in obtaining

the things their partners want or need and making it happen – whether monetarily, or practically, as revealed by Frank and Ollie.

I guess she's sort of, nesting, if you like. She's doing lots of browsing, online shopping for things, and arranging furniture and stuff. And I guess...part of me is thinking financially...thinking about security, investing money and just having enough money

Frank (second trimester)

Beth is undoubtedly a lot more on top of than me in terms of the actual things we need to buy, the things we need to do to prepare. So I'm kind of being led by her and you know you can tell me what we need, you tell what we need to do and I will, you know, put the time into doing that.

Ollie (second trimester)

Ollie's narrative especially is indicative of how fathers often undertake a rather supportive role in heterosexual parenting dyads, prioritising their partner's aspirations around motherhood seeking to facilitate and enable this. Certainly, there is a feminist critique here around how fathers' supportive role perpetuates gender-normative parenting practices, with much of the responsibilities still falling on mothers (Faircloth, 2021), however, the importance of this role is relevant for understanding the emotional geographies of expectant fathering (Doucet, 2009).

Although, for some participants the gendered attainment of baby things sometimes took the form of 'she finds, he buys', fathers were still actively involved in this process. This was alluded to by Logan earlier, in being given a list of items to procure from Jean – the purchasing of baby things eliciting a sense of identity as a father in buying things *for* their future child. However, for Martin, this importantly entailed being the one to go and collect items from sellers on Facebook Marketplace; often doing this on his own (though occasionally with Mel), seemingly integrating this as part of his commute to/from work, as the interview was conducted on a Thursday.

We're collecting clothes as I say from Facebook marketplace and picking them up from people's houses and stuff...like there's this ['really lovely jumper'³⁷] I picked up yesterday.

Martin (second trimester)

By engaging in the collection of these items enabled Martin to be active involved in the accumulation of baby things (Davies, et al., 2009). This is perhaps reflective of contemporary aspirations around collaborative parenting practices (Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

However, within the context of the pandemic, this was also seemingly an important means for navigating the risk of potential exposure to contaminants, such as disease. By taking responsibility for collecting this item, and being initially exposed to the potential dangers of contracting COVID from meeting with sellers – touching/interacting with an item which may hold traces of disease (Horne and Maddrell, 2002: 50, cited in Waight, 2013: 201) – Martin thus enrolls this boundary-maintenance into enactments of good fathering, protecting Mel (and their unborn child) from this potential risk. Moreover, at the time of the research over 2021, general estimations indicated that COVID-19 could survive for up to three days on non-porous surfaces (CDC, 2021). Therefore, upon bringing this item into the home, it could be effectively 'quarantined', being stored safely away to naturally decontaminate over time – particularly as it would likely not be needed for another few months.

Indeed, the attainment of baby things from second-hand, online, marketplaces, entailed considerable and careful navigation of potential risk (Waight and Boyer, 2018; Waight, 2015). Martin, for example, emphasised how little the things they had purchased via Facebook Marketplace had been used, asserting how pristine they were, often still with the price-tags attached, attesting to the *quality* of these second-hand items (see later discussion of the affective properties of the 'white', 'delicate' pristine jumper Martin refers to here).

³⁷ This is a quote from earlier in the interview, which I will return to in the next section.

Facebook marketplace...It's for, its second hand stuff, but a lot of things – like the [jumper] I picked up yesterday, it still has the label on...some stuff that we've picked up, is from the grandparents, and they had seconds of everything, like baby washing baths, and all sort, and they've said 'we never really used them', because, although the child would come round, there just wouldn't be a requirement for it. So these grandparents are offloading all sorts of things that have never been used, and changing matts and things like that, so

Martin (second trimester)

Moreover, through how many of these baby things had been obtained from *grandparents* (rather than other parents), Martin's narrative is indicative of contemporary geographies of childcare in the UK (see Tarrant and Hall, 2020; Tarrant, 2016, 2014a, 2013 on geographies of grandfathering).

However, despite the value of second-hand goods, participants also importantly acknowledged how there were some things which, for safety, should – indeed, morally *could* not – be bought second-hand (Waight, 2015), for example, a car-seat, which many considered to be too unsafe to risk using³⁸.

But everyone says 'don't bother [buying everything new]' so long as it's not grubby – unless it's a safety thing, like a car seat

Martin, (second trimester)

This reveals the importance of objects in pre-parental enactments of caregiving through the navigation of risk and ensuring of the child's future safety, through performances of watchfulness and weariness of potential hazards that baby things may pose to their child (Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016).

³⁸ Indeed, Waight (2015: 210) notes how used car-seats cannot be sold at nearly-new sales due to safety concerns of pre-use.

As such, the attainment of certain baby things consequently required the negotiation of opportunities for participants to physically go into shops (Prothero, 2002), providing important opportunities to try-out and ‘test’ certain baby things before purchasing (Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). This was particularly the case for large items such as a pram, which parents would interact with practically everyday in different places (Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016), as Martin reflected.

I thought you only needed one pram, but (his eyes widen, and he shakes his head) oh no, no, apparently not! (Both laugh)...my colleagues at work say ‘oh no, you need, you need a pram that’s a nimble thing for going up and down shopping isles’, ‘then you need a bigger one for stashing all the nappies and bottles and everything else for going off road for a day in the park – you know when you’re not near your car or your house, so you can disappear for like hours on end’. So, so we’re now looking at it having to buy another –so we’ve got *two* prams now (laughing)

Martin (second trimester)

Of course, access to such retail spaces was particularly tricky within the context of the pandemic, with participants having to navigate going to these spaces alongside COVID restrictions and lockdowns.

So when things opened, we went to Smyth’s toys to have a look. And the [pram] we wanted was there...a staff member showed us how you fold it up and stuff

Robbie (second trimester)

Indeed, for Ollie, going to a specialist baby shop – which he and Beth had made an appointment to attend – was one of the most remarkable experiences of the pregnancy; something he was somewhat rather embarrassed to admit. While this highlights the surrealism of simply going shopping during the pandemic, it also highlights the significance of such spaces in the formation of parental subjectivities (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006).

A standout moment during the pregnancy. (After a few seconds pause, he continues). This might sound really lame actually, given the magnitude of what's going on, but going to the baby shop (he laughs).

Because as I say, that might be the one and only time we get to go and do that, to go and do a bit of normal expectant parenting stuff you know? That felt like quite a big deal...walking in there and sitting down as expectant mother and father with someone explaining to you about all these pushchairs and things, it really did feel like "God, when properly into like baby land now", you know "there's no doubt about this, it's definitely happening, it's 100% happening. We are going to be parents". Yeah, so that perhaps is a standout moment and you know I never thought I'd say to someone that going into a shop was a significant moment in my life (both laugh) but that's, that's where we are in the at the moment.

(Ollie, second trimester)

Being able to go to a shop provided an important opportunity for tactile engagements with prams; many describing experiences of pushing these objects about, testing their manoeuvrability, sturdiness, and ease-of-use in order to be confident in their purchase, particularly given its expense (Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006).

So that was kind of quite intense because, we walked into this place and you've got this lady showing you all the pushchairs and we're kind of thinking God we've got to get the most out of hour, two hours, whatever it is that we're got. What's the best pushchair? What's the best value for money? Does it fit all the criteria that we need? Yeah, that was full on....

So you know, pushing all these prams around the store, which ones are the most from the manoeuvrable? Which one comes apart the easiest? Which one is going to be the easiest to tell Nan and Grandad how to use? All this kind of stuff that that you have to consider. So yeah, pushchair was a big one

Ollie (second trimester)

These tactile encounters with prams are reminiscent of the discussions of Chapter 5, through how these tactile encounters not only bring to the fore participants' understandings of themselves as parents, but also through how such embodied encounters – here with objects (specifically prams) rather than the bodies of others – enable expectant fathers to begin practicing their caregiving (cf. Ranson, 2014), developing a sense of parental subjectivity (Clement and Waitt, 2018, 2017; Boyer and Spinney, 2016; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). I return to this point later in the chapter where I discuss emotional, affective encounters with baby things. First, however, I explore how these objects become integrated into material landscape of home during the transition to parenthood.

6.4. Integrating Materialities of Baby Things into the Home: Shifting Material Landscape of Home: The Integration of Materialities of Baby Things

The previous section explored the spatialities of accumulating baby things, interrogating the enrolment of various spaces/networks as part of moral geographies of pre-parenting practices (see Leinaweaver et al., 2017). This section explores the ways in which these materialities became integrated into the material landscape of home as part of the home-work of preparing for the arrival of a child; actively transforming the home – and particular rooms – into distinctively parenting spaces (ibid.; Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

6.4.1. Home-work: Nursery-Making...and the Production of Family Home

For many participants, the integration of baby things was understood as an important aspect of them (and their home) being 'ready' – practically, morally, and emotionally – for parenthood (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Leinaweaver et al, 2017), as assurance that they could 'cope' with the arrival of a child; that they have everything they need to care for their new baby.

The main thing we've been preoccupied with is preparation for the baby and we're doing well on that front in terms of like the kind of practical things of getting his room ready, buying the things that we need, I think we're pretty much there....so that kind of, if he like came you know (he suddenly starts smiling and is very animated) today, tomorrow, then we could cope, so that's good. So that's been a weight off.

Ollie, (third trimester)

Moreover, the undertaking of this home-work was often met with a sense of accomplishment and achievement from participants, as a visible inscription of their being 'ready' for the arrival of their child.

But yeah, we've got loads of clothes, we bought loads of furniture. We've had new carpets put in there...Made a changing table with drawers. And we've got the cot to build and some other stuff. So yeah, we're, we're doing stuff.

Denny (second trimester)

The preparation of a child's future room (colloquially referred to as a nursery) was a particularly significant experience for many participants (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2014).

Yeah, I've been buying a few things like clothes and stuff. It's quite nice. It's quite exciting to do that sort of shopping, sort of deciding how to decorate a nursery.

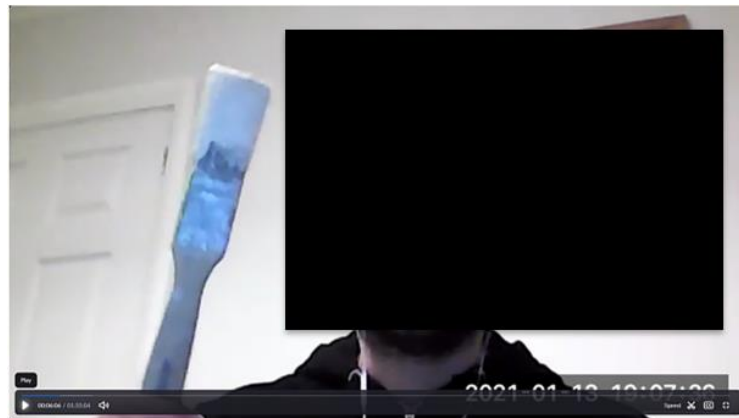
Robbie (second trimester)

if I owned somewhere (he smiles) I'd be totally decorating a room right now

Martin (second trimester)

Indeed, for the elicitation-style exercise conducted at the start of our first interview (Soaita and McKee, 2021; see Appendix E), the object that Ollie chose to bring was a paintbrush – somewhat in conflict with Cox's (2014) research on masculinities and the home, which found that responsibilities for painting nursery were primarily taken up by expectant mothers as part of the gendered work of preparing the home for the arrival of a child (p.232, echoed in Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

This might be somewhat underwhelming...What I have brought with me, having had a think about things, is this:



(he holds up a wooden paintbrush with white or pale coloured paint still on the bristles. The paintbrush is small enough to be used to paint in between corners and perhaps add extra detail but is not particularly fine),
which (he chuckles slightly), if you can see it, (holding it up to the camera) is a paintbrush.

Ollie (second trimester)

As noted in my methodology chapter (Chapter 3), this elicitation-style exercise provided particularly engaging insight into the role of actants in the lives of expectant fathers, encapsulated through the “vibrant materiality of [baby] things” (Soaita and McKee, 2021: 279), drawing attention to Ollie’s intimate encounters with materialities (here with a paintbrush) as part of the home-work of preparing for the arrival of his future child (Cox, 2014). He explained how this object encapsulated his experience as an expectant father to date.

And so this (holding up the paintbrush again) kind of represents to me the biggest part I’ve had to play so far because I feel that decorating and trying to get things ready for the baby in that sense has been the way that I’ve been able to put myself to the most use and feel like I’m, you know, being a dad, but an expectant dad, as best I can.

Ollie (second trimester)

Ollie's narrative here thus reveals how expectant fathers engage, specifically, in 'nesting' practices; spending time 'getting the house in order' and preparing for the arrival of baby. As such, this section addresses the comparative neglect of the dedicated work undertaken by expectant fathers specifically in preparing the home (Davies et al., 2009), though acknowledging the important relational nature of this work conducted alongside pregnant partners/expectant mothers, which have arguably been a greater focus in research (see Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2014).

What was particularly interesting within the painting of a nursery was the exact spaces participants emphasised having decorated. Obviously, this included spaces such as walls, with participants describing re-painting, or re-wallpapering, the intended baby's room. Frank, meanwhile, drew particular attention to the importance of decorating the space of the *ceiling*.

So we've been shopping for murals, like wallpaper to go on the ceiling (Alice: On the ceiling?) Yeah. So sort of, I guess animals on the ceiling, you know. So that when the child has night terrors, they can look up and feel comforted

Frank (second trimester)

This is an interesting contrast to the findings of previous work, with Luzia (2011) explaining how encounters with home often become gravitated towards floorspace during early parenting, where babies spend much of their time playing and (later) crawling (see Orrmalm, 2021, 2020). Here, however, Frank emphasises the importance of not only where babies spend their time, but also spaces they spend considerable time looking *at*; in this case, looking up at the ceiling while being on their back. While further revealing how parents' everyday geographies and (preparatory) encounters with the home are intimately tied to the everyday geographies of babies (Luzia, 2011), this is also particularly interesting as a form of anticipatory love/care (cf. Hamper and Nash, 2021; Meah, 2017), Frank decorating this space to bring comfort to his child in the future.

Similarly (and echoing some of the discussions of Chapter 4), some participants discussed the incorporation of particular materialities which acted as a material re-presentation of an absent loved one. Frank, for example, described the hope that although his child would never be able to meet their grandfather (his father), the presence of one of his paintings would provide a sense of presence of this person in their lives (being present in their nursery), thus providing an inter-generational connection, even in absence.

So my dad was a dilettante painter....very terrible works of art, very, very childlike. But my partner suggested that we frame up one of his paintings and put it on the wall for the baby's room, since they will never meet grandad

Frank (second trimester)

The significance of engaging with this preparatory work was particularly heightened during the pandemic, where there were significant disruptions to the 'normal' spatialities of pregnancy/expectancy; COVID restrictions meaning that expectant fathers could not always experience 'milestone moments' of going to maternity care appointments and scans (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5; see also Menzel, 2022).

When I think about my experiences as an expectant father to date, then I think, partly because of the pandemic...then obviously what we've been able to do in terms of engaging with the normal things you would do I guess as expectant parents has been limited...And I found that the best way I can kind of connect with having a baby and be of use is to kind of get the home as prepared as I possibly can

Ollie (second trimester)

Engagement in the home-work of preparing for the arrival of a child is widely acknowledged as an important means for expectant fathers to emotionally connect with and feel involved in the transition to parenthood (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), particularly so during the restrictions of the pandemic, as Ollie reveals above. John similarly described his feelings of anticipation/excitement at (re)decorating the home in anticipation for their future child's

arrival, after having been matched with a little girl (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2014).

I don't think it's quite sunk in. I think when I, when I build – once I've built the bed and done the decorating, I think yeah, that might kind of kick in, as in realisation kick in...it's gonna be so good. It's gonna be, it's gonna be great.

John (matched)

John's narrative here is particularly interesting in revealing how engaging with this home-work enables the transition to parenthood to 'feel more real' for expectant fathers – particularly those going through adoption, for whom Draper's (2003a) body-mediated 'milestone moments' are perhaps less pronounced (as discussed briefly in Chapter 5).

However, some participants expressed relatively superstitious feelings about bringing baby things into, and preparing the home, too early describing how they should instead be relatively cautious and tentative about this until the later stages of pregnancy. These feelings reveal the intense emotionality of expectant parents' affective encounters with baby things as part of the home-work of becoming a parent (see Cápona González, 2021, 2018; on Spinozian affect and superstition; similarly, see Howes, 2009, cited in Blackman, 2012 on affect and 'sixth sense')

I mean, you're not supposed to do the baby's room until the third trimester... Well, in case something happens, so you know, tradition is that you know, in the last three months you prepare the baby's rooms and not to, not to jinx it.

Frank (second trimester)

Frank's account here is distinctly reminiscent of fathers 'keeping an emotional distance' during early pregnancy (as discussed in Chapter 4), by not wanting to engage in preparatory practices of home-work too ready for the arrival of a child too early.

6.4.2. *DIY, Masculinities and the Production of Paternal Subjectivity*

The preparation of a baby's room/nursery is culturally regarded as a significant ritualistic rite-of-passage for expectant parents, symbolising their preparedness and commitment to parenting and raising a child – providing important moments for parents to actively work *together* in preparing for the arrival of a child (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). This was particularly in relation to the limited ability for expectant fathers to be involved in, or share, their partner's embodied labour of being pregnant and carrying their child (Longhurst, 2017; Davies et al., 2009), thus engaging instead in pre-parental enactments of love/care for their future child (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Hamper and Nash, 2021).

So obviously is a massive deal for me to become a dad, but I'm very aware that it is Beth who's those carrying the baby and the things, the physical changes and you know hormonal changes, emotional changes are mainly being felt by her. So, primarily, it's for me to make sure that I'm doing my bit to help Beth have what she needs. To keep her happy and healthy and then as a result of that same for the baby. So yeah it's kind of the support I'd say is the keyword that springs to mind from me and as I say, coming back to the paintbrush it's kind of looking at the practical stuff.

Ollie (second trimester)

The preparation of the home thus offered a key medium through which participants could feel actively involved in the pregnancy and impending parenthood (Cox, 2014; Davies et al., 2009), regarding home-work as a collaborative experience (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), although with an important acknowledgement of the primacy of their partner's experience; with Ollie framing this involvement as a central means to support Beth during the transition to parenthood.

Indeed, many acknowledged the highly gendered organisation of labour involved in preparing the child's room, with participants describing how it was often their partner taking primary responsibility for overseeing arrangements and plans for the room (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2014). This included expectant mothers deciding upon specific colours and materialities which would be used – relating to expectations of pre-parental demonstrations of investment in motherhood (Hamper and Nash, 2021).

We haven't done anything particularly creative, we haven't done any fancy murals or anything. Beth is a lot more creative than I am so I kind of like just do the work, Beth does the thinking about how it's going to look, choosing the colours, accessorising, that kind of stuff.

Ollie (second trimester)

Meanwhile, it would be expectant fathers undertaking this work – largely under the direction of their partner (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2016, 2014).

Tara had the instructions and I did the lifting up the stairs and most, most of the putting together. So it's yeah, it was quite easy. It's kind of Yeah, like, you know, a sort of plastic frame so there's the various bits you have to put together and then it's got like a sort of cloth, of, yeah, kind of cover that goes around the top bit. Yeah, yeah. So no, it was relatively easy. It didn't take too long, actually.

Tom (third trimester)

Tom's experience here highlights the importance of the fathers' engagement in the ritualistic practice of undertaking preparatory home, as an expression of their love and commitment to their future child (cf. Tomori and Boyer, 2019) – or at least commitment to support the mother's aspirations around parenting (see Chapter 7). However, in undertaking this work *with* their partner, it is also indicative of the intimacy of engaging in this pre-parenting practice together; of sharing the intimate experience of building a crib in anticipation of the arrival of child.

However, while this is arguably reflective of rather gender-normative performances of home-work in preparing for the arrival of a child, revealed in previous research (Tomori and Boyer, 2019, see also Cox, 2014), I suggest this is worth interrogating further, to explore *why* this gendered arrangement exists, and the significance of DIY as a domestic practice in the formation of particular subjectivities of parental identity, following Longhurst (2017) in attending critically to overlapping spatial scales.

Some participants explained how there was a certain embodied rationale to this arrangement due to the growing size of their partner's pregnant body, and subsequent discomfort; with them having been advised to minimise physical exertion, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. This highlights the overlapping scales of expectancy, with both Azri and Ollie deploying a certain embodied logic to the gendered division of preparatory work within the home.

So it's just sort of like understanding that...she can't be doing any lifting heavy things and stuff like that, and not expecting her to do anything like that anyway, yeah, so that she can be as comfortable as possible.

Azri (third trimester)

Beth has obviously I guess, things have changed for her a lot more than me because of the changes that she's going through like physically and stuff. So she's a lot less able to do things now (he seems hesitant to imply being pregnant makes Beth incapable, so quickly says) – she still does really well...but when we're doing some painting, there's certain positions that I can get into that she can't (short pause) physically.

Ollie (third trimester)

In fact, many even explained how the gendered divide emerged even when this was, perhaps, not ordinarily the most optimal arrangement for them as a couple, with many participants indicating that their partner was generally 'better' at DIY and constructing flat-pack furniture than they were (Cox, 2016).

Beth is much better at flatpack than I am (smiling) she is the one who, again, managing it, she's looks through the instructions, arranges everything, and I just do it. But she's much better and more patient.

Ollie (second trimester)

Anni's a lot better at some DIY than I am, I have to say. She'll do the drilling, she does that. Rolling out with the drill bit so yeah,

Denny (second trimester)

While Cox (2016) explores practices of home-improvement and DIY in the (re)production of gender identities, including the significance of such domestic practices for women's sense of home-making, DIY is often culturally regarded as a largely masculine pursuit, something which men are typically expected to take an interest and excel in as part of being a 'proper' man (Cox, 2016: 575; see Cox, 2014 on DIY and the geographies of masculinities). Indeed, despite assertions that DIY was usually the remit of their partner, many expressed particular masculine pride and satisfaction at the home-work they had done, and the things they had built in readying for the arrival of their child. This was particularly the case for Denny, who told me of his deep-seated fear of drills due to an experience in his youth, being moved to show me the things he had made (which initiated an impromptu house-tour, discussed shortly).

We've in fact – look, we've got some stuff from Ikea delivered today. So that's a cot, kulaks and some boxes that I need to make up for the nursery. And I made this the other day. Can you see that? That's got a changing table on top of a box of cabinets. I made that.

Denny (second trimester)

This sense of pride was similarly echoed by Logan, the only experienced dad in this study, but whose account speaks to the ongoingness of home-work (Orrmalm, 2021) having to adapt spaces of the home, implementing additional storage space in order to accommodate the growing size of his family (Woodward, 2021, 2016).

I bought like a pole and some things to put an extra layer in the wardrobe in their [the baby's and 2-year-old's] room. So [our daughter's stuff] is at the top and baby's at the bottom. So I put a new rail in which was surprisingly easy to do for someone who doesn't do DIY, but I did it and so yeah, I can't believe it, because it works.

Logan (third trimester)

These narratives reveal the distinct emotionality of spatial practices of DIY and home-making to the experience of becoming a father, and in particular the formation of a distinctly paternal subjectivity.

There's a few other things that she wants making...I'm the process, hopefully of trying to build her pirate ship come Doll's House for the garden. So we could put that together...she likes pirates and she like dolls, so I was tasked to try and build something for her to go in the garden.

John (Matched)

Here, John demonstrates how the home-work of DIY becomes enwrapped in the production of masculine subjectivity of fathering (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Cox, 2014), through John being willing and able to engage in this work as part of 'doing love' towards his future daughter, building something she will love, and will enjoy playing with (Meah, 2017).

The entanglements between assessments of 'moral' parenting ideals and the home were perhaps most stark for John, due to his experience of becoming a father through adoption, a process which entails the explicit inspection of the intended home *prior* to being approved as a prospective adopter (see Leinaweaver et al., 2017).

We don't know until we get to panel, and all of that is then dependent upon the social workers report on me and Val and obviously our house, family, pets, you know, the whole thing.

John, (Stage 2)

Indeed, the composition of home is even used in determining what *type* (i.e., age) of child would be suitable for them to adopt (similarly see Leinaweaver, 2015).

I mean, the panel will dictate whether we'll be able to go for a nought-two year-old because obviously they have to take into account, the house, the lifestyle, the finances, "are you ready?" "Will you be ready?" You know? So they might turn around and say, "No, definitely a two-year-old for them". Or they might turn around and say "Definitely a five year old"

(John, Stage 2)

This is particularly interesting in revealing how the structural compositions of home are intimately entangled with perceived moralities of parenting (Leinaweaver et al., 2017) and spatial practices of family-making (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). Resonating with the findings of Leinaweaver et al. (2017) on home-work during adoption, John described having to undertake considerable work on their home in order to meet the appropriate safety regulations to be approved as prospective adopters. This even included some rather extensive renovations, which John undertook himself.

When we went for our first day's training and they said about the house, we got sent a Health and Safety checklist and when I was reading through, I started to have a bit of a panic attack because it says "Windows conforming to so and so, standards" such and such "fire alarms conforming to this this and this", "knives in drawers", "no cupboards with chemicals", the usual, like, kind of the cupboards had to be all locked and lockable...Our staircase, that was checked – and the gap that is for a nought-two year old can be no bigger than six and a half centimetres and, a two-five year old is no bigger than a 10-centimetre gap. Well, our staircase had a top handrail and a middle handrail and the gap between those was about 25-centimetres. So we had to, I then, we then had to talk about the staircase, we had to put a new Bannister in. But the way it was installed, because it's in a bungalow isn't like a normal staircase, it was a struck together staircase so I had to completely reinvent the wheel to figure out how I was going to make it work.

John (Stage 3)

Though this is arguably reflective of the gendered performance of home-work in preparing for the arrival of a child (Tomori and Boyer, 2019), John's ability to do this work himself derived partly from his expertise of DIY, due to his job as a manual labourer in the events industry (Appendix F, see also Cox, 2014 on the entanglements of DIY and masculinity), which caused

some tension and frustration when Val suggested employing a ‘professional’ to get the work done sooner than he had initially planned.

Well, it had been on my mind for probably three months and then I still think we’re still thinking about it and then one day Val turns around to me and goes “That staircase needs doing before Stage 2 training”. “Yeah”, “If you’re not going to do it, I’ll get professional to do it”. Which absolutely snapped me in half, sent me over the edge and that was it: Got my tape measure, got my pencil, my pen, my book and got in the van and drove off and she didn’t see me for three and a half hours because I was fuming that she threatened to get somebody else in when I was gonna do it anyway. I came back with my bits of wood and whatever else and did the staircase, put all that in, made all that safe, you know it took a bit of time

(John, Stage 3)

Though John’s frustration could be read as an expression of feeling emasculated by Val’s suggestion, under my reading, his narrative is indicative more of his feeling somewhat *hurt* that this important home-work should – or even *could* – be outsourced to another person, one who is not emotionally invested in preparing their home for the arrival of their future child, symbolic of his ‘nesting’ practices as an expectant father (Davies et al., 2009). It thus indicates the emotional value expectant fathers’ place spatial practices of being involved in preparing the home for the arrival of their future child (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2014).

Importantly, however, though participants were heavily involved in the construction of this space of the child’s room through home-work practices of decorating or DIY, there was also critical recognition of the ongoing work undertaking by expectant mothers in continuing to fill this space with little materialities (cf. Waight, 2017).

We actually finished his room, decorating wise, quite a while ago now, the best part of a couple of months and then Beth’s been sort of adding to it with bits and bobs since then, and we’ve put like shelves on the walls and a counter, all the main kind of stuff, but the main painting was done quite a while ago

Ollie, (third trimester)

The incorporation of these materialities was largely grounded in the desire to give a particular room ‘character’, and with Ollie further drawing attention to the affective potential of this space in the production and anticipation of infant personhood (Hamper, 2020), through the hopeful fostering of shared interests and cares between parents and future child via the very materialities incorporated within this space.

We both like our animals and we’re hoping that the baby will too, so Beth has got a few things which are kind of woodland creature themed to accessorise the room and so we’re hoping that it will be the accessories and stuff that will give it a bit of character but at least everything is kind of clean and fresh and then, you know, ready to go.

Ollie, (second trimester)

This is ultimately indicative of the highly gendered work of preparing for the arrival of a child (Tomori and Boyer, 2019) and ‘nesting’ practices (Davies et al., 2009).

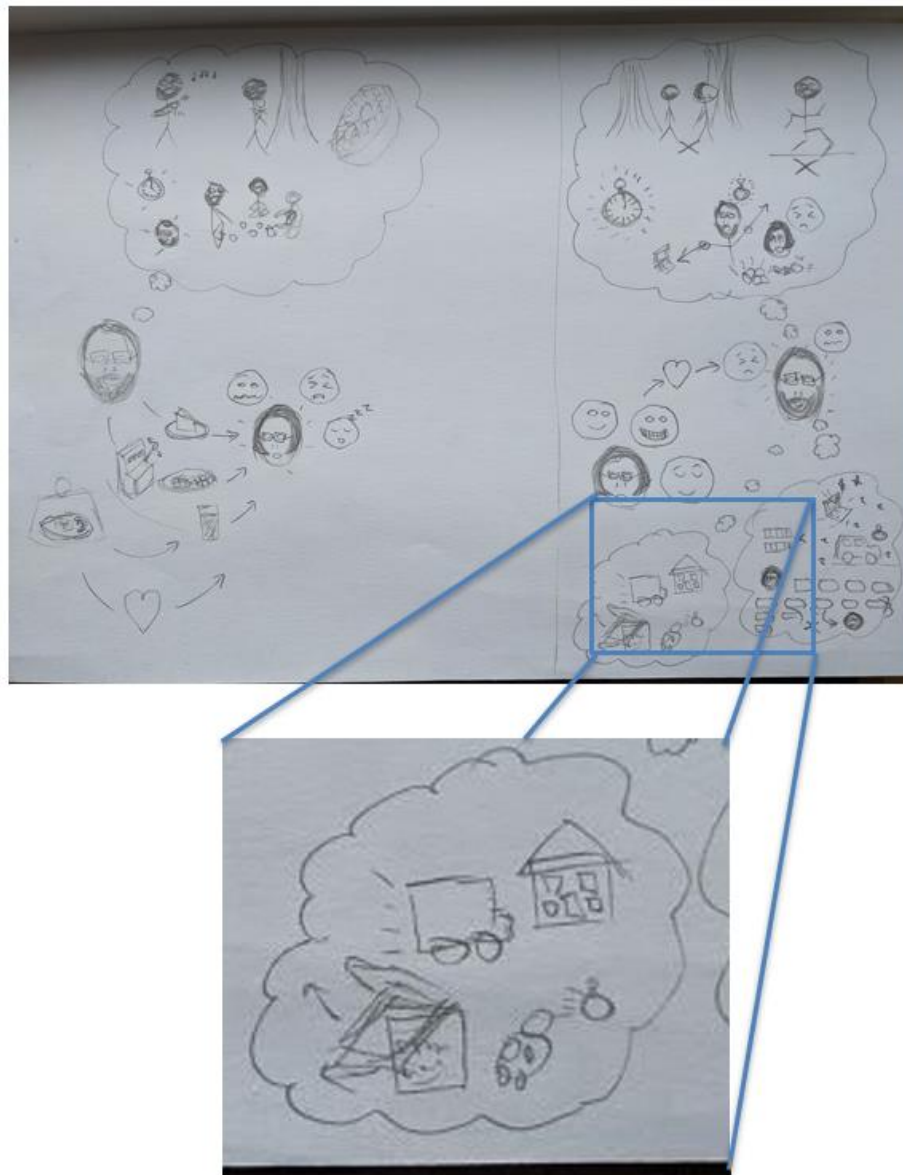
Although this work of preparing the home was largely associated with feelings of anticipation and excitement (as well as an intimate emotional connection to the future child), for some, this could also be quite a stressful experience, particularly as the arrival of a child loomed closer.

Yeah I’m kind of, a bit anxious. It’s getting to the point where he could easily turn up at any point, at any moment so we’re trying to be as prepared as we can for him to come at the earliest of possible moment. If we’ve prepared for that, then we’re prepared for anything so. So yeah, so feeling excited – I can’t wait to meet him I must admit, you know I’m really looking forward to that (he says smiling) but, practical side of it, a bit worried like ‘am I going to be ready?’

Ollie (third trimester)

As Ollie highlights, the stress of this experience derived from anxieties of ‘not being ready’ and feeling that this work *needed* to be done before the arrival of a child (relating to expectations of being ‘ready’) (Leinaweaver et al., 2017). This was particularly the case for those participants looking to move home just before, or soon after, the expected due date (in

order to have more ‘space’, as discussed previously), which Tom highlighted during our elicitation style exercise in our first interview. He broadly categorised this under his ‘negative’ emotions section, with the presence of a stop-watch indicating the pressure of time. He explained how these feelings of stress derived from the *inability* to set up a designated (and permanent) space for their child before they arrive.



And then the final aspect, final bubble here, so we'd like to move house – as if we didn't have enough to do! – but we'd like to move house to get a bit more space and that sort of thing. So it's kind of, yeah, feeling like this new job and wanting to move house and sort that out and feeling like we need to kind of get organised for the baby arriving and you know, that kind of thing. So feeling like they're those kind of – yes, things causing stress.

Tom (second trimester)

Tom's narrative is particularly revealing of how the completion of such preparatory home-work becomes configured within moral displays of preparedness, enrolled into cultures of pre-parenting enactments. Indeed, there was recognition among some participants of how this home-work obviously *could* be done afterwards, although with emphasis of how doing so would entail the navigation of additional pressures; namely additional care requirements and heightened safety concerns which are not as present before arrival of a child into the home. This was not least having to navigate and mitigate against potential risks such work would pose to the child, due to the presence of tools, with someone (typically the mother) having to mind the child whilst the other (usually the father) undertakes this work – potentially with reinforcements from friends/family. This was evinced by both Robbie and Tom in our follow-up interviews (conducted 6-months and 9-months post-partum, respectively).

We moved two months before...but because she was early, it's only just now that we've been able to, we could bear to get the paint brushes out and the masking tape and stuff. Well, like Haley's sister had to come around to watch Lissy because she's like – if you're not looking at her or paying attention to her, she's not happy. So we've had, we've had to get her sister around to sort of watch her while we can, we can do a bit more decorating.

Robbie (follow-up)

It's kept us busy trying....Things are not happening very quickly, as you might imagine, yeah. Like DIY things, kind of become a big planning process because someone's got to look after Penny and keep her away from screwdrivers and hammers

Tom (follow-up)

Here, Robbie and Tom seek to enrol alternative moral discourses and displays of 'good parenting' in lieu of having a pre-prepared room for their babies, emphasising instead their investment and work towards child safety and protecting their child from potential risks.

6.4.3. *Storage of Baby Things: Clutter and Dormant Objects? Or Objects-in-Waiting.*

Through how baby things were accumulated some time before the arrival of a child, for many participants, there was a considerable period where these objects were present in their home, while not actively being used. Indeed, participants marvelled at the *amount* of stuff they had amassed, which needed to be temporarily stored until the baby arrived.

It's just, it's amazing how much crap you accumulate, and we're getting lots of offloaded stuff from other people whose baby, their children are old enough they don't need these papooses (he gestures having a sling over his shoulder) and all sorts so we're getting loads of stuff from them

Martin (second trimester)

The spatialities of this storage were often highly visible within the homescape. During our first interview, Denny took me on an impromptu tour of the upstairs of their home, taking me into their nursery-in-progress; their spare room turned temporary storage room, revealing the cardboard boxes of flat-packed furniture waiting to be built, the various clothes and tools left on counters (placed almost absent-mindedly, as though midway through a task), and the huge vacuum-packed bag of clothes stored away in their cupboard of their upstairs landing (see Collins and Stanes, 2021 on home storage; see also Knoblauch et al. 2014 on videography)³⁹.

³⁹ All images used with permission.

So we've got like, we've in fact – look, we've got some stuff from Ikea delivered today. So that's a cot, kulaks and some boxes that I need to make up for the nursery.



And I made this the other day. Can you see that? (Alice: Yeah, brilliant!). That's got a changing table on top of a box of cabinets...



...we've been given so many clothes that we vacuum packed them all – can you see that?...so these are like three to six months, six to 12 months, they were like put them to one side vacuum packed that looks like that's not fucking packed anymore...



Denny (second trimester)

Denny's narrative especially reveals the storage of these materialities was often highly visible and somewhat chaotic, spilling out onto the landscape in ways which were uncontrollable, the vacuum-packed bag intended to save space opening up, but still being relatively 'hidden' behind a closed door (Collins and Stanes, 2021). Indeed, some objects – particularly 'big things' such as prams – were stored away in spaces of the home which meant they could be more explicitly 'hidden', such as garages (ibid.; Cappellini and Yen, 2016; Woodward, 2016).

Already we're filling up our garage with baby stuff, with prams, and car seats and whatnot and the spare room is filling up with cabinets and baby changing stations.

Martin (second trimester)

However, other materialities were necessarily stored *within* certain spaces of the home, due to their intended purpose within nurseries (Tomori and Boyer, 2019). For some participants, the intense visibility of these objects, within the homescape encroached onto everyday use of these spaces, such as within nurseries-in-progress which continued to be used as offices, or lying in hallways, making them difficult to navigate and leaving them with a feeling of their home being 'cluttered' (Woodward, 2021, 2016).

So it [the cot] also came in an enormous box, So we've got like, a bit of a corridor in the living room, but it kind of took up the corridor. So we were like, 'well, it's in the way'

Tom (third trimester)

At times, the presence of these materialities 'cluttering' spaces of the home caused particular stress for expectant fathers. This was especially when it came to wanting to decorate and prepare the nursery, with Ollie describing (at length) how the temporary storage of baby things in the baby's future room entailed having to move objects *out* in order to make final touches, and to create space in which to build furniture (Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

(Alice: If you were kind of standing in the nursery and kind of have gone upstairs now and looked around how do you think you would feel in the room?)

At the moment, stressed! Because I'd be like "what is all this stuff doing in here? We still need to get rid of it!" you know there's no room here for a baby. So I feel a bit stressed. You empty the room out to paint it, you paint it, and then you look at this lovely room that you just painted, freshly painted, empty, and you think "Oh, we're getting somewhere" and then you have to put all the junk back in (Alice laughs) and then you think "oh God, we haven't gotten anywhere" but you have, but it still feels like there's lots do...

...Anyway...we've decorated that room, we've got the units in. So we're finally starting to move stuff out of the baby's room to the little room, and then use that space to make the baby furniture which we still have in boxes up there at the moment, which we haven't been able to build up to now because we've had all this stuff to do so. So it's all kind of like dominoes, there's just one thing that affects another...

Ollie (second trimester)

This section has explored the integration of baby things into the homescape through spatial practices around home storage – practices which were often quite mundane, but still highly visible and significant. By interrogating the presence of baby things within the home *prior* to the undertaking of home-work (indeed, in anticipation of it), it has extended previous work by Tomori and Boyer (2019) and Leinaweaver et al. (2017). It further contributed to geographical literatures on family-practices of home-storage through how storage practices may embody the inscription of entirely future parenthood (rather than mediations of the past) (cf. Owen and Boyer, 2022; Collins and Stanes, 2021).

However, these are far from being 'dormant objects' (Owen and Boyer, 2022; Woodward, 2021, 2016) – they are not merely objects not being used, but which have not been used *yet*, objects full of affective anticipatory potential of their future use. They are thus, what I would term *objects in waiting*, ready to be used in the future. I now explore expectant fathers emotional, affective encounters with these objects within the home, in lieu of the presence of their future child.

6.5. Affective Encounters: Arriving at Arrival

In the Literature Review, I outlined how objects are more than merely ‘things’, but are highly agential beings/entities, possessing the affective capacity to affect and be affected (Woodward, 2021; Clement and Waitt, 2018), with Rautio (2013) arguing how even stones – seemingly banal and ordinary objects – have affective capacity and the affordance to call to us and interact with them in specific ways – largely by virtue of their material properties. This was also of significance for participants in this project, with various baby things calling out to them at various points in their transition to parenthood, and which fostered an intimate, emotional ‘arrival’ into fatherhood. I noted especially the significant ability/affective capacity of material objects to evoke and elicit emotions and, further still, for such objects to become enwrapped in the emergence of particular forms of subjectivity and identity (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Clement and Waitt, 2018; Boyer and Spinney, 2016; after Barad, 2008; Braidotti, 2002).

In this final discussion section of this chapter, I explore how participants ‘arrive at arrival’ through the emergence of a distinctly paternal sense of subjectivity and identity, via intimate, and care-full encounters with baby things – predominantly within spaces of the home (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Waight and Boyer, 2018). I spotlight, especially, how these tender, intimate and ultimately *loving* encounters with such material objects occur only between expectant fathers and the objects themselves – entirely unprompted by others, thus going beyond, and extending the discussions Chapter 5, wherein the encounters occurred always within the presence of their partner. While this arguably reflects broader societal discourses of intimate, involved fathering during pregnancy/expectancy – with fathers engaging in pre-parenting practices to feel/be ‘involved’ and foster a sense of paternal identity before the arrival of a child (Twamley et al., 2013) – I suggest there is more at play here. They are not participating in these encounters because of a perception that this is what being a ‘good father’ during pregnancy/expectancy is all about (as may be argued with engagements in pre-parenting

practices, discussed earlier, such as attending scans, decorating a nursery etc.); rather, they are engaging in these practices on an *entirely* emotional level. As such, this section reveals the intensity of emotional practices through which expectant fathers, actively and independently, engage in the ‘doing’ of family before the arrival of child.

Interestingly, the objects which were perhaps the most pivotal in facilitating this arrival varied considerably, including everyday domestic material objects (which were almost banal) – as I will show – but also the extraordinary. Frank for example, described his experience of being on a beach in the summer before our interview, and seeing a discarded dummy, feeling compelled to pick it up. So powerful was this object that it is what Frank chose for our elicitation-style exercise (see Soaita and McKee, 2021).

[Frank holds up a cracked, old-looking dummy]

I found this in the summer, on the beach. With me and my partner on the beach, and she was worried she was never gonna get pregnant. And, and I was just lying down, and I just saw this thing next to me. And I just thought, (he looks at the dummy in his hand, holding it up as though it possesses some mystical quality) “No, we’re gonna get pregnant”. And this was just like, you know, a sign. It was a sign. And it had a particular, a particular feeling. When I saw it was just like, “Wow”. and it's almost like, at that moment, I knew that I would be having a child with this woman.

Frank, (second trimester)

Frank’s narrative here echoes Rautio’s (2013) analysis of carrying stones, revealing the affective agency of materialities in calling out to us to touch and interact with them in particular (often imaginative) ways, potentially taking on a new persona, through the interactions between object and person (after Barad, 2008). Indeed, although Frank explained how this object was old, and worn (the plastic/rubber cracked), he was not only compelled to pick it up – irrespective of its potential unhygienic qualities (Waight and Boyer, 2018) – but also to *keep* it, storing – perhaps even displaying – it within this home during the ensuing months (clearly having known where to find it, for our interview). Noteworthy here is that this object is not

intended for his future child (ibid.) but acts as a representation of them in much the same way that virtual depictions of fruits are used within pregnancy apps (Hamper and Nash, 2021).

This encounter is all the more profound for how it occurred very early on during the pregnancy – before Faith (and therefore Frank) even knew she was pregnant. As such, this object was not ‘just’ a dummy, but is representative of the hope and desire for children, taking on the persona of a future child (hence his compulsion to keep it).

Moreover, this affective encounter is also revealing of the various temporalities and spatialities of encounter in expectant fathers’ ‘arriving at arrival’, with Frank’s experience occurring at a beach, at the very start of pregnancy. It also has an almost ethereal quality, with Frank’s encounter with this object acting as a confirmation to him, at least, of their impending futures as parents, enabling him to ‘arrive’, emotionally, at fatherhood – long before Faith became aware of the pregnancy (see Howes, 2009, cited in Blackman, 2012 on sixth sense and affect). Even more ethereal is the fact that, at the time of this experience Faith *was* actually pregnant.

However, for many participants, intimate and affective encounters with baby things typically occurred within spaces of the home, often toward the later stages of pregnancy/expectancy. This was largely consequent to the visible presence of objects within the home (present due to the home-work and accumulation and storage of baby things performed earlier in the pregnancy, as discussed thus far in this chapter), with these shifting material landscapes of home becoming re-presentative and emblematic of the anticipated arrival of their future child.

Indeed, many participants described being drawn to particular objects displayed in their home (Rautio, 2013), interacting with these objects in intimate, embodied, multi-sensory ways. They explained their experiences of looking at, touching/caressing these objects – largely in *lieu* of the presence of their future child (Leinaweaver et al., 2017). These encounters were

significant in enabling expectant fathers to develop an individual, and paternal, sense of connection to their future child (cf. Davies et al., 2009).

In particular, the material properties and affective affordance of objects were significant in anticipating playful encounters with their future child. Tom, for example, described his affective encounters with various cuddly objects, which not only called to him based on their affective appeal – in being ‘cute’, a point which I will return to in a moment – but also the playfulness afforded by their material properties.

I really like this like pink cat that Tara made...It waves really nicely you can hold it and then it's waves, that's very cute, yes, and giving it even a silly little accent, the miniature dachshund that we've got waves quite nicely too (Alice: preparing for a little puppet shows). Yeah. Yeah.

Tom (third trimester)

Tom's narrative here is particularly revealing of how the highly affective sensory and material properties of baby things ‘call out’ to expectant fathers to interact with them in particular ways (after Rautio, 2013), with the bendability of the dachshund's limbs being particular conducive for being used to wave.

This is interesting for how, through these encounters with this immaterial object, Tom anticipates and attempts to build an emotional connection with his future child. Within her ethnographic research with new fathers, Ranson (2014) argues how fathers' repeated, and routinised performance of caregiving practices, produces an ‘embodied habitus’ of intimate fatherhood; the repeated enactment of (practical) care enabling this to become habitual and familiar. These intimate, affective encounters highlighted in Tom's narrative are revealing of the ways his emotional, embodied habitus of intimate fatherhood emerge during the period of expectancy, through anticipatory forms of encounter with a future child (as previously discussed in Chapter 5). By imagining using these objects to playfully interact with his future daughter, Tom is in essence *practising* and *rehearsing* future practices of caregiving – albeit

the largely fun dimensions of parenting ways (echoing feminist critiques of fathers' engagement only in the 'fun' aspects of parenting, see Brandth and Kvande, 2018; Doucet 2009). Nevertheless, his encounters of touching, bending and speaking *with* these objects are thus reflective of the affective anticipations and excitement of his future intimate caregiving practices, bringing the future into the present (cf. Meah, 2017) and developing a (new) emotional/emodied habitus of intimate, involved fathering (cf. Ranson, 2014) and a distinctly paternal sense of subjectivity.

Martin similarly described how the emergence of a paternal sense of self also emerged through sensory encounters with clothes, positioning these as highly emotive material objects for expectant fathers. He described, while holding these objects, imagining his future child, feeling an intimate and emotional sense of proximity and closeness to them (cf. Hamper and Nash, 2021; Meah, 2017).

Clothes....when you're holding them, you're thinking, well we're buying stuff that's 0-3 months and they look too big(!), but we buy stuff...inevitably, you start imagining what your child, whatever she looks like, will be wearing, of you dressing them up and stuff. So I think that's the most memorable, viscerally, you know *emotive* thing is clothes. Probably more than baby changing stations or a pram, or car seat, yeah, because I'm imagining her wearing them (Alice gasps) and trying to imagine what her personality would be like, you know, will she be someone who'd want to wear this stuff? You know (he gestures with one hand, then the other as though torn between a decision), you know bears or sailing boats?

Martin (second trimester)

These objects are particularly emotive for how they enable Martin to develop a sense of personhood for his future child, imbuing his unborn child with agency and personality (Holt and Philo, 2022). That is, while looking at and holding these baby clothes, Martin anticipates and begins to imagine his future child, wondering what kinds of clothes they will most enjoy wearing. Again, I feel it is worthwhile stressing how Martin is interacting with these objects as

an individual, rather than as necessarily part of a parenting team. He is thus engaging with these intra-actions distinctly as a *father*, his encounters with which enable him to think about and imagine his future child, developing an emotional sense of proximity and closeness to them (Meah, 2017) and ultimately to develop a sense of paternal subjectivity (cf. Hamper and Nash, 2021; Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

This paternal subjectivity was also evoked through descriptions of the size and textures of baby clothes.

Alice: What's your favourite item of clothing that you've gotten so far?

Martin: It's actually something that I picked up yesterday, which was a really thick like – what's it called? (he fumbles about, trying to recall the right word) – it's like a jumper, like a really nice, thick, woolly jumper, so I think that was it. It's just (his face scrunches up with emotion, indicating how enamoured he is) everything so delicate, and it's, and it's really nice. And it's white as well, and it's all new and, you know, clean (he waves his arms about in front of him erratically, in excitement) – and I know it's going to get covered in sick, I know. (Alice laughs). But little things like this, because they just look so delicate and lovely and new

Martin (second trimester)

Martin's emphasis here on this jumper being white has particular invocations of purity and cleanliness (Waight and Boyer, 2018; Lupton, 2013). Moreover, in being 'cute', Martin's narrative positions these materialities of baby things as being highly affective, highlighting their capacity for mobilising expectant fathers' emotions, and eliciting connection to their future child. Indeed, when talking about clothes, expectant fathers frequently referred to these in relation to their 'cuteness' – with surprising attention being given to socks and, relatedly, shoes.

The very tiny socks. I hung them out on the washing line with a peg and now it's like the clothes pegs pretty much bigger than the socks...

Tom (third trimester)

In a fascinating article Orrmalm (2020) examines the significance of babies' everyday encounters with socks, later building upon this to explore babies' space-making practices (Orrmalm, 2021). These narratives extend Orrmalm's work, revealing how expectant *parents* (specifically fathers), similarly encounter and intimately intra-act with socks as part of the space-making practices involved in becoming a parent; as well as how these affective encounters facilitate the anticipation of the arrival of a child (Menzel, 2024; cf. Leinaweaver et al., 2017).

Socks are perhaps the most banal and unextraordinary of objects. However, these narratives reveal how through the tiny *size* of these baby clothes, the familiar materialities of socks become an *unfamiliar* and extraordinary quality, becoming almost uncanny (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Chambers, 2017).

Alice: My mum still has [my brother's] baby shoes...and they're like (Alice gestures with her fingers) teeny tiny little things

Ollie: (Smiling widely) I *know*! There's nothing quite like the shoes is there to kind of bring home how small they are?

Ollie (third trimester)

This highlights the affective capacities of the size of objects in eliciting a sense of intimacy, tenderness and ultimately care-fullness for a future child. Echoing Martin's early discussion of the purity and pristineness of baby clothes, the tininess of these baby socks (as well as their softness) is indicative of the perceived vulnerability of babies/infants (Lupton, 2013), encounters with which thus evoke a sense of paternal feeling to protect and care for a child (Waight and Boyer, 2018), and thus to develop a sense of readiness, indeed, preparedness *for* the arrival of a child (Leinaweaver et al., 2017).

He was so tiny when he arrived – so he was five pounds 14 ounces which is not like you know, the littlest small, but it's small. Um it was small enough that he was too small for all the clothes we had for him and that kind of stuff, so like the newborn stuff was too big, I have to go and get it like *tiny* baby clothes. And so, yeah, it was – at first it was kind of like God, he's so small you feel a little bit like (a small shake of the head), handling him, just, you know, he might break, but um really quickly you get to the point, or we both have, where it's felt really natural to hold him, it's not, you know, intimidating, you just feels normal.

Ollie (post-birth interview)

These narratives reveal the affective capacity of baby things to facilitate an emotional connection between expectant father and future child, evoking a distinctly paternal sense of subjectivity through expectant fathers' intimate encounters with these objects (cf. Tomori and Boyer, 2019). It highlights also how the caregiving 'instinct' is fundamentally learned (Ranson, 2014) – Ollie expressing here his familiarity of holding his son Henry, contrasting to his experience discussed in Chapter 4 of feeling fearful of holding babies. Importantly, and in line with the conception of objects as agential entities (Burkitt, 2014; Ahmed, 2004), these objects *want* to be touched, and held; to be cuddled, caressed and played with, by virtue of their material, and sensory composition (after Rautio, 2013). The soft textures of their surfaces and their tiny size powerfully evoke tender care-full forms of intra-action and encounter with expectant fathers facilitating their transition into fatherhood. In many ways, for many participants, it is almost unfathomable that there will soon be a 'tiny human' to fill these tiny socks (Holt and Philo, 2022), but nevertheless, these encounters reinforce to expectant fathers that this tiny human *will* be here, and will be here *soon*, in their home – a 'tiny human' for whom they will be responsible for caring for and protecting (Brandth and Kvande, 2018). Thus, this section has revealed these intimate and affective encounters are significant in how expectant fathers 'arrive at arrival', emotionally and practically, evoking a distinctly paternal sense of subjectivity and intimate, anticipatory sense of connection with their future child.

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored emotional geographies embroiled within expectant fathers' performance and engagement within the preparatory 'home-work' of anticipating the arrival of a child, extending outwards from the body to consider the emotional geographies of the home (and specifically rooms within the home). I have foregrounded the significance of the home in the moral production, and ultimately displays, of 'good parenting' practices (Kerr et al., 2018; Dowling and Power, 2012); particularly as performed prior to the arrival of a child, through the demonstration of emotional, practical and material preparation for raising a child (Tomori and Boyer, 2019).

More specifically, I explored expectant fathers' engagement in the 'work' involved in the accumulation and integration of 'baby things' within the home, revealing the significance of this shifting material landscape of the home to the subsequent re-creation of the home into a distinctly parental space (ibid.; Leinaweaver et al., 2017). Moreover, I examined how consumption practices of accumulating baby things were enrolled into moral displays and commitments towards 'good parenting' practices (Prothero, 2002) such as through engagement in localised share economies.

While I noted in the literature review how the brief considerations of expectant fathering within pre-parenting geographies of preparing the home have been largely heteronormative, noting the divisions of labour along traditional gender lines – with expectant fathers taking on much of the manual, DIY labour (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Cox, 2016, 2014) – this chapter extended the literature by examining the significance and meaning of these spatial practices of preparing for the arrival of a child to expectant fathers *themselves*. It thus goes beyond hegemonic discourses of 'good parenting' practices, to reveal the overlapping scalarities at play, and how the division of such work is mediated via considerations of the body, as well as navigations of 'risk' (particularly during the pandemic).

However, most importantly, I argued in this chapter how intimate, care-full intra-actions and encounters with these objects – in lieu of the presence of their future child – constituted anticipatory forms of encounters of love/intimacy (Meah, 2017; Leinaweaver et al., 2017), enabled the development of a distinctly paternal sense of subjectivity (Davies et al., 2009). This was perhaps most evident through my examination of expectant fathers' intimate, multi-sensory embodied encounters with these objects within spaces of the home; with these material objects 'calling out' to expectant fathers to touch, hold and tenderly intra-act with them in highly care-full ways (Tomori and Boyer, 2019, after Barad, 2008 and Braidotti, 2002). As such, this chapter has thus built upon the insights developed in Chapter 5, going beyond the scale of the body, to consider how these are entangled with the shifting material landscape of home.

Moreover, by spotlighting expectant fathers' emotional engagements and encounters with baby things on an *individual* level – rather than as part of collaborative, relational encounters with their partner (Tomori and Boyer, 2019) – this chapter has extended existing understanding of the spatial practices/interactions which are emotionally significant to expectant fathers (Davies et al., 2009). Indeed, many of these multi-sensory and affective encounters took place without 'prompting', such as through the embodied experiences of others (as in Chapter 5), also going beyond societal discourse and expectations of 'good fathering' practices during pregnancy/expectancy, such as attendance of ultrasound scan appointments as a demonstration of commitment for 'being there' for the future child (Chapter 4). These encounters thus revealed how, for many expectant fathers, there is a strong desire to be actively involved in the labours, demands (and joys) of parenting; to spend time practicing and learning

these in anticipation of a child's arrival. Thus, in bringing my empirical discussions to a close, Chapter 7 will now attend critically to the central factors that frequently hinder fathers' more equitable participation in childcare: the ongoing tensions between the involved, intimate father, and distant breadwinner (Aitken, 2005, 2000).

7 Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Precarity and Uncertainty in Expectant Fathers' Negotiation of Paternity Leave from Work

7.1. Introduction

Thus far in this thesis, I have examined the emotional geographies of expectant fathering at the scales of the body (both individually, via expectant fathers (self)regulation of emotions in Chapter 4, and *between* bodies through expectant fathers' inter-embodied encounters with their unborn child, inside the womb in Chapter 5), as well within the space of homes, via the accumulation and interaction with 'baby things' in Chapter 6. Further still – and supporting Longhurst's (2017) assertion of the need to consider emotions, at various different scales, within male-caregiving – examinations of these spaces has revealed how expectant fathers' emotional experiences at these scales are importantly intermingled with societal expectations of 'good parenting' practices and national legislation (especially via the navigation of COVID-19 restrictions). In this final empirical discussion chapter, I extend my focus further outwards, to examine expectant fathering within workplace spaces through expectant fathers' negotiation and arrangement of parental leave from work.

Following the arrival of a child, parents – and new parents especially – typically take a portion of leave from work, the amount of which generally differs between mothers/fathers. Whilst the importance, and value, of fathers' leave-taking has been increasingly argued for in policy/research, it is still generally expected that mothers will need, and take, more time away from work. Indeed, UK statutory maternity-leave includes 26-weeks 'ordinary leave', compared to just 2-weeks paternity (though with possibilities for further leave, depending on specific employment circumstances, and employee benefit packages available), reflecting pervasive societal expectations of mother-caregiver/father-breadwinner gendered parenting roles.

As I noted in Chapter 2, examination of parental leave has been widely unexamined within geography – with the partial exceptions of Boyer et al.’s (2017a) feminist review on the uneven geographies of contemporary childcare in the UK in the aftermath of the recession, and a collection of response articles which draw further critical attention to the geographies which may enable, or hinder, fathers’ more equitable involvement in childcare, such as through facilitating greater uptake of leave (Longhurst, 2017; Gorman-Murray, 2017; Locke, 2017; Boyer et al., 2017b). However, within these commentaries, there is a rather curious absence of the central role of workplace spaces – specifically, of the practical accessibility and awareness of parental leave legislation to negotiate extended forms of leave, along with workplace cultures which perpetuate societal expectations of gendered parenting roles. This chapter thus responds directly to, and importantly extends, these commentaries by examining the emotional geographies of expectant fathers’ negotiation and arrangement of paternity leave from work.

I show how, despite the significance of bodily difference, and highly gendered expectations of ‘good parenting’ practices in the home discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, it is actually workplace spaces – and especially expectant fathers’ sense of commitment to them – which act as the biggest hindrance to fathers’ truly equitable involvement in the labours/demands of early parenting. Indeed, though these emotions emerge in relation to workplaces, I reveal how they permeate elsewhere, into different places; including into intimate spatialities (and indeed temporalities) of the home (Longhurst, 2017). I highlight and explore the entanglements between expectant fathers’ emotions and workplace spaces, interrogating how these emotions influenced their negotiation of leave-taking. This includes how much leave they felt able to take, as well as the pressures they felt about preparing for leave.

Importantly, as Twamley (2019) notes, negotiations of leave are not, necessarily, confined to conversations – and indeed, are often navigated through the entire absence of explicit discussions. Rather, they are navigated via national legislation (Boyer et al., 2017a),

workplace policies (Koslowski, 2022; Borgkvist et al., 2021; Haas and Hwang, 2019) – including employee relations and contracts – as well as against societal discourse and community-based expectations of ‘good parenting’ practices (which are distinct for mothers and fathers); particularly through gendered expectations/aspirations for the bodily performance of parental care (Longhurst, 2017).

Through this chapter, I also make an important departure from extant work on parental leave (from beyond geography) through a focus on fathers’ emotional experiences of negotiating even basic allowances of paternity leave, a form of leave which has been underexplored within research (Petts et al., 2020, 2019). Indeed, much work on fathers’ negotiation of leave has done so within the context of *shared* parental leave, which is firstly not always applicable/available to many fathers (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Twamley and Schober, 2019; Boyer et al., 2017a), but which is also known to still be largely taken by mothers (Brooks and Hodgkinson, 2021; O’Brien and Twamley, 2017). I suggest that attending to fathers’ negotiation of more typical forms of leave may be more revealing about the factors which prohibit greater uptake of (extended) leave and, subsequently, their active participation in the labours/demands of early parenthood (Gorman-Murray, 2017; Locke, 2017). Indeed, recent figures estimate that whilst 91% of UK fathers take some form of leave (Twamley and Schober, 2019), with around 75% making use of statutory leave entitlements (Boyer et al., 2017a), less than one third (29%) will take more than two-weeks’ leave (Kaufman, 2018).

Following this introduction, and a brief overview of the legislative context of UK parental leave, this chapter examines fathers’ emotions and experiences of requesting and negotiating leave from work. It firstly attends to expectant fathers’ hopes and desires for leave, and their disappointment (and anxiety) when this was not possible, due to ineligibility based on employment status; restrictions which ultimately reify fathers’ ‘place’ being at work, despite recent societal emphasis on intimate, involved fatherhood. It also explores the fractious

tensions participants felt between taking leave (as part of enactments of being a good, involved father/partner) and pressures of being a ‘good worker’, illuminating their anxieties/uncertainties, even guilt, about taking leave from work. Thus, it furthers geographic research on (expectant) fathering, as well as broader (feminist) debates around flexible working in supporting fathers’ more equitable contribution to the labours/demands of early parenthood.

Importantly, I distinguish here between prolonged states of (social) anxiety as a disorder and sustained state of ill-ease (for this, see Todd, 2021; Boyle, 2019), instead conceptualising anxiety as an emotion; an affective resonance which is relatively temporary, but which may be repeatedly felt for a sustained period in response to particular pressures. These pressures may lead to more permanent states of ill-health and stress (Pykett et al., 2020). Thus, by way of conclusion, I reflect on the implications of these emotional experiences on participants’ expectations of their future at work, highlighting the significance of paternity leave on father-employee retention. As such, whilst I situate this thesis primarily within (pre)parenting geographies (and geographies of fathering specifically), I also demonstrate in this chapter the wider significance of fathers’ leave-taking for research concerned with employee mental health/wellbeing, work-family balance, gender equality, masculinities and childcare (Brandth and Kvande, 2021).

7.1.1. UK Legislative Context

The UK presents a particularly interesting case for examining the emotional geographies of parental leave, having undergone some of the slowest development of parental leave legislation in Europe (Kaufman, 2018; O’Brien and Twamley, 2017; Boyer et al., 2017a), in particular the provision of allowances of paid, protected, paternity leave for fathers (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Atkinson, 2017). It is therefore useful to briefly trace these policy developments – summarised in Figure 4 – for how it informs, and continues to mediate, cultural understandings of the gendered nature of parental leave and, by extension, parenting roles/responsibilities

(Longhurst, 2017; Boyer et al., 2017b).

Maternity leave rights are deeply entrenched in UK workplace cultures, with the provision of financially-supported maternity leave dating as far back as 1948 though post-war welfare state support (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Baird and O'Brien, 2015). However, this was not formalised in policy until 1975 under the Employment Protection Act (ibid.; Twamley and Schober, 2019)⁴⁰. UK fathers only became entitled to leave in 1999, due to changes in European Law – highlighting the supranational scales at which father-involvement are mediated – which gave both mothers and fathers the right to up to 13-weeks unpaid leave (Birkett and Forbes, 2019), although this was reportedly restricted to 4-weeks leave per year for fathers (Atkinson, 2017). Moreover, the fact that this leave was unpaid severely limited fathers' willingness and ability to take advantage of this entitlement (ibid.). The provision of paid leave for fathers was eventually introduced in 2003 with the introduction of Statutory Paternity Leave legislation, which gave fathers the legal entitlement to 2-weeks leave at a portion of their weekly salary (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; O'Brien and Twamley, 2017). However, this legislation has remained largely unchanged since its implementation, with only pay entitlements rising with inflation. This is even as Statutory Maternity Leave has undergone constant changes and extensions in preceding years. Currently, maternity leave in the UK entails up to 52-weeks leave, comprising 26-weeks 'ordinary leave', plus a further 26-weeks 'additional leave' (up to 39 weeks paid) with UK statutory paternity leave, by contrast, constituting just 2-weeks leave, commencing only post-birth/adoption (Twamley and Schober, 2019; Atkinson, 2017).

⁴⁰ It is also worth noting that access to this support has been highly variable, with the arrival of a child often historically entailing the termination of employment for many women. Indeed, access to maternity leave support only became widespread in 1990 (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021).

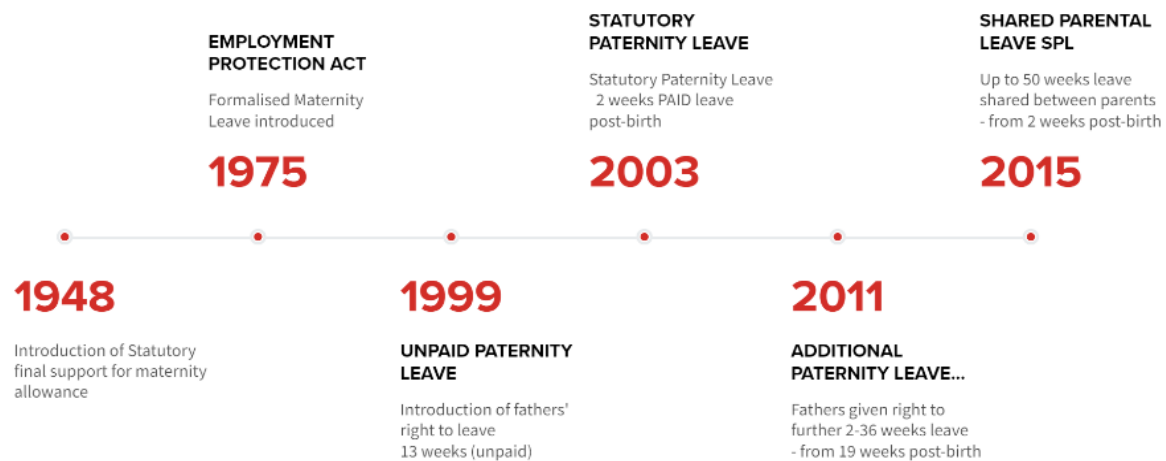


Figure 4: A Timeline of Parental Leave Legislation in the UK

In 2011, the UK implemented the allowance of Additional Paternity Leave (APL), giving fathers access to this ‘additional leave’ previously allocated to mothers. It was intended to facilitate greater father-involvement during the early years (Twamley and Schober, 2019), reflecting shifting cultural ideologies towards more involved fatherhood ideals (Dermott, 2008). However, this leave could only be taken 19-weeks after the arrival of a child and only if their partner had returned to work (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Kaufman, 2018; Atkinson, 2017). It was therefore not widely used. In 2015, APL was largely subsumed under Shared Parental Leave (SPL), allowing parents to share up to 50-weeks leave starting from just *two*-weeks after the arrival of a child – the mandatory recovery period from labour/birth (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Twamley and Schober, 2019; Kaufman, 2018). Thus, SPL has been heralded as a move towards de-gendered parental leave policy, which recognises the embodied nature of pregnancy and early parental care – as discussed previously in this thesis – whilst actively encouraging father-involvement in childrearing (Yamashita, 2016). Indeed, it has been argued to be an improvement on APL in terms of how much leave could be shared, as well as *when* fathers could initiate this leave, which can also be taken alongside the mother to better enable shared caregiving (Twamley and Schober, 2019; Kaufman, 2018).

However, unlike many Scandinavian/Nordic countries, SPL in the UK does not contain a reserved period of leave for fathers – known as a ‘quota’ – beyond the initial 2-weeks statutory paternity entitlement (Twamley and Schober, 2019; Atkinson, 2017). It operates instead on the basis of ‘maternal transfer’, referring to the process where mothers within “eligible couples...can cut short” their maternity leave and “gift” it to their partner (Birkett and Forbes, 2019: 206; O’Brien and Twamley, 2017). This is problematic, with previous research noting how fathers feel uneasy about ‘taking away’ mothers’ allowance of leave (Petts, 2020, 2019; McKay and Doucet, 2010), with policy design “based on maternal transfer ... [being] known not to encourage paternal uptake” (O’Brien and Twamley, 2017: 164). Thus, far from ‘degendering’ parental leave, the structure of SPL actually compounds disparate gendered divisions of leave, constructing extended leave-taking as ‘rightly’ hers, but which *can* be transferred, under certain circumstances (O’Brien and Twamley, 2017), but usually is not, as I discuss in this chapter.

7.2. Making Plans for Leave: Gendered Considerations

During early discussions around leave-taking, when describing their initial hopes and plans for leave, many participants drew upon contemporary discourses of ‘good’, involved fathering ideals (Brooks and Hodgkinson, 2021; Dermott, 2008), largely framing the importance of leave-taking time in terms of wanting to ‘be there’ to establish a bond with their child and to actively participate in caregiving (Beglaubter, 2019; O’Brien and Twamley, 2017; McKay and Doucet, 2010).

A colleague at work, one of them did [SPL] for six weeks and said it was really rewarding...it was full-on, and it was a shock, you know, but he realized what his partner was having to deal with on a daily basis. So it’s something I’d like to do as well

Martin (second trimester)

What I'm hoping – fingers crossed – is that they allow us to have four weeks: two paternity, two holiday...so with any luck, I might be able to have a month from the beginning...with our baby to bond. So that's really nice. Certainly at the beginning, which I think is the most important really, that I'll be able to do that.

Denny (second trimester)

This reflects contemporary ideologies around gender-egalitarian practices of caregiving, with fathers' use of (extended) parental leave becoming an expression of such commitments (Faircloth, 2021; O'Brien and Twamley, 2017; McKay and Doucet, 2010).

Indeed, many fathers in this study expressed wanting to take as much leave as possible, with some even drawing explicit comparisons between the UK's maternal model of parental leave and the affordance of paternity leave in Scandinavian contexts, expressing disappointment that the UK affordance of leave for fathers is not as generous.

It's sad that I can't get longer off really...I suppose the ideal [is like in] Scandinavian countries...when you when you compare it to two weeks leave for dad's it's shit, for want of a better word...

I mean, I'm not saying I should have, I should have nine months, you know I think the mom's definitely needs more, definitely agree with that, it's just a shame that we can't have a bit more, to be honest

Robbie (second trimester)

it was something I'd always wanted to do, and I wanted to be involved and it seemed, because I think even the, the shared parental leave is relatively new. I think that's something you can do. It seemed like, you know, this really good thing that, that we could share it. I don't know (he trails off) – Tara's got some cousins, over in Norway and they, they shared their leave and kind of really enjoyed that and really appreciated it

Tom (second trimester)

These experiences highlight a very clear social appetite for fathers' participation in early parenthood.

However, fathers' desire for leave was often tempered by participants making explicit reference to their *partner's* intentions for leave, with fathers expressing a willingness to adapt their plans in order to enable her aspirations/desires (McKay and Doucet, 2010). This was alluded to in Robbie's narrative above – simultaneously expressing his wish that he could have more leave in order to 'be involved', while asserting how mother's 'definitely' need more, thus reinforcing traditional assumptions of leave-taking between mothers and fathers – but was also expressed explicitly by other participants.

whether we change our minds, maybe we'll get towards the end and Anni's like 'you know what, I want this time still', I'm completely amenable to that

Denny (second trimester)

For many participants, assumptions about the gendered division of leave was often explained through reference to their partners' (assumed) ability, and intention, to breastfeed (Faircloth, 2021; McKay and Doucet, 2010), highlighting the important role of the body within such negotiations.

to be honest, I don't really know what I *could* do...because I can't (he cross his hands in front of his chest, indicating lack of breasts) – well, if we're going to express milk, I suppose I could, but I think Mel is keen to do her own breastfeeding, at least for the first few weeks or months, so...[I] don't think I'm much use anyway

Martin (third trimester)

This point resonates with Longhurst' (2017) commentary on the gendering of parental leave, which draws attention especially to cultural understandings of men's bodies as 'not designed' for caregiving through their inability to get pregnant, give birth and breastfeed (cf. Aitken, 2000), with mothers thus being the more 'natural' choice to take leave. This is especially in the context of the UK, given the prevalence of 'breast is best' parenting cultures (Faircloth, 2021), with Martin's narrative here revealing how, as with the findings of Chapters 4 and 5, fathers internalised embodied understandings of the irrefutable 'fact' of early parental care (cf. Aitken,

2000), demonstrating their commitment to being a good father by deferring to, and actively prioritising, their partner's leave-taking.

Expectations of embodied parental caregiving thus perpetuate understandings that fathers should be more readily able to return to work than mothers (Faircloth, 2021; Longhurst, 2017). Breastfeeding is often a laborious and emotionally/physically-intensive task, which can take over six hours a day (Tomori, 2009). Therefore, in order to establish – and maintain – such ‘good mothering’ practices, it is generally expected that mothers will need, and take, more time away from work compared to fathers (Twamley and Schober, 2019; McKay and Doucet, 2010)⁴¹. This is because fathers’ bodies are not ‘needed’ (or culturally expected) as part of infant feeding and caregiving – and therefore fathers are culturally regarded as more readily able to return to work. Indeed, within her research on fathers’ ‘kinship work’ around breastfeeding in the US, Tomori (2009) highlights how fathers seek to actively support mothers in their caregiving practices/aspirations around breastfeeding specifically *by* returning to work and supporting the family unit through earning financially, thus allowing mothers to dedicate time to infant care. Resonating with Tomori’s (2009) analysis, Martin thus demonstrates his commitment to being a ‘good father’ by prioritising Mel’s leave, to enable her to be able to dedicate time to ‘good mothering’ practices of breastfeeding, which are said to provide greater nutritional value to babies (Faircloth, 2021).

⁴¹ Indeed, healthcare discourse around breastfeeding has often been used to argue against the expense of leave-allocation for fathers, even in Nordic contexts which have been generally favourable of encouraging fathers’ extended leave-taking (Brandth and Kvande, 2021:13)

Tomori's (2009) findings resonate with broader research, which argues that fathers largely seek to work to support mothers' aspirations around caregiving – indicating a prioritisation of mothers' *emotions* and feelings around parenting practices and expectations/pressures of 'good parenting' (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Twamley and Schober, 2019). Thus, despite participants' initial desires for intimate, involved and equitable fathering ideals (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Faircloth, 2021 Dermott, 2008), many 'fell back' into more gender-normative arrangements, prioritising their partner's leave-taking by planning to go back to work after a short period of paternity leave (Kaufman, 2018; McKay and Doucet, 2010). This reveals how, at the scale of the body, fathers often position themselves as somewhat secondary to mothers (Aitken, 2000), with important implications within the context of leave-taking (Kaufman, 2018; McKay and Doucet, 2010).

However, the gendered division of leave was also evident in adoption, where the 'embodied logic' of breastfeeding/birth-recovery is less emphasised. John for example, highlighted the financial imperative of the leave-arrangement explaining that because Val works part-time (whereas he is employed full-time) it would not make 'financial sense' for him to take longer leave as this would be financially more costly (O'Brien and Twamley, 2017).

I mean, I can be the permanent father and Val could be the person that goes back to work,
but she only works part time hours anyway, so the financial wouldn't be right

John (Stage 2)

Interestingly, though, he went on to emphasise the *emotional* significance of this leave for Val demonstrating how the gendered allocation of leave is ultimately entrenched in pervasive societal expectations of gendered parenting roles/responsibilities (Twamley and Schober, 2019; Aitken, 2005, 2000).

...But then that would have been really hurtful for Val, she would have lost the bond which was going to happen for one of us, irrelevant of sex.

John (Stage 2)

John's narrative posits clearly how emotions are at the very centre of decision-making about parental leave (Hamilton, 2021; Longhurst, 2017) explaining how, irrespective of his own desires, it is Val's feelings, and Val's bond with their child, which must take precedence. This does not suggest that John does not want a close relationship with their child, or to be an active, involved, father (although he was perhaps the most traditional 'breadwinner' archetype among my participants), rather, it reflects gendered expectations of 'good parenting' in the UK, which remain deeply ingrained in maternal caregiving (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021).

Moreover, emphasis on leave-taking being 'mother-led' was also evident even in cases where this would *contradict* with 'financial sense' arrangements (McKay and Doucet, 2010). Ollie, for example, earned less than his partner Beth but, nevertheless, still emphasised wanting to prioritise Beth's leave-taking over his own.

I want this to be kind of led by Beth...I want it to be the case that whatever she wants to do is fine by me and I will support that. So Beth obviously wants to take as much time as possible...

Ollie (second trimester)

Ollie's narrative is again indicative of a desire to be a 'good father' by being a supportive partner (McKay and Doucet, 2010), reminiscent of the findings of Chapter 4. However, it also highlights intensely gendered expectations of 'good parenting' (Faircloth, 2021). This is revealed through Ollie's reference to how Beth 'obviously' wants to take as much leave as possible (implying a certain level of less-than-full discussion about alternative options) and that, in order to *be* a 'good mother', Beth *should* want to stay at home, even though her job is more financially profitable for the family.

The relational navigation of emotions is thus fundamental to fathers' negotiation for leave (Longhurst, 2017), informing how much leave fathers feel *able* to take while being a 'good partner' (cf. Menzel, 2022; Tomori, 2009). Indeed, many demonstrated a certain hesitancy to disrupt gendered affordances of leave out of consideration for their partner (McKay and Doucet, 2010). These emotions were exacerbated especially by policy structuring at the national legislative level which permit arrangements of shared leave-taking only on the basis of maternal transfer (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Twamley and Schober, 2019).

Obviously I get two weeks, but then I can (he says slightly more hesitantly) *take* some of her maternity leave

Martin (second trimester)

Martin's narrative highlights the significant role of emotions in the navigation of leave arrangements through how fathers do not want to (and indeed, arguably feel guilty about the prospect of) 'taking' leave away from their partner (McKay and Doucet, 2010). It also demonstrates how cultural expectations of parenting cultures ultimately reify fathers' 'place' being at work (whilst mothers' is largely at home, in the presence of children). These expectations are importantly mediated at the levels of the body and the community (Longhurst, 2017).

Indeed, participants' hesitancies around taking extended leave, such as through SPL, derived especially from their perceptions of their *employer's* assumptions about intentions for leave-taking. This was revealed especially by Ollie in his account of receiving paternity-leave paperwork.

I have a few mixed feelings about this...I mean I was sent all the paperwork very promptly about the paternity policy and all the forms I needed to fill in, but no one's really had a *conversation* with me about it in that sense

Ollie (second trimester)

The lack of conversation here highlights the significant role of workplace spaces in making leave-taking (in)accessible for fathers, being implicitly assumed that, as a father, he will only require (and indeed, desire) a minimal period of leave before returning to work (Birkett and Forbes, 2019).

This section has thus revealed how, although arrangements of leave-taking are mediated at the overlapping scales of the body, community-based expectations of ‘good parenting’ practices, embedded within national legislation (Longhurst, 2017), are, most importantly, arranged within and negotiated via workplace spaces where such legislation is implemented (Koslowski, 2022). In what follows, I tease out the emotional geographies of fathers’ gendered, negotiations of leave from work at these overlapping scales, which reinforce fathers’ ‘place’ being at work, rather than on leave.

7.3. Workplace Policies and Employee Contracts: The Stresses and Anxieties of Leave Ineligibility

For many participants in this research, their initial hopes for leave were significantly curtailed by workplace arrangements and eligibility for leave (see Appendix F for a summary of participants’ leave).

In order to qualify for paid leave entitlements, fathers in the UK are required to have been in continuous employment for a minimum of 26 weeks prior to the 15th week before the arrival of a child – or, more plainly, 41 weeks before the due-date. This requirement is stipulated under both shared and statutory paternity leave legislation and is longer than the requirement for mothers to qualify for maternity leave (just 26 weeks) (Twamley and Schober, 2019). Such criterion perpetuates societal assumptions of fathers’ ‘place’ being primarily at work (Aitken, 2005; Brandth and Kvande, 1998) rather than in parenting spaces of caregiving, such as the home (Gorman-Murray, 2017).

Indeed, it “assumes a degree of permanency” in fathers’ involvement in paid employment, excluding fathers in precarious/temporary work contracts (O’Brien and Twamley, 2017:165), as well as young and impoverished fathers (Boyer et al., 2017a) who have not shown themselves to be ‘good workers’ by meeting cultural expectations of (hegemonic) masculinity through breadwinning (Aitken, 2005). Moreover, because this is legislated as an *employee* benefit, it also means that fathers who are self-employed are ineligible for this financial support (Twamley and Schober, 2019), further reinforcing the centrality of workplace spaces to the organisation and negotiation of fathers’ leave-taking (Koslowski, 2022).

For many participants, employment circumstances significantly influenced their negotiation of paternity leave. Azri and Frank were both self-employed, and were thus ineligible for government-funded financial support (Twamley and Schober, 2019). Though they described wanting, and ideologically valuing, (extended) leave-taking in order to be ‘involved fathers’ (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Dermott, 2008) they noted how the financial constraints of their circumstances would require them to ‘juggle’ paternity leave and continuation of work, reflecting fathers’ sense of precarity and uncertainty of how viable their involvement in (extended) leave-taking would be for their new family.

Faith’s going to take six months...and I think I’m going to take six months as well. But we’re both self-employed...(Alice: Yeah, I don’t really know how parenting leave works if you’re self employed...?)...Well you don’t work until you can’t afford not to work.

Frank (second trimester)

I’m going to be predominantly working from home during the first bit...[but] I guess we’ll just juggle that and make it work between us

Azri (second trimester)

These narratives highlight the gendered responsibilities of parenting, in particular the ongoing cultural imperative of fathers to provide financially for their family⁴² (Faircloth, 2021; Aitken, 2005) – even at the expense of their (equitable) participation in caregiving (Brooks and Hodgkinson, 2021). Thus, though arrangements of leave are negotiated relationally with their partner (McKay and Doucet, 2010), they are importantly negotiated *spatially*; grounded in cultural assumptions about mothering/fathering, with fathers expected to be at work: physically (or at least mentally) removed from spaces of childcare such as the home (Halford, 2006; Brandth and Kvande, 1998). This is particularly due to how returning to work enables mothers to remain at home, and be primarily focused on caregiving (Faircloth, 2021; Twamley and Schober, 2019).

Another three of my participants had recently started new jobs (within a year of the arrival of their child) also making them ineligible for paid paternity leave entitlements (Twamley and Schober, 2019). Logan had moved jobs for a better workplace culture (describing the new e-commerce company as ‘lovely’); meanwhile Robbie had sought more secure employment in preparation for starting a family, taking a job as a regional law enforcement analyst having previously been undertaking a post-doc (see Hughes, 2021 on precarious academic contracts and (women’s) plans to conceive); whilst Tom had recently completed his PhD.

Because I’ve only just started I haven’t obviously built up that much leave...[and] I don’t qualify for parental leave because I’m so new...

Logan (second trimester)

⁴² Interestingly, neither were able to participate in an interview post-birth.

Importantly, these participants did not qualify for paternity *pay* (remunerated from the government by their employer). They *were* still entitled to 2-weeks' unpaid *leave*. The complexity of this distinction, and the wording in employee contracts (derived from national legislation) caused considerable confusion and, indeed, some frustration.

I started a new job in January...but because of the amount of time I've been there, I'm not actually entitled to anything...[I] looked up the policy within the first few days of being there, and I'd actually misread the policy – I thought I was entitled to it, but there was a bit of small print that says you have to have been there – I don't know why they worded it like this...Why they can't just say a year, I don't know.

Robbie (second trimester)

The interpretation that they would not be permitted to take (any) paternity leave was the source of considerable stress and anxiety. This is revealed especially by Tom, who it is worth quoting at-length here, expressing his disappointment at being unable to 'be there' to support Tara, and bond with their baby.

I'm not eligible for parental leave. So you have to be employed quite a long way in advance to be eligible, which we didn't realise...So that was quite hard. Things we had anticipated doing, and the time that we'd anticipated I would have, to kind of be around and help and support – and *wanting* to be involved as well, really – that kind, yeah, I wouldn't be there...So yeah, it still kind of feels a bit raw. I think about of the two of them that, I won't get to be with them

Tom (second trimester)

He also described the particularly poignant moment where he and Tara discovered that he would not be eligible for (paid) leave (although easily confused with the entitlement to actually take leave).

It was the middle of the night, Tara had gotten up at some point, and...she'd been looking things up and found out I couldn't have it...So I found out at like 2am. So yeah. I guess when I initially found out, it was – you know, Tara was very stressed about it. So I was like, 'well, I've got to put a brave face on it', trying to rationalise it that, you know, 'it's

disappointing, but I'd have annual leave that I could take'...So that it would kind of work out. And that there might be options for you know, taking unpaid leave...I guess with it only being two weeks it's somehow easier to kind of work that out [with work], I guess

Tom (second trimester)

In describing having to 'put on a brave face' during this moment, Tom's experience is further indicative of the highly gendered emotion work performed by expectant fathers during pregnancy, as discussed in Chapter 4, providing calm support, reassurance and rational alternatives of how they will manage and set aside their own disappointment and upset (cf. Menzel, 2022). Indeed, as he described in Chapter 4, Tom feels he cannot *allow* himself to acknowledge how he feels about being unable to share leave with Tara; *he is not able to let himself feel this disappointment* in this moment, but instead must be strong (Hodkinson and Das, 2021)

Interestingly, Tom's narrative also reveals how the complexity of parental leave legislation in the UK can actually add to women's 'hidden' organisational labour (and stress) within intimate relationships, rather than redistribute responsibilities more evenly, as is its supposed aim. This is particularly exacerbated by policy structuring based on maternal transfer, where making arrangements for leave is foremost Tara's responsibility – due to needing to determine her maternity leave rights which she can then 'transfer' to Tom. However, more importantly for this thesis, it further illustrates the overlapping spatial scales which mediate fathers' arrangement of parental leave, from national policy, employee contracts to the intimate spatialities (and temporalities) of the home and the significance of emotional geographies within such negotiations (Longhurst, 2017).

we then swapped in the morning, when I woke up...feeling slightly panicky...[and]...Tara was like 'no, I think what you said in the middle of the night was right', that we'll just be able to kind of work that out and come up with something, even if it's just using my annual leave, then, you know I'll be around, and be there for support.

Tom (second trimester)

Like Tom, many other participants described similar intentions to use annual leave allowances to create make-shift (extended) paternity leave, constituting informal arrangements with their employer.

So my plan is to take my statutory two weeks leave from when the baby is born, which I will take, and then work have cleared me to have two weeks' annual leave immediately after that, so I will have a month off immediately after the birth.

Ollie (second trimester)

These arrangements were especially valued by participants who were ineligible for paid leave. Indeed, they expressed being incredibly fortunate that their workplaces would permit this leave – even feeling grateful in cases where this allowance was only for a few *days*.

But then work were really good and my line manager just said I can take a week's full paid leave...without having to bother HR [Human Resources] or anything

Robbie (second trimester)

They were actually really nice and said 'look, we don't want to do nothing for you, so we'll give you three days to make up the week.'

Logan (second trimester)

This is interesting because previous research has often highlighted the significance of workplace *resistance* in curtailing fathers' uptake of leave (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Kaufman, 2018). Here, however, fathers described feelings of being incredibly grateful, expressing considerable appreciations towards their workplace for allowing them to take annual leave in place of (and even in addition to) paternity leave, enabling them to 'be there' (O'Brien and Twamley, 2017; McKay and Doucet, 2010). These experiences thus highlight the significance placed on taking time off work immediately after the arrival of a child – particularly supporting their partner's recovery from labour/birth and for bonding with their child, subsequently wanting to take as much time as possible.

I figure that's probably, of all the time, when Beth is most going to need me around because she's going to be knackered and the baby's going to not be sleeping and needing to be fed and changed regularly. So if I can be around for that, you know, I think that's hopefully the best time...I want to make the most of every day of this month.

Ollie (third trimester)

However, though these informal arrangements of leave are arguably indicative of greater flexibility of workplaces around fathers' leave-taking – allowing them to take (paid) leave when workplaces are not legally obliged to permit this – these informal arrangements actually worked to *reinforce* fathers' feelings of obligation towards workplaces, as I now explore.

7.4. Apprehensions of Taking 'Too Much' Time Away: Anxieties of Being a Good (or Bad) Worker

As Kaufman (2018) argues, "fathers...do not want to be seen as uncommitted workers" (p.319), reflective of pervasive societal assumptions, which continue to associate fathering with workplace spaces as part of (hegemonic) displays of masculinity (Gorman-Murray, 2017; Aitken, 2005). This relates to cultural expectations of being a 'good', 'ideal worker' (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Borgkvist et al., 2021; Haas and Hwang, 2019).

I'm not really used to being someone who kicks up a lot of fuss in the workplace, I'm just content to get my head down and do what has to be done

Ollie (second trimester)

Indeed, many participants expressed considerable anxiety about requesting 'too much' time away from work. This was largely due to their sense of how taking paternity leave would be disruptive to their employer, which – in being a 'good worker' – should be avoided (Haas and Hwang, 2019). Tom explained how this was especially the case for him as a new employee, indicating his feelings that asking for leave so soon after joining (and thus having not had time to prove his 'usefulness' to work) risked making him seem uncommitted to his new job, positioning him as a *bad* worker.

These things feel a bit easier once you're a bit more established, and you feel like you've been useful and people think you are useful, as opposed to being new and being like "Yeah, I'm new. But I'd like lots of time off. What do you think?"

Tom (third trimester)

However, this uneasiness was similarly expressed by John, who had been working for the same employer for many years. Throughout multiple interviews he expressed his hesitancy, even *dread*, about the leave that he had already secured through this company's adoption leave plan.

I'm dreading it because of work. Because work is – they've been very supportive...

John (Stage 3)

I'm very lucky at work because they have got an adoption leave policy in place, which I didn't realise...[but]...six weeks or so out of the business, when legally they don't have to cover you...is a long time out of the business. So I mean, it's been very good, they're 100% behind me

John (matched)

For me, work would – it would be impossible. If I get a phone call, today, to say tomorrow [we can start introductions] – because I work in the events industry, and I do all work hours and weekends and whatever else – it just wouldn't be fair for me to say to work: 'Sorry. But see you later.'

John (Stage 2)

These narratives illustrate expectant fathers' clear apprehensions and anxieties about leave-taking, with both Tom and John already feeling guilty about taking paternity leave and not 'being there' at work (Aitken, 2005). This is indicative of how fathers often anticipate problems with requesting leave – even where workplaces are generally supportive (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021). Importantly, they seem less concerned about the impact of taking leave on future career development – as has been noted by previous research – perhaps because statutory paternity leave is relatively short in comparison to shared leave, which has typically been the focus of research (Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Twamley and Schober, 2019). Instead, participants

seemed more anxious about how their absence would be an *inconvenience* to their workplace (Haas and Hwang, 2019), even in the relatively short time they were away.

Apprehensions over this inconvenience caused by taking leave were exacerbated especially during the pandemic, particularly for participants whose work necessitated face-to-face engagements (see Das and Hodkinson, 2020, cited in Menzel, 2022). Denny, for example, explained his intention to self-isolate for a period before the arrival of their child, which he linked to the importance of ‘being there’ during labour/birth, reflective of contemporary discourses of involved fathering (Menzel, 2022). He described his experience of subsequently needing to request further affordances of leave *prior* to the birth of their child – not usually covered by paternity leave arrangements (and taken in addition to his paternity leave) – in order to work from home and ‘shield’.

like at some points last year...the husband couldn't attend the birth...I said to work...‘Look, I need to self-isolate 10 days before the birth. I don't want to be doing any forward-facing work.’

Denny (second trimester)

Denny’s case is particularly interesting because both he and his wife, Anni, worked in the same place, a small events company. However, although *Anni* had been shielded on medical grounds and ordered to work from home by their employer, Denny was still expected (partially) to go into work. This reflects Kaufman’s (2018) assertion of how – given the embodied nature of pregnancy – employers “often see women as mothers...[whilst] ignor[ing] men’s paternity status” (p.320); evinced especially by how paternity leave may only commence after the arrival of a child. It further illustrates the overlapping *scales* of fathers’ negotiation of leave from work; that because Denny’s body is not carrying the child, he is still able to go into work, meanwhile Anni must remain at home, being a ‘good mother’ by protecting (and thus caring for) their unborn child (Faircloth, 2021; Longhurst, 2017). This therefore re-entrenches traditional gendered parenting roles, and the spaces of work and home through mother-

caregiver/father-breadwinner dichotomies (Menzel, 2022; Gorman-Murray, 2017). This is further revealed by Denny's explanation of how making this request was a stressful and anxiety-inducing experience.

And that was quite a stressful email to write...It's like, basically marking yourself out, like, "I can't be asked to do anything". So that was stressful...Anni said "Do you feel bad for doing that?" "Yes, I do".

Denny (second trimester)

Thus, even taking shorter periods of leave (or temporarily not going into work, but working from home) elicits anxiety and guilt from fathers, relating to perceptions about their commitment to the workplace (Borgkvist et al., 2021). Denny's narrative highlights his anxiety of being deemed a 'bad worker' by not being physically present (and available) to work (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021).

7.5. Initiating Leave: Uncertainties of When and Guilt of How Long

Participants also described anxiety around starting their leave due to the uncertainty of when their child would arrive. This uncertainty was perhaps most felt by John, having been cleared to take his paternity leave but not knowing *when* this would actually be, due to the lengthy adoption process, not being able to give his work an indicative date (as is possible with due-dates in pregnancy). He described being in a rather liminal state of waiting to be 'matched' before he and Val could begin transitions.

I'm dreading it because it's not like, you know, a guaranteed date to set your mind on...we could be talking four weeks, we could be talking 16 weeks [until we're matched].

John (Stage 3)

Moreover, the fact that paternity leave can only be initiated *after* the arrival of a child (due to its typically short length) meant that it was often difficult for fathers to fully plan and prepare for leave by ensuring that their workplace responsibilities were completed. This uncertainty

became increasingly pronounced as the arrival of a child loomed closer, creating conflicting emotions; the excitement of becoming a father (and meeting their child) contrasting sharply with the stress/anxiety and apprehension of preparing to take paternity leave. These conflicting emotions were illustrated especially by Ollie, who described his anxiety about having to manage and arrange to ‘hand-over’ his workload to his colleagues for the four weeks he would be on paternity leave.

feeling excited...[I] can’t wait to meet him....but, as we’ve gotten towards this end, I’ve been a bit more anxious – work is the thing I’m most anxious about...I’m going to be off for a month...but we are a small team of eight people, and not all of us [are] full-time either...so it’s difficult in terms of trying to assess workload and get ready to hand over...So that’s playing on my mind really

Ollie (third trimester)

Indeed, the emotionality of ‘handing-over’ work is a particularly important – but overlooked – dimension in the negotiation of fathers’ leave-taking arrangements. This is particularly significant because there is rarely a precedent for paternity leave cover – due to its generally short length (Haas and Hwang, 2019) – while maternity leave cover is deeply engrained within many workplaces within UK contexts. Ollie’s anxiety about this hand-over was heightened especially due to working in a small team. His narrative indicates the pressure to be a ‘good worker’ by being a good *colleague*, seeking to minimise the impact of his absence on others at work (Haas and Hwang, 2019). This reveals how fathers’ negotiations of leave are mediated not only by their partners’ emotions/feelings (Faircloth, 2021; Twamley and Schober, 2019; McKay and Doucet, 2010) but also those of their colleagues (Haas and Hwang, 2019).

Moreover, the fact that Ollie evidently already feels guilty about going on leave reveals the pressure for fathers to be at work (rather than at home) as part of hegemonic masculine displays of breadwinning and ‘good worker’ ideologies, reifying fathers ‘place’ being at work (Aitken, 2005; Brandth and Kvande, 1998).

There were even instances of fathers ‘holding off’ on initiating their leave for as long as possible. Towards the end of the pregnancy, Logan’s partner, Jean, was admitted to hospital following a check-up and told she would need to be induced. Whilst he let work know that the arrival of his child would be imminent, he also explained how he carefully navigated initiating the start of his leave, waiting instead until after his wife was in labour (which could potentially last the better part of a day).

I then had to, obviously let work know that I was now officially – I wasn’t on, I didn’t say I was on paternity...I didn’t want to take the time off until I needed to...

Logan (post-birth)

Indeed, despite Jean being admitted to hospital, their baby was not actually born for several more days due to various complications with NHS staffing. Logan’s decision to hold off on starting his leave was therefore to ensure that he could make the most of the time away from work once their child had actually arrived.

Moreover, what was particularly striking whilst doing this research was how many fathers were *actually working* (albeit from home) whilst their partner was in the early stages of labour.

Sunday evening Tara starting have like early contractions...I did a little bit of work on Monday morning being like “well you know, who knows what’s going to happen?”

(Tom, post-birth)

when Haley said her waters broke, she just said “oh go back sleep” like at midnight and I did, I think I went back to sleep for a couple of hours. Because I think I was still thinking that I might have to go into work the next day.

(Robbie, post-birth)

While, as with Logan, continuing to work arguably enables Tom and Robbie to preserve their paternity leave until after the baby arrives, it also illustrates that the gendered expectations of fathers' primary commitment to workplace responsibilities is deeply entrenched. Indeed, the sense of guilt about being on leave (and thus not being at work) is so keenly felt that – even with the imminent arrival of their child – expectant fathers feel an overwhelming sense of obligation to the workplace, dedicating themselves to workplace responsibilities in order to be a 'good worker' for employers and colleagues (Haas and Hwang, 2019). The emotionality of this experience was revealed especially by Ollie.

[Beth's] waters breaking...for me it was slightly blind panic...going through my head that I'm nowhere near prepared for work, and going to be leaving people in the lurch on Monday if we have this baby now...

...They gave her a 24-hour window for labour to start naturally...and I just got on with trying to get as much stuff done around the house as possible and then just crack on with work –

which I *know* sounds terrible, and it's obviously not really what I wanted to be doing that that point, but I just felt *so bad* about handing things over in such a state that I thought "lets just get as much done as I can." I wouldn't really have liked to spend that day working. I would have liked to have been doing numerous other stuff at home, just focusing purely on the baby and stuff. So that wasn't good. I didn't enjoy that. But I felt that I had to do something (he shakes his head slightly) and I wasn't really happy with the state that I left things in

Ollie (post-birth)

Ollie's emotional experience is significant since, for many participants, workplace demands came into increasing conflict with their caregiving *after* the arrival of their child. Many described being contacted by their workplaces, and having to spend time working during their paternity leave – some in more substantive way than others.

I was on paternity leave, and I was getting a couple requests from my boss going “Oh, could you just answer this question” or do this or do that...you know, deadline stuff

Martin (post-birth)

There was one thing which I could have handed over, but I hadn’t really done very much of it.

And I took the decision – naïvely – to not hand it over at the time [Henry arrived], but thinking “okay, in the first couple of weeks of paternity leave, I might get a little bit of time here and there to snatch a bit of time to work on it” and then hand it over in a better state nearer to the deadline.

Anyway, as time went on, I realised that was very naïve. Having a baby keeps me very busy, and I didn’t get any time to work on it.

So then one afternoon I had to kind of work essentially and get this thing done so I could hand it to my boss, to get in before the deadline. And I think that was worst of all worlds

Ollie (post-birth)

These experiences exemplify the cultural expectations held by many workplaces for fathers to be “flexible about their flexibility” (Borgkvist et al., 2021: 2076) – an expectation grounded in expectations of fathers’ being a good, committed worker – with workplaces expecting fathers to still be available for work enquiries, even as they had secured their paternity leave, and ultimately ignoring their paternity status (Kaufman, 2018).

7.6. Being on Leave and Returning to Work: Spatial Navigations of Work and Care and Falling Back into Gender

For many participants, workplace demands came into increasing conflict with their caregiving, particularly after returning to work following their paternity leave, exacerbated by the spatialities of these conflicting roles – with many fathers choosing to go into work following the arrival of their child even during the pandemic. This decision to (physically) return to work was largely explained in terms of minimising disruption to fathers’ productivity, as Ollie explains.

(Hesitantly) I, I email my boss, yesterday and I asked if I can go back into work in the office...Me and Beth spoke about this the other day and we thought, all things considered, it would be the best option for us both. One of my limitations is multitasking. I just can't do it, and with work I like to be as focused on work. It's been tough, at times, working from home during this period, anyway, without a baby...with a baby it's gonna be next to impossible. And we don't have a room in the house for working, where I could just shut myself away to work after work, I have to work in communal areas so.

Ollie (post-birth)

However, Ollie also explained how his going into work – in early April 2021, a period of relative intensity in terms of pandemic restrictions⁴³ – was beneficial to Beth; his absence from the home removing the conflict over communal spaces.

Also for Beth...I want her to feel like she can move around the home as much as she wants, when she wants, without worrying about disturbing me

Ollie (post-birth)

This re-framing of his decision to return to work (providing Beth with space at home) is interesting in illustrating the role of space in perpetuating gendered parenting roles (Brandth and Kvande, 1998). Indeed, Ollie seeks to legitimise himself as a good father, not only through his commitment to his workplace responsibilities and productivity as a 'good worker' (Haas and Hwang, 2019), but also by being a supportive (albeit somewhat secondary caregiving) partner by returning to work (Tomori, 2009).

⁴³This included no indoor mixing across households and permissions to only meet outside in groups of six people (Institute for Government Analysis, 2021). Indeed, national 'stay-at-home' orders (except for key workers) ended only on 29th March 2021 (ibid.), emphasising Ollie's keenness to return to work

Nevertheless, going into work, to show oneself as a good, committed worker, still elicited conflicting emotions for fathers in being apart from their family at home. This was particularly due to the impact of commute-time, which lengthened fathers' absence from the home, and thus caused fathers to 'miss out' on being with their newborn babies, who were often being put to bed soon after fathers returned home.

which is mixed emotions, because the flip side of it is that if I go to the office...it's anything from like 40 minutes to an hour at the end the day, so I'm going to have a lot less time to spend with Henry than I would, if I was working from home.

Ollie (post-birth)

yesterday was my first day back in work, physically – I'd worked the day before that, on Wednesday, but from home...and then felt like "oh, my God, I've missed out, you know, on six or seven hours of like, not being with her." So then I see her and it's like, God, you know, she's still here, I forgot she was here. Here she is. And then it's like, you know, catching up on what she's, how many times she slept or whatever. And then the same yesterday, coming home from work, just sort of, you know, missed out. I feel like I missed out a bit, you know, being in work for seven or eight hours and just catching up.

Robbie (post-birth)

Indeed, fathers also expressed fears that being at work (and not on leave) would potentially prevent, or damage, their ability to bond with their child due to not 'being there' (at home). This was explained especially by Logan, the only experienced dad in this study, in describing his experience of work-family conflict after the birth of his first child.

I made that mistake with my previous in terms of not [being there] – I was so busy, I was at an office, with work and stuff and I didn't manage, I didn't really interact that much when she was newborn. And then when it came to me holding her and stuff, like she wouldn't accept it. She, she would cry and want to be like – but as soon as mum picked her up, she'd be fine.

Logan (post-birth)

Logan's quote illustrates well the emotio-spatial conflict fathers experience between work and family life (Aitken, 2000), through how being at work, and not at home, caused difficulties in his ability to provide effective care for his infant daughter, with this responsibility, consequently, having to be undertaken by his partner.

However, similar conflicts between workplace and caregiving demands also arose for fathers who *were* working from home – albeit consequent to their physical presence within the home, rather than being at work. Much like Ollie's experience above, Martin expressed his concern that working from home would potentially be quite distracting from his ability to work. He noted this especially in terms of the porosity of the soundscapes of the home (Kerr et al., 2018), where the sound of his newborn daughter crying would permeate the borders of the spare room, re-appropriated as a (closed-off) office space – further reflecting the changed geographies of workplace spaces through COVID (Reuschke, and Felstead, 2020).

It is difficult when you're trying to revise for stuff or, I can see it being a problem – (he gestures behind him, to the door) and I can hear her screaming now – I know Mel's on it, but I know it'll be distracting for me... That might be an issue

Martin (post-birth)

His concern about working from home was less because he did not want to take responsibility for caregiving for their newborn daughter (working from home in order to be 'on hand' to support Mel) (Haas and Hwang, 2019; Halford, 2006), but more because of how stopping to do this would be disruptive to his workflow, and thus his ability to show himself as a 'good worker'.

We'll help each other out and we'll share the load of this baby, even though you know, Mel's the one, on paper, on maternity leave and I'm the one who's got to get back to work.

Martin, (post-birth)

His narrative reflects the reinforcement of father-worker/mother-caregiver dichotomies, consequent to the gendered organisation of parental leave: because Mel is on maternity leave (and Martin at home, but working), she is expected to take primary responsibility for caregiving; that even as Martin might want to be involved he still needs to fulfil his commitments to work. These tensions can result in inter-partner conflict; indeed, it was a particular point of frustration for Martin in our follow-up interview.

...in the first few months – it's calmed down now, but – I'm interpreting this – but I thought in Mel's head, I think she didn't think I was *actually working* because I'm working from home, that I'm not actually working somehow.

Martin, (follow-up)

This narrative highlights the inherent spatial tension of fathers' workplace and caregiving responsibilities which, for Martin, are exacerbated by working from home, blurring the spatial partition between work and home (Halford, 2006) – Martin physically being at home, and thus *able* to performance childcare tasks, seemingly devalued the fact that he was, or should be, 'at work'.

Indeed, after returning to work following his paternity leave, Martin described having briefly moved to sleeping in the spare bedroom in order to be able to get enough sleep to function properly at work. This reveals the inherent tensions fathers experience between workplace responsibilities and care, with Martin actively removing himself from the spaces of care in order to get enough sleep to be able to function at work (to be able to fulfil expectations of a 'good worker') – though being quick to point out that he was no longer doing this. As such, it reveals how despite fathers' original hopes and plans to 'share care' (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021), the spatial negotiation of work and home resulted in parents 'falling back into gender' (Miller, 2010).

But when I started, and I was having to get back into the office last week, you know, after you know a good few days of very little sleep, I just said to my partner, to Mel, “Look, I *need*, I need sleep” (he puts his hands out in front of him as though emphasising desperation) “So I’m going to inflate the travel mattress down in the lounge and just sleep down there”...but you know, like I said we’ve kind of adjusted back and we’re all fine

Martin (follow-up)

Though this shift was temporary, it still highlights how new fathers internalise expectations of being a good worker, arguably here prioritising his workplace responsibilities through sleep.

At times, this re-entrenchment of traditional father-breadwinner/mother-caregiver roles was consequent to fathers’ changing working arrangements. For example, Logan had been a remote worker for a number of years, but due to his company being bought up by a larger corporation, he was now required to be in the office (located in Swansea, travelling from Bristol) at least once a week; the distance often meaning overnight stay.

I now travel to work once or twice a week, I now leave the house Tuesday morning...and I do an overnight stay...So I’m away for two days now as well because of work which is a bit of a strain on the, on the wife

Logan, (follow-up)

These experiences reveal the fundamental tensions between workplace responsibilities and fathers’ care commitments (Aitken, 2000) – tensions which create intense stresses/anxieties for fathers in adapting to new parenthood (and indeed, new partnership, through the renegotiation of relationship dynamics). In the final section of this chapter, I explore how these tensions have significant ramifications for fathers’ mental/emotional wellbeing and for father-employee retention (Brandth and Kvande, 2021).

7.7. *Adapting from Arrival: Workplace Tensions and Father-Employee Retention*

Many participants were seeking more workplace flexibility in order to accommodate their fathering aspirations, particularly once their partner returned to work following their maternity leave. At times this was through making adjustments to their working hours, often in highly gendered ways.

But I think I'm sort of resigned to the fact that, you know, maybe a seven and a half hour working day might have to be done over 12 hours, you know, if it's doing a few hours in the morning, a few hours in the afternoon and a few hours in the evening, then that's part of what it has to be, and that's fine with me, I think. So I think between us, Haley will do, she'll do three 12-hour shifts. So she's in work three days, and I think we've talked about her going down to two, when she goes back so it should mean that if she's doing two days in work, and I'm doing two or three days in the office

Robbie (second trimester)

Particularly interesting here is that while Haley plans to reduce her working hours, Robbie is actually working *longer* hours, stretching his workday in order to accommodate the combination of work and care while working flexibly from home. Indeed, this is particularly interesting for how previous research has suggested that new fathers (particularly those in the UK) tend to *increase* their working hours following the arrival of a child (Chung, 2021), reflective of the overhang of cultural associations between fathering and providing financially (Aitken, 2005), and gendered expectations for fathers to embody cultural ideologies of being a good, ideal worker. This is demonstrated especially by the performances of long working hours, and by being physically present in the workplace – even when there is capacity for flexible, at-home working (Borgkvist et al., 2021; Beglaubter, 2019; Haas and Hwang, 2019; Halford, 2006) – reflective of fathers' general preference for a spatial partitioning of the spheres of work and home (Gorman-Murray, 2013; Smith and Winchester, 1998).

Ollie similarly expressed a desire to make adjustments to his working hours once Beth returned to work.

I've not made a formal request, but I made an inquiry as to whether I might be able to drop down to four days when Beth goes back to work...and they are *open* to it um, but what I'm asking about is actually dropping like a full day as opposed to going down to compressed hours because that's what Beth is thinking and it, it wouldn't really work if both of us did compressed hours...Beth earns more than I do for a start so if we were to, for one of us to drop down properly, then it would make more sense that I do because we're losing less income as a household – amongst other things, that that's not the only consideration, but it's a big one.

Ollie (follow-up)

However, fathers still expressed some hesitancy and anxiety about requesting flexible working, due to concerns that their workplace would not find them 'deserving' enough for it.

...so I'd like to drop down to four days and one thing – they're asking me try and work out, to identify areas of my existing workload that I wouldn't do anymore, which isn't unreasonable of them because I'm the one making the request (he leans forward, putting his elbows on the table and resting his chin in his fists – looking almost anxious, as though he's about to start biting his nails).

But I must admit I'm not making much headway on that, I'm kind of kicking the can down the road...because I don't know how I identify things that I – am I supposed to work on the basis of what I don't *want* to do anymore? What I think I'm least good at?

Ollie (follow-up)

Here Ollie expresses ongoing tensions between being a good (i.e., present) father and a good worker, unsure whether to identify tasks he does not want to do (thus making him look uncommitted) or tasks that he is least good at (which someone else could do better than him) (Haas and Hwang, 2019). However, although doing this may be of benefit to his employer, Ollie also seemed hesitant to make this change which would increase the workload for his colleagues, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Um because the problem is we're a very small organisation and I don't want to be throwing things onto other people's workloads because I know actually my colleagues are all really busy as well, and nobody's going to thank me for that, so it's, it's not *on* really, so. Um, I think I need to have more of a kind of two-way discussion with my boss about that, because at the moment, she's kind of put the ball in my court

Ollie (follow-up)

Ollie's experience here is particularly interesting for how it echoes concerns/anxieties of being a 'bad worker' and a bad colleague in order to be a good father, through how his request for flexible working conjures concerns about the impact this would have on his colleagues.

Furthermore, a number of participants expressed their anticipation of potentially wanting/needing to look for a new job in the near future. For Martin, this need stemmed from wanting to support Mel's desire for taking extended leave (staying home to look after their daughter Margot before putting her into nursery) and therefore looking for a new job in order to better provide financial support for his family as the sole earner.

But now, Mel's thinking more she'd like to *not* put Margot into a nursery for the first two years, potentially. So could I work and financially support all of us? (he scratches the back of his head)

Martin (follow-up)

He explained how he could do this by working more overtime, further reflecting the general trend for fathers to increase their working hours following the arrival of a child (Chung, 2021; Borgkvist et al., 2021). However, he also expressed his hesitation to do this, relating this to not wanting to be an 'absent' breadwinner like his own father, as I discussed in Chapter 4.

And like, well, I *could* if I did some overtime (he runs his hand down the back of his neck, and onto his chest), which neither of us want me to do – because I don't want to turn into my father where I'm working late or working weekends, and when I am here, I'm too tired to do anything... So I've been looking at other jobs...

Martin (follow-up)

Indeed, he explained how the working hours of his current job no longer seemed feasible for him as a new father.

And my job anyway entails unsociable hours and then the expectation for weekend working anyway. So I've decided since Margot came along, I don't want to (he shakes his head), I don't want to do this anymore, basically...

Martin (follow-up)

Martin described, therefore, looking for a new job, which would provide greater flexibility, higher pay and more sociable working hours.

But if I do this, if I can financially support all of us, for Mel to not work, and for us to have a bit of money to have the quality of life (he pauses briefly) and have a job where I'm working three days in the office only, (he shakes his head slightly) and it's no expectation to do weekend work, and there's less, there's less risks to my own physical, physical well-being – I work in law enforcement, whereas this is desk based – then...(he trails off)

Martin (follow-up)

However, the particular job he was applying (and had, at the time of the interview, gone through six rounds of interviewing) for would entail a move to Ireland, with implications for 'uprooting' the family and delaying their ability to 'settle-down'.

So in the lead up to this, we've both thought we're going to sell our house in Wales and that'll give us money to put down a deposit and settle, set down roots, somewhere...and we can just start having a like our Forever Home...

But the catch is, for me is that – well us – is that we'd have to move to Dublin to do it (to emphasis, he turns to look at the camera, from where he was looking away to the side, leaning his cheek on his hand). So we're renting here at the moment, but it's just delaying that setting down roots for a couple more years.

Martin (follow-up)

For other fathers, finding a new job was framed as important for their personal happiness/fulfilment (as well as financials security and career progression); no longer feeling

that they were the ‘right’ person for the job, due to their other responsibilities/priorities as a father.

....to be honest I’m like – my overriding fear is that I’m not – I think I’m not in the right job for me anymore. I’m not the right person for the role.

[and] you know, doing something about it is equally scary and frustrating because looking for a job is just crap...

...but then, at the same time I know that until I make a change, things aren’t going to improve if you know what I mean.

Ollie (follow-up)

I’m thinking about what I’m going to be doing next...I’ve been thinking I wanted to do something different anyway, like I’m 41 now and the kind of role that I’m in...I can’t move from this role, really – with the lifestyle and the pay and doing different hours and things like that...It’s something for someone younger, really, in all honesty, now. You know, for me, it’s like 10 years ago when I started it, all fresh eyed

Denny (post-birth)

These experiences reveal how inflexible working may have significant implications for father-employee retention as well as fathers’ wellbeing, highlighting the broader significance of navigating workplace spaces beyond just the immediate care for a new child.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined expectant fathers’ emotions and experiences of requesting and negotiating leave from work. It has illuminated the fractiousness and uncertainty participants felt about their leave, contributing to understandings of the emotional geographies embroiled in fathers’ navigation of workplace spaces and commitments during pregnancy/early parenthood. Thus, it furthers geographic research on (expectant) fathering, as well as broader (feminist) debates around flexible working in supporting fathers’ more equitable contribution to the labour/demands of early parenthood, and to gender equality more broadly (Kaufman, 2018).

It has revealed how, despite legislative innovation and societal emphasis towards involved fathering ideals, there remains significant “uneven [emotional] geographies” to fathers’ ability to take leave (Boyer et al., 2017a), mediated at the scales of body, home, community, and national legislation (Longhurst, 2017) – but most importantly workplaces spaces (Koslowski, 2022). It has therefore contributed to understandings of how parental leave legislation is negotiated and *lived*, though emotions, across different spatial contexts.

That is, though fathers’ arrangements for leave are importantly negotiated within national policy contexts, they are more exactly negotiated through spaces of the everyday – most especially workplaces, home and parenting spaces – in relation to an assemblage of other things beyond national policy – to which geographers could usefully attend. This chapter has highlighted how fathers’ negotiation of leave is mediated via encounters with line-managers/bosses, relations with colleagues, and employee contracts (Koslowski, 2022; Borgkvist et al., 2021; Haas and Hwang, 2019). They also involve considerations of one’s partner (McKay and Doucet, 2010), informed by societal expectations around parents (and gender more broadly), mediated by embodied enactments of ‘good parenting’ practices – in particular around breastfeeding (Faircloth, 2021; Birkett and Forbes, 2019; Tomori, 2009).

These findings therefore corroborate broader research on parenting leave, which argue how even as national legislation “gestures towards” more gender egalitarian parenting/caregiving (Hamilton, 2021:199) – through the neoliberal emphasis on parents’ ‘choice’ (Twamley and Schober, 2019) – it remains geared towards cultural assumptions of mothers as primary caregivers (Hamilton, 2021; Twamley and Schober, 2019). This is particularly within the context of intensive parenting cultures (Faircloth, 2021), which views mothers as the rightful ‘owners’ of leave (O’Brien and Twamley, 2017), but are importantly perpetuated within workplace spaces in ways which need to be critically examined further (Koslowski, 2022; Borgkvist et al., 2021).

This unevenness thus reifies traditional, gendered dynamics of caregiving (Boyer et al., 2017a); the gendered affordance of leave allowing fathers to only fully contribute to caregiving immediately after the arrival of a child, thus remaining largely supportive (and arguably secondary) “incidental collaborators in care” (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021:51; Beglaubter, 2019).

Cultural assumptions about the ‘ideal worker’ remain heavily masculinised in many ways (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021), re-entrenching traditional ideologies of father-breadwinner/mother-caregiver parenting roles (Aitken, 2005). This is because even when workplaces offer flexible working arrangements, workplace cultures often expect fathers to be “flexible about their flexibility” in order to demonstrate their commitment to work and position themselves as ‘good workers’ (Borgkvist et al., 2021: 2076). This relates to cultural expectations of the ‘good, ideal, worker’: an employee who demonstrates full commitment to their workplace by always being available and prioritising their workplace responsibilities above all else (including care work) (ibid.; Borgkvist et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2021).

Indeed, during follow-up interviews, many had begun seeking alternative employment opportunities. For Martin, this stemmed from wanting to support Mel’s desire to extend her leave (staying home to look after their daughter before putting her into nursery), looking for a new job in order to better financially support for his family as the sole earner (McKay and Doucet, 2010). Meanwhile, for others, this was framed as important for their personal happiness/fulfilment, no longer feeling that they were the ‘right’ person for the job (Ollie) or seeking greater workplace flexibility in order to accommodate their fathering aspirations (Denny). This reveals the significant implications of the negotiation of (expectant) fathers’ leave-taking, and flexible working arrangements for father-employee retention, as well as for fathers’ wellbeing (Brandth and Kvande, 2021). In the Concluding chapter that follows, I highlight the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

8 Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This thesis began with the assertion that becoming a parent is an intensely emotional experience, and one which is highly gendered. It also asserted that these experiences are intensely spatial, with the differing experiences of expectant mothers and fathers being mediated by everyday spaces and places. The central, overarching aim of this thesis – methodological and empirically – was to shed light onto the gendered, emotional experiences of expectant fathers, bringing these into dialogue with a critical, emotional geographies framework illustrating what an emotional, and geographical, perspective can add to understanding these experiences across different social and spatial contexts.

This aim was fundamentally grounded in the methodological, and ethical, principles of feminist research, seeking to address the general absence of expectant fathers' voices/experiences within geographical, and broader social scientific research on family/parenting, outlined in the Introduction and Literature Review Chapters. In line with the guiding tenets of feminist geographical research design and praxis outlined in the Methodology (McDowell, 1997), the analysis chapters of this thesis 'give voice' to expectant fathers, presenting rich, empirical insights into the *emotional geographies of expectant fathering*.

Utilising Aitken's (2009) conception of fathering as a starting point, it has situated, empirically, *expectant* fathering as "a daily emotional practice that is negotiated, contested, reworked and resisted differently in different spaces" (p.230), but also extended this to reveal how this practice is also mediated by, and performed, at various overlapping spatial scales – from the body, through to national legislation and policy (Longhurst, 2017). I have sought to develop an understanding of expectant fathering as a holistic experience, with each chapter of my empirical analysis focused on a distinct dimension of experiences which comprised the

practices of becoming a father, interrogating these through distinct but complementary ways of framing emotio-spatial life, as developed in the Literature Review.

The Analysis included interrogation of expectant fathers' emotion work (particularly during early pregnancy), multi-sensory inter-embodied encounters of love/intimacy with a future child, the shifting material landscape of home in preparing for the arrival of a child (and expectant fathers intimate encounters with materialities of baby things), and finally the negotiation of leave from work. Each of these chapters thus reflected a number of key facets of the emotional geographies of expectant fathering, which broadly correspond to what are culturally regarded as important 'milestone moments' that are central to becoming a father.

In this final, concluding chapter, I bring these insights together, to reiterate how and why emotional geographies provides a critical framework for understanding expectant fathering, and the value of this, not only to geographers, but also to others; including to interdisciplinary researchers on fathering (along with family/parenting more broadly), as well as policy makers.

8.2. Findings and Contributions

This thesis has examined the *emotional geographies of expectant fathering*. It has highlighted the centrality of emotions to how fathers understand, and internalise, their 'role' during pregnancy as primarily one of support, illuminating how these emotions are reified across different spaces and places – and at different, overlapping spatial scales, which work to mutually reinforce fathers' understanding of their largely secondary position within caregiving (Longhurst, 2017). Moreover, it has revealed how these are exacerbated especially in times of crisis, such as the coronavirus pandemic, engendering a general retreat into traditional gendered parenting roles (Menzel, 2022) – encouraged most especially within institutional spaces of maternity care and workplace spaces.

However, more hopefully, it has also revealed the array of spatial practices through which the expectant fathers in this study sought to engage, actively, in pregnancy/expectancy – doing so even in an age of crisis, and thus implicitly fighting back against political discourse which has (re)positioned expectant fathers as ‘distant spectators’ in recent years (Menzel, 2022). These go beyond spatial practices of just ‘being there’ during pregnancy, such as by being a supportive partner and attending (at least one) antenatal appointment, which has long been understood as a demonstration of ones’ commitment to ‘being there’ as a father post-birth (Draper and Ives, 2013). Indeed, the practices examined encompass a wide array of intimate, tender and care-full multi-sensory, (inter)embodied encounters; some at the level of the body, through ‘body-mediated moments’ (Draper, 2003a, 2003b, 2002a), while others include affective encounters with objects within the home (extending Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Leinaweaver et al., 2017; Davies et al., 2009). I have explored how such practices become enrolled into the formation of expectant fathers’ sense of love/intimacy towards their future child, exploring also how these practices constitute anticipatory and imagined forms of *caring for* and actively *living with* children before they are born, evoking a distinctly paternal subjectivity (Tomori and Boyer, 2019; Meah and Jackson, 2016). As such, I have revealed how spatial enactments of ‘doing’ family are embedded within multiple timeframes (Evans, 2014), extending Meah’s (2017) analysis of the circuits of father-child intimacy, enabled and maintained, for her, via memory, to consider how these relations are also mediated via the future and acts of anticipation.

This thesis has extended also Holt and Philo’s recent (2022) call for greater examinations of ‘tiny human geographies’, through interrogation of how fathers, especially, engage in spatial practices of ‘doing family’ with foetuses’ as part of their pre-parenting practices (Hamper, 2022; Hamper and Nash, 2021), forging an agenda for what may even be deemed ‘foetal geographies’. Moreover, interrogating and illuminating how fathers engage in

such practices both with their partner (via inter-embodied encounters of Chapter 5), but also *individually*, (through affective encounters with baby things in Chapter 6), this thesis highlights the intense desires for fathers to be involved in the care of their future children.

In this way, this thesis has responded directly to Longhurst's (2017) call for the need to attend critically to fathers' emotions at the overlapping spatial scales of communities, homes and bodies – along with national legislation (as originally considered by Boyer et al., 2017a) – in understanding why care remains so deeply gendered. However, through Chapter 7 especially, this thesis has importantly *extended* Longhurst's commentary by illustrating the central role of *workplace spaces* through which fathers 'fall back' into gender (Miller, 2010). That is, despite all the things expectant fathers do to engage in pregnancy, and to prepare themselves – practically and emotionally – for the arrival of their future child, it is workplace spaces (and specifically fathers' sense of obligation to these places, and mothers' to home) that ultimately hinder the ability for truly active, involved fathering to be realised and to come to fruition.

8.3. Implications for Policy and Practice

Throughout this thesis, I have been critical of societal assumptions that the embodied nature of pregnancy makes mothers more natural caregivers. I have posited instead that parental care – and indeed parental 'instinct' – are fundamentally learned phenomena (Ranson, 2014; Ruddick, 1992). *Fathers need time* to be able to continue engaging in such care-full practices post-birth, especially in order to develop an emotional, embodied habitus of caregiving through repeat, routinised performances of care (Ranson, 2014). This thus has important ramifications for policy and practice.

In the Introduction chapter of this thesis, I noted how, in 2023, parenting organisations *Pregnant then Screwed* and *The Fatherhood Institute* launched a joint campaign petitioning for the UK government to extend statutory paternity leave entitlements (currently two weeks) to

six weeks paid leave, in a joint effort to facilitate fathers' greater involvement in the early years, as well as to address gender inequalities in the labour market (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/640814> [accessed: 25/07/2023]). In January 2024, this petition was rejected by the UK Government, stating that they had “no plans to increase Paternity Leave and Pay”, but that, “if parents wish to take longer leave they can use Shared Parental Leave to share up to 37 weeks of pay and up to 50 weeks of leave” (UK Government and Parliament, 2024: n.p.).

However, as I have shown in Chapter 7, Shared Parental Leave is largely inaccessible for many who want to use it. This inaccessibility is grounded in eligibility criteria implemented at the national level (Twamley and Schober, 2019), along with workplace cultures, which continue to promote maternal models of care as the established norm (Burkitt and Forbes, 2019); which, I have shown, expectant fathers feel largely uneasy (and, indeed, unable) to contest. Indeed, interrogating the emotional geographies of expectant fathers' negotiation and arrangement of leave reveals how negotiating even basic allowances of paternity leave evokes fractious tensions and anxiety between being a good father and a good worker (Brooks and Hodkinson, 2021; Aitken, 2009, 2005, 2000).

If the UK is truly committed to gender equality, a starting point has to be legislative reform around parental leave to support fathers – socially and financially – to be able to take this time. Other European contexts, particularly Scandinavia (as some of my participants reflected on), have achieved more equitable models of parental leave by limiting the need for leave arrangements based on ‘maternal transfer’. This can only be achieved by raising paternity leave pay and increasing fathers' ‘standard quota’ of leave entitlement beyond just two weeks, more akin to a six-week quota. This is importantly not to suggest a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to parental leave – indeed, while the UK has a lot they could learn from the Scandinavian models, the UK could do even better, by making extended leave even more accessible to fathers

across the socio-economic spectrum, by eliminate eligibility criteria that excludes fathers who are self-employed, newly-employed (as was the case for many of my participants) or on precarious work contracts – as is increasingly likely in the UK’s current crisis-laden economic environment.

By making it equally likely – and indeed *possible* – for fathers to take a substantial amount of time away from work following the arrival of a child, workplaces have the opportunity to provide fathers time to adapt to the labours and joys of care. This would ultimately make for more inclusive and equitable workplace cultures, “undermining employment discrimination against mothers” – and women more broadly – by removing the very foundation such gendered discrimination is based (Haas and Hwang, 2019: 59; McAllister et al., 2021), normalising men’s participation in care (Elliot, 2016). This would then begin to resolve gender inequalities across society more broadly, since, as I have shown throughout this thesis by applying a geographical perspective, experiences/encounters in one place are intimately entangled with, and are mutually reinforced by, experiences elsewhere.

Indeed, although these implications for policy/practice are perhaps most needed within workplaces, they also have important applications for practice in other areas. In developing policy pertaining to family life – particularly in response to ongoing social crises – it is vital that expectant fathers’ emotions and experiences are considered more sensitively than they have been in recent years, as the pandemic restrictions in Chapter 4 have shown. By failing to do this, policy and practice risks perpetuating (expectant) fathers’ secondary ‘place’ within care to the ultimate detriment of future gender parity.

8.4. Directions for Future Research

In bringing this thesis to a close, I call for a greater examination of the gendered, emotional experiences of expectant fathering within feminist research – in geography, but also more broadly. I have shown how an emotional geographies framework is particularly pertinent for

interrogating these experiences, providing vital and nuanced insight into how emotions fundamentally *matter* in the lives of expectant fathers, and how spaces/scales of these experiences overlap and coalesce.

This thesis has highlighted the need for *listening* to expectant fathers – based on the feminist principles of empathy, rapport and listening – advocating especially for the value of a mini-longitudinal design strategy, developing rich research relationships with participants and gaining detailed insights into their changing and evolving emotional experiences as expectant fathers over time, allowing for the identification of the factors which enable or hinder their hopes and aspirations of fatherhood.

During recruitment, I placed considerable emphasis on diversity and inclusivity, stressing that participation was open to ‘*any* individual who identifies as being a primary ‘*paternal*’ relation (i.e. not ‘mother’) currently *committed* to the arrival of a new baby’ who wanted to talk and share their experiences. This was irrespective of their gendered identity, sexual orientation, age, or the nature of their relationship to the child/expecting mother. This definition therefore includes ‘expectant fathers’ from a range of circumstances including biological fathers, homosexual/lesbian parenting couples and ‘social’ fathers (those not biologically related to the child, but identifying as their ‘father’, such as (new) partners of pregnant women, surrogate fathers, or adoptive parents). However, I recognise that my sample was still largely gender-and-hereto-normative, with all of my participants being heterosexual, and in long-term, relationships with the future mother of the child – further, all but one participant self-identified as ‘White’.

Indeed, there is recognition within methodological literatures around family research – in and beyond geography – for fathers to only participate in research (in substantial numbers) when such research is specifically aimed at them (Gabb, 2010). This is reflective of how the seemingly gender-neutral term ‘parenting’ is often considered synonymous with ‘mothering’

in many contexts (Atkinson, 2017; McKay and Doucet, 2010). However, I suggest this offers important possibilities for taking research on expectant fathering further. This may be through, for example, the development of a series of projects aimed at different groups of fathers across the social spectrum, to ensure a more thorough, and holistic, understanding of expectant fathers' experiences – ensuring that expectant fathers from across the socio-economic spectrum have an opportunity to be listened to, developing a rich and current data set which would uncover the variegated emotional geographies of expectant fathering. I suggest that such projects should have their aims rooted in openness, rather than having a set agenda of focusing on one particular aspect of expectant fathering, allowing the focus to emerge instead *through* the voices of the expectant fathers themselves.

While this thesis has gone some way to addressing the absence of expectant fathers' voices and experiences within geography, there is more work to be done. Despite the inclusion of John's experiences as an adoptive father, I feel that a key limitation of this thesis is the continued normative articulation of expectant fathering through pregnancy. Future research could thus take forward this framework for understanding the experiences of expectant fathers – and indeed expectant parents more broadly – coming to parenthood in a diverse range of ways; be that through adoption (Leinaweaver et al., 2017), IVF/Fertility treatment (Hamper and Nash, 2021; Perrota and Hamper, 2021) surrogacy (Schurr 2018; Schurr and Militiz, 2018), or otherwise. These are unique pathways into parenthood, which comprise factors beyond those considered in this thesis. However, the emotional geographies framework that I propose could still be useful in understand these experiences.

It is my hope that, by following these directions for future research geographers, socio-cultural researchers, and society more broadly can begin to truly understand the *emotional geographies of expectant fathering* – in all its richness and diversity.

References

- Abrahamsson, S. and Simpson, P. (2011) The Limits of the Body: Boundaries, Capacities, Thresholds. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 12: (4), 331-338.
- Ahmed, S. (2000) *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. London, Routledge.
- Ahmed, S. (2004) *Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Aitken, S.C. (1998) *Family Fantasies and Community Space*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, Rutgers University Press.
- Aitken, S.C. (2000) Fathering and Faltering: 'Sorry but You Don't Have the Necessary Accoutrements.' *Environment and Planning A*. 32, 581-598.
- Aitken, S.C. (2005) The Awkward Spaces of Fathering. In: van Hoven, B. and Hörschelmann, K. (Eds.). *Spaces of Masculinities Critical Geographies*. London, Routledge. Pp. 222-236.
- Aitken, S.C. (2009) *The Awkward Spaces of Fathering*. Surrey, Ashgate.
- Alcadipani, R.(2020) Pandemic and Macho Organisations: Wake-up Call or Business as Usual? *Gender, Work & Organisation*. 27: (5), 734-746.
- Anderson, B. (2014). *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*. London, Ashgate Publishing.
- Anderson, B. (2023) Forms and Scenes of Attachment: A Cultural Geography of Promises. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. DOI: [10.1177/20438206221129205](https://doi.org/10.1177/20438206221129205)
- Anderson, B. (2010) Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness: Anticipatory Action and Future Geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*. 34: (6), 777-798.
- Anderson, B. and Toila-Kelly, D. (2004) Matter(s) in Social and Cultural Geography. *Geoforum*. 35, 669-674.
- Anderson, B. and Fenton, J. (2008) Spaces of Hope. *Space and Culture*. 11: (2), 76-80.
- Anderson, K. and Smith, S.J. (2001) Editorial: Emotional Geographies. *Transaction of the Institute of British Geographers*. 26, 7-10.
- Andreasson, J. and Johansson, T. (2016) Global Narratives of Fatherhood. Fathering and Masculinity on the Internet. *International Review of Sociology*. 26: (3), 482-496.
- Archibald, M.M., Ambagtsheer, R.C., Casey, M.G. and Lawless, M. (2019) Using Zoom Videoconferencing for Qualitative Data Collection: Perceptions and Experiences of Researchers and Participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 18, 1-8. DOI: [10.1177/1609406919874596](https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596)

- Åsenhed, L., Kilstam, J., Alehagen, S. and Baggens, C. (2013) Becoming a Father is an Emotional Roller Coaster- An Analysis of First-Time Fathers' Blogs. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 23, 1309-1317.
- Atkinson, J. (2017) Shared Parental Leave in the UK: Can it Advance Gender Equality by Changing Fathers into Co-Parents? *International Journal of Law in Context*. 13: (3), 356-368.
- Averett, K.H. (2021) A Feminist Public Sociology of the Pandemic: Interviewing About a Crisis, During a Crisis. *Gender, Work and Organisation*. 28: (S2), 321-329.
- Baird, M. and O'Brien, M. (2015) Dynamics of Parental Leave in Anglophone Countries: The Paradox of State Expansion in Liberal Welfare Regimes. *Community, Work and Family*. 18: (2), 198-217.
- Barad, K. (2008) Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. In: Alaimo, S. and Hekman, S. (eds.) *Material Feminisms*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press. Pp. 120-156.
- Barbour, K. and Hitchmough, A. (2014) Experiencing Affect through Site-Specific Dance. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 12, 63-72.
- Barker, J. (2008) Men and Motors? Fathers Involvement in Children's Travel. *Early Child Development and Care*. 178: (7-8), 853-866.
- Barker, J. (2011) 'Manic Mums' and 'Distant Dads'? Gendered Geographies of Care and the Journey to School. *Health and Place*. 17, 413-421.
- Barnett, C. and Land, D. (2007). Geographies of Generosity: Beyond the 'Moral Turn'. *Geoforum*, 38: (6), 1065-1075.
- Barnwell, A. (2014) Creative Paranoia: Affect and Social Method. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 20, 10-17.
- Baxter, J. (2016) Case Studies in Qualitative Research. In: Hay, I. (Ed). *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. Pp. 130-146.
- Beglaubter, J. (2019) 'I Feel Like it's a Little Bit of a Badge of Honour': Fathers' Leave-taking and the Development of Caring Masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*. DOI: [10.1177/1097184X19874869](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X19874869)
- Beninger, K. (2017) Social Media Users' Views on the Ethics of Social Media Research. In: Sloan, L. and Quan-Haase, A. (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*. London, Sage. Pp. 57-73.

- Bennett, J. (2012) Powers of the Hoard: Further Notes on Material Agency. In: Cohen, J. (Ed.) *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*. Washington, Oliphaunt Books. Pp. 237-269.
- Berggren, K. (2014) Sticky Masculinity: Post-structuralism, Phenomenology and Subjectivity in Critical Studies on Men. *Men and Masculinities*. 17: (3), 231-252.
- Berggren, L., Olsson, C., Talvia, S., Hörnell, A., Rönnlund, M. and Waling, M. (2020) The Lived Experiences of School Lunch: An Empathy-Based Study with Children in Sweden. *Children's Geographies*. 18: (3), 339 – 350.
- Bevan, M.T. (2014) A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research*. 24: (1), 136-144.
- Birch, M. and Miller, T. (2000) Inviting Intimacy: The Interview as Therapeutic Opportunity. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. 3: (3), 189-202.
- Birkett, H. and Forbes, S. (2019) Where's Dad? Exploring the Low Take-Up of Inclusive Parenting Policies in the UK. *Policy Studies*. 40: (2), 205-224.
- Bissell, D. (2007) Animating Suspension: Waiting for Mobilities. *Mobilities*. 2: (2), 277-298.
- Bissell, D. (2020) A Changing Sense of Place: Geography and COVID-19. *Geographical Research*. 59, 150-159.
- Blackman, L. (2012) *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment*. Mediation. London, Sage.
- Blumen, O. Fenster, T. and Misgav, C. (2013) The Body within Home and Domesticity: Gendered Diversity. *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Policy and Identities*. 11: (1), 6-19.
- Blunt, A. (2005) Cultural Geography: Cultural Geographies of Home. *Progress in Human Geography*. 29: (4), 505-515.
- Blunt, A. (2009) Geography and the Humanities Tradition. In: Clifford, N.J., Holloway, S.L., Rice, S.P. and Valentine, G. (Eds.). *Key Concepts in Geography*. 2nd Edition. London, Sage. Pp. 66-82.
- Blunt, A. and Dowling, R. (2006) *Home*. London, Routledge.
- Blunt, A. and Willis, J. (2000) *Dissident Geographies: An Introduction to Radical Ideas and Practices*. Essex, Pearson Education Limited.
- Bondi, L. (2005a) Troubling Space, Making Space, Doing Space. *Group Analysis*. 38 : (1), 137–149.
- Bondi, L. (2005b) Making Connections and Thinking through Emotions: Between Geography and Psychotherapy. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30, 433 – 448.
- Bondi, L. (2014) Understanding Feelings: Engaging with Unconscious Communication and Embodied Knowledge. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 10, 44 – 54.

- Bondi, L., Davidson, J. and Smith, M. (2005) Introduction: Geography's 'Emotional Turn'. In Davidson, J., Bondi, L. and Smith, M. (Eds.). *Emotional Geographies*. Oxon, Routledge. Pp. 1-16.
- Böök, M.L. and Mykkänen, J. (2019) Finnish Mothers' and Fathers' Construction of and Emotions in Their Daily Lives. *Scandinavian Journal of Education Research*. 63: (3), 412 – 426.
- Borgkvist, A., Moore, V., Crabb, S. and Elliott, J. (2021) Critical Consideration of Workplace Flexibility "For All" and Gendered Outcomes: Men Being Flexible about their Flexibility. *Gender, Work and Organisation*. 28, 2076-2090.
- Boyer, K. (2014) 'Neoliberal Motherhood': Workplace Lactation and Changing Conceptions of Working Motherhood in the Contemporary US. *Feminist Theory*. 15: (5), 269-288.
- Boyer, K. (2019) *Spaces and Politics of Motherhood*. London, Rowman and Littlefield International.
- Boyer, K., Dermott, E., James, A. and McLeavy J. (2017a) Regendering Care in the Aftermath of the Recession? *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 7: (1), 56-73.
- Boyer, K., Dermott, E., James, A. and McLeavy J. (2017b) Men at Work? Debating Shifting Gender Divisions of Care. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 7: (1), 92-98.
- Boyer, K., Reimer, S., & Irvine, L. (2013). The Nursery Workspace, Emotional Labour and Contested Understandings of Commoditised Childcare in the Contemporary UK. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 14: (5), 517-540.
- Boyer, K. and Spinney, J. (2016) Motherhood, Mobility and Materiality: Material Entanglements, Journey-Making and the Process of 'Becoming Mother'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 34: (6), 1113-1131.
- Boyle, L.E. (2019) The (Un)Habitual Geographies of Social Anxiety Disorder. *Social Science and Medicine*. 231, 31-37.
- Braidotti, R. (2002) *Metamorphoses*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (1998) Masculinity and Child Care: The Reconstruction of Fathering. *The Sociological Review*. 46: (2), 293-313.
- Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2018) Masculinity and Fathering Alone During Parental Leave. *Men and Masculinities*. 21: (1), 72-90.
- Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2021) *Designing Parental Leave Policy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Branicki, L.J. (2020) COVID-19, Ethics of Care and Feminist Crisis Management. *Gender, Work and Organisation*. 27, 872-883.

- Brannen, J. and Nilsen, A. (2006) From Fatherhood to Fathering: Transmission of Change among British Fathers in Four-generation Families. *Sociology*. 40: (2), 335-352.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) Can I Use TA? Should I Use TA? Should I not Use TA? Comparing Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Other Pattern-Based Qualitative Analytical Approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*. 21, 37-47.
- Brickell, K. (2012) “Mapping” and “Doing” Critical Geographies of Home.’ *Progress in Human Geography*. 36: (2), 225-244.
- Briggs, A. and Hall, S-M. (2023) *Running on Empty: Austerity, Rising Costs of Living and Growing Inequality for People and Charitable Organisations in Northern England*. London, Independent Social Research Foundation. Report available at: https://issuu.com/isrf/docs/briggs_hall_-_running_on_empty_2023 > [Accessed: 06/08/2023]
- Brooks, C. (2010) Embodied Transcription: A Creative Method for Using Voice-Recognition Software. *The Qualitative Report*. 15: (5), 1227 – 1241.
- Brooks, R. and Hodkinson, P. (2021) *Sharing Care*. Bristol, Bristol University Press.
- Brown, J., Kirk-Wida, E., Baker, C. and Barber, S. (2021) *Coronavirus: A History of English Lockdown Laws*. Research Briefing Commissioned by House of Common’s Library. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9068/> > [Accessed: 08/11/2023]
- Bryan, D.M. (2013) To Parent or to Provide? The Effect of the Provider Role on Low-Income Men’s Decisions About Fatherhood and Paternal Engagement. *Fathering*. 11: (1), 71-89.
- Buckle, C. (2021) Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Ethics, Gender and Precarious Work. *International Journal of Housing Policy*. 21: (3), 433-450.
- Burkitt, I. (1997) Social Relationships and Emotions. *Sociology*. 31: (1), 37 – 55.
- Burkitt, I. (1999) *Bodies of Thought: Embodiment, Identity and Modernity*. London, Sage.
- Burkitt, I. (2002) Complex, Emotions: Relations, Feelings and Images in Emotional Experience. *The Sociological Review*. 50: (S2), 151-167.
- Burkitt, I. (2014) *Emotions and Social Relations*. London, Sage.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge.
- Cápona González, D. (2018) El Papel Político de la Superstición y el Deseo En Spinoza: Consideraciones Actuales Sobre el Capitalismo [The Political Role of Superstition and

- Desire in Spinoza: Current Considerations Regarding Capitalism] *Ideas y Valores*. 67: 168, 177-197.
- Cápona González, D. (2021) “No hay medio más eficaz para gobernar a la masa que la superstición.” La política de la superstición en Spinoza [“Nothing Governs the Multitude More Effectively than Superstition”: The Politics of Superstition in Spinoza]. *Las Torres de Lucca*. 10 (18), 2021: 109-121.
- Cappellini, B. and Yen, D.A. (2016) A Space of One's Own: Spatial and Identity Liminality in an Online Community of Mothers. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 32: (13-14), 1260-1283.
- Carrigan, M. and Szmigin, I. (2004) Time, Uncertainty and the Expectancy Experience: An Interpretive Exploration of Consumption and Impending Motherhood. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 20: (7-8), 771-798.
- Casey, E. and Taylor, Y. (2014) Intimacies, Families and Practices of Consumption. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. 3: (1), 131-133.
- Casey, E. and Taylor, Y. (2015) Introduction: In: Casey, E. and Taylor, Y. (Eds.) *Intimacies, Critical Consumption and Diverse Economies*. Basingstoke, Palgrave, Macmillan. Pp.1-9.
- Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] (2021) *Science Brief: SARS-Cov-2 and Surface (Fomite) Transmission for Indoor Community Environments*. Available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/science-and-research/surface-transmission.html>> [Accessed: 15/08/2023]
- Chadwick, R. (2017) Embodied Methodologies: Challenges, Reflections and Strategies. *Qualitative Research*. 17: (1), 54-74.
- Chambers, P. (2017) The Nightdress I Wore to Give Birth In. *Performance Research*. 22: (4), 18-27.
- Charlick, S., Pincombe, J., McKellar, L., Fielder, A. (2016) Making Sense of Participant Experience: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Midwifery Research. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*. 11, 205-216.
- Chung, H. (2021) *Shared Care, Father's Involvement in Care and Family Well-being Outcomes*. Kent, University of Kent.
- Chung, H., Birkett, H., Forbes, S. and Seo, H. (2021) Covid-19, Flexible Working, and Implications for Gender Equality in the United Kingdom. *Gender and Society*. 35: (2), 218-232.

- Clement, S. and Waitt, G. (2017) Walking, Mothering and Care: A Sensory Ethnography of Journeying On-Foot with Children in Wollongong, Australia. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 24: (8), 1185-1203.
- Clement, S. and Waitt, G. (2018) Pram Mobilities: Affordances and Atmospheres that Assemble Childhood and Motherhood On-The-Move. *Children's Geographies*. 16: (3), 252-265.
- Clifford, N.J., Holloway, S.L., Rice, S.P. and Valentine, G. (2009) *Key Concepts in Geography*. (eds.). 2nd Edition. London, Sage.
- Collins, R. and Stanes, E. (2021) Ambivalent Storage, Multi-Scalar Generosity, and Challenges of/for Everyday Consumption. *Social and Cultural Geography*. DOI: [10.1080/14649365.2021.1975166](https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2021.1975166)
- Colls, R. (2004) 'Looking Alright, Feeling Alright': Emotions, Sizing and the Geographies of Women's Experiences of Clothing Consumption. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 5: (4), 583-596.
- Colls, R. (2006) Outsizing/Outside: Bodily Bigness and the Emotional Experiences of British Women Shopping for Clothes. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 13: (5), 529-545.
- Colls, R. and Fannin, M. (2013) Placental Surfaces and the Geographies of Bodily Interiors. *Environment and Planning A*. 45, 1087-1104.
- Connell, R.W. (1987) *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Connell, R.W. and Messerschmidt, J.W. (2005) Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society*. 19: (6), 829-859.
- Connerty, T.J., Roberts, R., and Williams, A.S. (2016) Managing Life, Motherhood and Mental Health After Discharge from a Mother-Baby Unit: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. *Community Mental Health Journal*. 52, 954-963.
- Cope, M. (2010) Coding Transcripts and Diaries. In: Clifford, N., French, S. and Valentine, G. (Eds.) *Key Methods in Geography*. 2nd Edition. London, Sage. Pp. 440-452.
- Cox, R. (2014) Working on Masculinity at Home. In: Gorman-Murray, A. and Hopkins, P. (Eds.) *Masculinities and Place*. Surrey, Ashgate. Pp. 227-238.
- Cox, R. (2016) Materials, Skills and Gender Identities: Men, Women and Home Improvement Practices in New Zealand. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 23: (4), 572-588.
- Crang, M. and Thrift, N. (2000) *Thinking Space*. (Eds.). London, Routledge.
- Curti, G.H., Aitken, S.C., Bosco, F.J. and Dixon Goerisch, D. (2011) For Not Limiting Emotional and Affectual Geographies: A Collective Critique of Steve Pile's 'Emotions

- and Affect in Recent Human Geography.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 36, 590-594.
- Daniels, N.M. and Chadwick, R.J. (2018) Doing Homebirth like a Man? Constructions of Masculinity in South African Men's Narratives of Homebirth. *Journal of Gender Studies*. 27: (6), 725-739.
- Das, R. and Hodkinson, P. (2020, June 22). Dad, Distanced: The Turbulence of New Fatherhood Amidst a Pandemic. Discover Society. <<https://archive.discoversociety.org/2020/06/22/dad-distanced-the-turbulence-of-new-fatherhood-amidst-a-pandemic/>> [Accessed: 05/01/2021]
- Davidson, J. and Milligan, C. (2004) Embodying Emotion Sensing Space: Introducing Emotional Geographies. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 5: (4), 523-532.
- Davies, A., Dobscha, S., Geiger, S., O'Donohoe, S., O'Malley, L., Prothero, A., Sorensen, E.B., Thomsen, T.U. (2009) The Involved Ostrich: Mothers' Perceptions of Fathers' Participation in the Transition to Parenthood. *Advances in Consumer Research*. 35, 254-260. Available at : <<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/14635/volumes/v36/NA-36>>
- Davies, H. (2019) Embodied and Sensory Encounters: Death, Bereavement and Remembering in Children's Family and Personal Lives. *Children's Geographies*. 17: (5), 552-564.
- Dawney, L. (2011) The Motor of Being: A Response to Steve Pile's 'Emotions and Affect in Recent Human Geography.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 36, 599-602.
- de Boise, S. (2018). The Personal is Political...Just Not Always Progressive: Affective Interruptions and their Promise for CSMM. *NORMA*, 13: (3-4), 158-174.
- de Boise, S. and Hearn, J. (2017) Are Men Getting More Emotional? Critical Sociological Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Emotions. *The Sociological Review*. 65: (4), 779 – 796.
- de Silva, M. and Ghandi, K. (2018) "Daughter" as a Positionality and the Gendered Politics of Taking Parents in the Field. *Area*. 51, 662-669.
- Deave, T., Johnson, D. and Ingram, J. (2008) Transition to Parenthood: the Needs of Parents in Pregnancy and Early Parenthood. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*. 8: 30 DOI:[10.1186/1471-2393-8-30](https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2393-8-30)
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London, Continuum.

- Denegri-Knott, J. and Molesworth, M. (2010a) Love It. Buy It. Sell It. Consumer Desire and the Social Drama of eBay. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 10: (1), 56-79.
- Denegri-Knott, J. and Molesworth, M. (2010b) Concepts and Practices of Digital Consumption. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*. 13: (2), 109-132.
- Dermott, E. (2008) *Intimate Fatherhood: A Sociological Analysis*. Oxon, Routledge.
- Dheensa, S., Williams, R. and Metcalfe, A. (2013) Shattered Schemata and Fragmented Identities: Men's Experiences of Antenatal Genetic Screening in Great Britain. *Journal of Family Issues*. 34: (8), 1081-1103.
- Dick, B. (2017) *Convergent Interviewing*. Available at: <http://www.aral.com.au/resources/coin.pdf> [Accessed: 21/11/2019]
- Dixon, D. and Jones, J.P. (2006) Feminist Geographies of Difference, Relation and Construction. In: Aitken, S. and Valentine, G. (Eds.) *Approaches to Human Geography*. London, Sage. Pp. 42-56.
- Dixon-Swift, V. James, E.L., Kippen, S. and Liamputtong, P. (2009) Researching Sensitive Topics: Qualitative Research as Emotional Work. *Qualitative Research*. 9: (1), 67 – 79.
- Dolan, A. and Coe, C. (2011) Men, Masculine Identities and Childbirth. *Sociology of Health and Illness*. 33: (7), 1019 – 1034.
- Domosh, M. (1998) Geography and Gender: Home, Again? *Progress in Human Geography*. 22: (2), 276-282.
- Doucet, A. (2006) 'Estrogen-Filled Worlds': Fathers as Primary Caregivers and Embodiment. *The Sociological Review*. 54: (4), 696-716.
- Doucet, A. (2009) Dad and Baby in the First Year: Gendered Responsibilities and Embodiment. *Annals of the American Academy*. 624, 78-98.
- Doucet, A. (2013) A "Choreography of Becoming": Fathering, Embodied Care, and New Materialisms. *Canadian Review of Sociology*. 50: (3), 284-305.
- Doughty, K., Duffy, M. and Harada, T. (2016) Practices of Emotional and Affective Geographies of Sound. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 20, 39-41.
- Dowling, R. (2008) Accommodating Open Plan: Children, Clutter, and Containment in Suburban Houses in Sydney, Australia. *Environment and Planning A*. 40, 536-549.
- Dowling, R. and Power, E. (2012) Sizing Home, Doing Family in Sydney, Australia. *Housing Studies*. 27: (5), 605-619.
- Draper, H. and Ives, J. (2013). Men's Involvement in Antenatal Care and Labour: Rethinking a Medical Model. *Midwifery*, 29, 723-729.

- Draper, J. (2002a) 'It's the First Scientific Evidence': Men's Experiences of Pregnancy Confirmation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 39: (6), 563-570.
- Draper, J. (2002b). 'It Was a Real Good Show': The Ultrasound Scan, Fathers, and the Power of the Visual. *Sociology of Health & Illness*. 24: (6), 771-795.
- Draper, J. (2003a) Men's Passage to Fatherhood: An Analysis of the Contemporary Relevance of Transition Theory. *Nursing Inquiry*. 10: (1), 66 – 78.
- Draper, J. (2003b) Blurring, Moving and Broken Boundaries: Men's Encounters with the Pregnant Body. *Sociology of Health and Illness*. 25: (7), 743 – 767.
- Duff, C. (2010) On the Role of Affect and Practice in the Production of Place. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 28, 881-895.
- Duffy, M. (2013) The Requirement of Having a Body. *Geographical Research*. 51: (2), 130-136.
- Dunn, K. (2016) Interviewing. In: Hay, I. (Ed). *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. Pp.149 – 188.
- Dyck, I. (1990) Space, Time and Renegotiating Motherhood: An Exploration of the Domestic Workplace. *Environment and Planning D*. 8: (4), 459-483.
- Edensor, T. (2015) Producing Atmospheres at the Match: Fan Cultures, Commercialisation and Mood Management in English Football. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 15, 82-89.
- Eggeling, K. (2022) Embracing the 'Inverted Commas', or How COVID-19 Can Show us New Directions for Ethnographic 'Fieldwork'. *Qualitative Research*. DOI: [10.1177/14687941221096594](https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221096594)
- Ellingson, L.L. (2017) *Embodiment in Qualitative Research*. Oxon, Routledge.
- Elliot, J., Holland, J. and Thomson, R. (2008) Longitudinal and Panel Studies. In: Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L. and Brannen, J. (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods*. London, Sage. Pp. 228-248.
- Elliot, K. (2016) Caring Masculinities: Theorising an Emerging Concept. *Men and Masculinities*. 19: (3), 240-259.
- Elwood, S.A. and Martin, D.G. (2000) 'Placing' Interviews: Locations and Scales of Power in Qualitative Research. *Professional Geographer*. 52: (4), 649-657.
- England, K. (1996) *Who Will Mind the Baby? Geographies of Childcare and Working Mothers*. London, Routledge.
- Englander, M. (2012) The Interview: Data Collection in Descriptive Phenomenological Human Scientific Research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*. 43, 13-35.

- Evans, R. (2014) Parental Death as a Vital Conjuncture? Intergenerational Care and Responsibility Following Bereavement in Senegal. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 15: (5), 547-570.
- Faircloth, C. (2021) When Equal Partners Becomes Unequal Parents: Couple Relationships and Intensive Parenting Culture. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. 10: (2), 231-248.
- Faircloth, C. and Gürtin, Z. (2018) Fertile Connections: Thinking Across Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Parenting Culture Studies. *Sociology*. 52: (5), 983-1000.
- Faircloth, C. and Murray, M. (2015) Parenting: Kinship, Expertise, and Anxiety. *Journal of Family Issues*. 36: (9), 1115-1129.
- Fitzpatrick, K. and Longley, A. (2014) Embodiment and Affect in Research Collaborations. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 12, 49-54.
- Fois, F. (2017) Understanding Ethnography Through a Life Course Framework: A Research Journey Into Alternative Spiritual Spaces. *Area*. 49: (4), 421-428.
- Foster, H.D. (1979) The Geography of Stress. *Area*. 11: (2), 107-108.
- Frost, N., Nolas, S.M., Brooks-Gordon, B., Esin, C., Holt, A., Mehdizadeh, L., Shinebourne, P. (2010) Pluralism in Qualitative Research: the Impact of Different Researchers and Qualitative Approaches on the Analysis of Qualitative Data. *Qualitative Research*. 10: (4), 441-460.
- Gabb, J. (2004) 'I Could Eat My Baby to Bits': Passion and Desire in Lesbian Mother-Children Love. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 11: (3), 399-415.
- Gabb, J. (2010) *Researching Intimacy in Families*. 2nd Edition. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gabb, J. (2012) Embodying Risk: Managing Father-Child Intimacy and the Display of Nudity in Families. *Sociology*. 47: (4), 639-654.
- Gatrell, C. (2006) Interviewing Fathers: Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork. *Journal of Gender Studies*. 15: (3), 237-251.
- Giazitzoglu, A. (2020) This Sporting Life: The Intersection of Hegemonic Masculinities, Space and Emotions Among Rugby Players. *Gender, Work and Organisation*. 27: 67-81.
- Gilligan, C. (1993) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge. Harvard, Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, C. (2011) *Ethics of Care*. Available at: <<https://ethicsofcare.org/carol-gilligan/>> [Accessed: 04/08/2023]

- Gorman-Murray, A. (2008) Masculinity and the Home: A Critical Review and Conceptual Framework. *Australian Geographer*. 39: (3), 367-379.
- Gorman-Murray, A. (2013) Urban Homebodies: Embodiment, Masculinity and Domesticity in Inner Sydney. *Geographical Research*. 51: (2), 137-144.
- Gorman-Murray, A. (2017) Caring About Male Caregiving: Spaces, Subjectivities and Regendering Care. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 7: (1), 74-78.
- Gorman-Murray, A. and Hopkins, P. (2014) Introduction: Masculinities and Place. In Gorman-Murray, A. and Hopkins, P. (Eds.) *Masculinities and Place*. Surrey, Ashgate. Pp. 1-24.
- GOV.UK (2014) Press release: New Right for Fathers and Partners to Attend Antenatal Appointments. Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-right-for-fathers-and-partners-to-attend-antenatal-appointments>> [Accessed: 09/03/2023]
- GOV.UK (2023) Paternity Pay and Leave. Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave>> [Accessed: 09/03/2023]
- Greco, M. and Stenner, P. (2008) Introduction: Emotion and Social Science. In: Greco, M. and Stenner, P. (Eds.). *Emotions: A Social Science Reader*. Oxon, Routledge. Pp. 1 – 21.
- Greenfield, M., Payne-Gifford, S. and McKenzie, G. (2021). Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Considering “Freebirth” During Covid-19. *Frontiers in Global Women’s Health*, 2, 603744. DOI:[10.3389/fgwh.2021.603744](https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2021.603744)
- Gunnarsson Lorentzen, D. and Nolin, J. (2017) Approaching Completeness: Capturing a Hashtagged Twitter Conversation and Its Follow-On Conversation. *Social Science Computer Review*. 35: (2), 277-286.
- Haas, L. and Hwang, C.P. (2019) Policy is Not Enough – the Influence of the Gendered Workplace on Fathers’ Use of Parental Leave in Sweden. *Community, Work and Family*. 22: (1), 58-76.
- Halford, S. (2006) Collapsing the Boundaries? Fatherhood, Organisation and Home-Working. *Gender, Work and Organisation*. 13: (4), 383-402.
- Hall, S.M. (2016) Moral Geographies of Family: Articulating, Forming and Transmitting Moralities in Everyday Life. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 17: (8), 1017-1039.
- Hall, S.M., and Ince, A. (2016) Introduction. In: Hall, S.M., and Ince, A. (Eds.) *Sharing Economies in Times of Crisis: Practices, Politics and Possibilities*. London, Routledge. Pp. 1-16.
- Hallman, B.C. (2010) Placing Families, Placing this Book. In: Hallman, B.C. (Ed.). *Family Geographies The Spatiality of Families and Family Life*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. Pp. 1-9.

- Hallman, B.C. and Benbow, M.P. (2010) 'Seeing if You Can Catch the One Picture That Just Makes it': Placing Family Life Through Family Zoo Photography. In: Hallman, B.C. (Ed.). *Family Geographies The Spatialities of Families and Family Life*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. Pp. 10-30.
- Hamilton, P. (2020). *Black Mothers and Attachment Parenting: A Black Feminist Analysis of Intensive Mothering in Britain and Canada*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Hamilton, P. (2021) Researching Parental Leave During a Pandemic: Lessons from Black Feminist Theory and Relationality. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. 10: (1), 197-203.
- Hamper, J. (2020) 'Catching Ovulation': Exploring Women's Use of Fertility Tracking Apps as a Reproductive Technology. *Body and Society*. 26: (3), 3 – 30.
- Hamper, J. (2022) A Fertility App for Two? Women's Perspectives on Sharing Conceptive Fertility Work with Male Partners. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*. 24: (12), 1713-1728.
- Hamper, J. and Nash, C. (2021) Bonding Work: Spacing Relations through Pregnancy Apps. *Transactions for the Institute of British Geographers*. 46, 584-597.
- Hanna, E. and Gough, B. (2016) Emoting Infertility Online: A Qualitative Analysis of Men's Forum Posts. *Health*. 20: (4), 363-382.
- Hanna, P. (2012) Using Internet Technologies (such as Skype) as a Research Medium: A Research Note. *Qualitative Research*. 12: (2), 239-242.
- Harris, A. and Guillemin, M. (2012) Qualitative Interviewing: A Portal into the Otherwise Unexplored. *Qualitative Health Research*. 22: (5), 689 – 699.
- Harrison, P. (2006) Poststructuralist Theories. In: Aitken, S. and Valentine, G. (Eds.). *Approaches to Human Geography*. London, Sage. Pp. 122-135.
- Hart, D. (2021) COVID Times Make 'Deep Listening' Explicit: Changing the Space Between Interviewer and Participant. *Qualitative Research*. DOI: [10.1177/14687941211027780](https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211027780)
- Hawkins J.M. (2017) Transcription Systems. In: Allen, M. (Ed.). *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods*. London, Sage. Pp. 1776 – 1779.
- Henwood, K., Shirani, F. and Groves, C. (2018) Using Photographs in Interviews: When We Lack the Words to Say What Practice Means. In Flick, U. (Ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. London, Sage. Pp. 599-614.
- Herrera, F. (2020). 'A Horror Movie with a Happy Ending': Childbirth from the Father's Perspective. *NORMA*, 15: (3-4), 251-266.
- Hickman-Dunne, J., von Benzon, N. and Whittle, R. (2022) Facebook as a Platform for Collecting Women's Birth Stories: Supporting Emotional Connections Between

- Hiemstra, N. and Billo, E. (2017) Introduction to Focus Section: Feminist Research and Knowledge Production in Geography. *The Professional Geographer*. 69: (2) 284-290.
- Hildingson, I., Cederlöf, L., Widén, S. (2011) Fathers' Birth Experience in Relation to Midwifery Care. *Women and Birth*. 24, 129-136.
- Hochschild A R (1979) Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology* 85: 551-575.
- Hochschild A R (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hockey, J., Penhale, B., and Sibley, D. (2005) Environments of Memory: Home Space, Later Life and Grief. In: Davidson, J., Bondi, L. and Smith, M. (Eds.). *Emotional Geographies*. Oxon, Routledge. Pp. 135-146.
- Hodkinson, P. and Brooks, R. (2019) Interchangeable Parents? The Roles and Identities of Primary and Equal Carer Fathers of Young Children. *Current Sociology Review*. 68: (6), 780-797.
- Hodkinson, P. and Das, R. (2021) *New Fathers, Mental Health and Digital Communication*. Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Høffding, S. and Martiny, K. (2016) Framing a Phenomenological Interview: What, Why and How. *Phenomenological Cognitive Science*. 15, 539-564.
- Holdsworth, C. (2014) *Family and Intimate Mobilities*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Holland, J., Thomson, R. and Henderson, S. (2006) *Qualitative Longitudinal Research: A Discussion Paper*. Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper No. 21, 1-60.
- Holloway, S.L. (1998) Local Childcare Cultures: Moral Geographies of Mothering and the Social Organisation of Pre-School Education. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 5: (1), 29-53.
- Holloway, S.L. and Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2017) New Economy, Neoliberal State and Professionalised Parenting: Mothers' Labour Market Engagement and State Support for Social Reproduction in Class-Differentiated Britain. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 41: (4), 376-388.
- Holloway, S.L. and Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2014) "Any Advice is Welcome Isn't it?": Neoliberal Parenting Education, Local Mothering Cultures, and Social Class. *Environment and Planning A*. 46, 94-111.

- Holloway, S.L., Pimlott-Wilson, H. and Whewall, S. (2024) Geographies of Supplementary Education: Private Tuition, Classed and Racialised Parenting Cultures and the Neoliberal Educational Playing Field. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. DOI: [10.1111/tran.12666](https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12666)
- Holmes, M. (2015) Men's Emotions: Heteromascularity, Emotional Reflexivity, and Intimate Relationships. *Men and Masculinities*. 18: (2), 176-192.
- Holt, L. (2013) Exploring the Emergence of the Subject in Power: Infant Geographies. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 31, 645-663.
- Holt, L. (2017) Food, Feeding and the Material Everyday Geographies of Infants: Possibilities and Potentials. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 18: (4), 487-504.
- Holt, L. and Philo, C. (2022) Tiny Human Geographies: Babies and Toddlers as Non-Representational and Barely Human Life? *Children's Geographies*. DOI: [10.1080/14733285.2022.2130684](https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2022.2130684)
- Holtan, A., Standbu, A and Eriksen, S.H. (2014) When Emotions Count in Construction of Interview Data. *Nordic Social Work Research*. 4: (2), 99 – 112.
- Hopkins, P. and Pain, R. (2007) Geographies of Age: Thinking Relationally. *Area*. 39: (3), 287-294.
- Horton, J. and Kraftl, P. (2006) Not Just Growing Up, But Going On: Materials, Spacing, Bodies, Situations. *Children's Geographies*. 4: (3), 259-276.
- Horton, J. and Kraftl, P. (2012) Clearing Out a Cupboard: Memory, Materiality and Transitions. In: Jones, O. and Garde-Hansen, J. (Eds.) *Geography and Memory: Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 25-44.
- Howlett, M. (2021) Looking at the 'Field' through a Zoom Lens: Methodological Reflections on Conducting Online Research During a Global Pandemic. *Qualitative Research*. DOI: [10.1177/1468794120985691](https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120985691)
- Hubbard, P. (2005) The Geographies of 'Going Out': Emotion and Embodiment in the Evening Economy. In Davidson, J., Bondi, L. and Smith, M. (Eds.). *Emotional Geographies*. Oxon, Routledge. Pp. 117-134.
- Hughes, K. and Tarrant, A. (2023) Men, Families, and Poverty: Tracing the Intergenerational Trajectories of Place-Based Hardship. Cham, Springer International Publishing.
- Hughes, S.M. (2021) "Wait for a Permanent Contract": The Temporal Politics of (In)Fertility as an Early Career Researcher. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. DOI: [10.1177/2399654421994852](https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654421994852)

- Institute for Government Analysis (2021) *Timeline of UK Coronavirus Lockdowns, March 2020 to March 2021*. Available at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/timeline-lockdown-web.pdf> [Accessed: 08/11/2023]
- Jamieson, L. (1998) *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies*. Cambridge, UK Polity Press.
- Jessee, V. and Adamsons, K. (2018) Father Involvement and Father-Child Relationship Quality: An Intergenerational Perspective. *Parenting*. 18: (1), 28-44.
- Johnsen, H., Stenback, P., Halldén, B-M., Crang Svalenius, E., Persson, E.K. (2017) Nordic Fathers' Willingness to Participate During Pregnancy. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*. 35: (3), 223-235.
- Jupp, E. and Gallagher, A. (2013) New Geographies of Parenting, Policy and Place. *Children's Geographies*. 11: (2), 155-159.
- Jupp, E., Pykett, J. and Smith, F.M. (2017) *Emotional States: Sites and Spaces of Affective Governance* (Eds.). Oxon, Routledge.
- Jupp, E. (2012) Parenting Policy and the Geographies of Friendship: Encounters in an English Sure Start Children's Centre. In: Kraftl, P., Horton, J. and Tucker, F. (Eds.). *Critical Geographies of Childhood and Youth: Contemporary Policy and Practice*. Bristol, Policy Press. Pp. 215-229.
- Jupp, E. (2017) Troubling Feelings in Family Policy and Interventions. In: Jupp, E., Pykett, J. and Smith, F.M. (Eds.). *Emotional States Sites and Spaces of Affective Governance*. Oxon, Routledge. Pp. 144-158.
- Katz, C. (1992) All the World is Staged: Intellectuals and the Projects of Ethnography. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 10, 495-510.
- Katz, C. (1994) Playing the Field: Questions of Fieldwork in Geography. *The Professional Geographer*. 46: (1), 67-72.
- Kaufman, G. (2018) Barriers to Equality: Why British Fathers Do Not Use Parental Leave. *Community, Work and Family*. 21: (3), 310-325.
- Kaufman, E.C. (2021) Staying with the Trouble of Collegiality, Professionalism and Care: Fertilities in Care. *Environment and Planning C*. 39: (8), 1737-1754.
- Keely, A., Greenfield, M. and Darwin, Z. (2023) "We Should be Working Together and it Felt Like They Disrupted That": Pregnant Women and Partner's Experiences of Maternity Care in the First UK COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown. *International Journal of*

- Kerr, S-M., Gibson, C. and Klocker, N. (2018) Parenting and Neighbouring in the Consolidating City: The Emotional Geographies of Sound in Apartments. *Emotion, Space and Society.* 26, 1-8.
- Kindon, S. (2003) Participatory Video in Geographic Research: A Feminist Practice of Looking? *Area.* 35: (2), 142-153.
- King, L. (2016). Hiding in the Pub to Cutting the Cord? Men's Presence at Childbirth in Britain c.1940s-2000s. *Social History of Medicine.* 30: (2), 389-407.
- Kinkaid, E. (2020) Re-Encountering Lefebvre: Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Social Space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space.* 38: (1), 167 – 186.
- Kirby-Hawkins, E., Birkin, M. and Clarke, G. (2019) An Investigation into the Geography of Corporate E-Commerce Sales in the UK Grocery Market. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science.* 46: (6), 1148-1164.
- Kneale, J. (2021) Good, Homely, Troublesome or Improving? Historical Geographies of Drinking Places, c.1850-1950. *Geography Compass.* 15: (3), <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12557>
- Knoblauch, H., Tuma, R. and Schnettler, B. (2014) Video Analysis and Videography. In: Flick, U. (Ed). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis.* London, SAGE. Pp. 435-449.
- Knox, S. and Burkard, A.W. (2009) Qualitative Research Interviews. *Psychotherapy Research.* 19: (4), 566-575.
- Kobakhidze, M.N., Hui, J., Chui, J. and González, A. (2021) Research Disruptions, New Opportunities: Re-Imagining Qualitative Interview Study During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* DOI: [10.1177/16094069211051576](https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211051576)
- Koslowski, A. (2022) Parenting Leave, Workplace Characteristics, Male Health and the Pandemic: Currents in Policy-Related Fatherhood Research in Higher Income Countries. *Journal of Family Research.* DOI:[10.20377/jfr-820](https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-820)
- Kosut, M. and Moore, L.J. (2010) Introduction: Not Just the Reflexive Reflex Flesh and Bone in the Social Sciences. In: Moore, L.J. and Kosut, M. (Eds.). *The Body Reader: Essential Social and Cultural Readings.* London, New York University Press. Pp. 1 – 26.

- Kraftl, P. (2008) Young People, Hope, and Childhood-Hope. *Space and Culture*. 11: (2), 81-92.
- Kraftl, P. and Horton, J. (2008) Spaces of Every-Night Life: For Geographies of Sleep, Sleeping and Sleepiness. *Progress in Human Geography*. 32: (4), 509-524.
- Kushner, K.E., Sopcak, N., Brietkreuz, R., Pitre, N., Williamson, D.L., Rempel, G., Stewart, M. and Letourneau, N. (2017) On Shifting Ground: First-Time Parents' Ideal World of Paid Work and Family Time. *Community, Work and Family*. 20: (2), 119-141.
- La Jevic, L. and Springgay, S. (2008) A/r/tography as an Ethics of Embodiment: Visual Journals in Preservice Education. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 14: (1), 67 – 89.
- Lane, R. (2014) Healthy Discretion? Breastfeeding and the Mutual Maintenance of Motherhood in Public Space. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 21: (2), 195-210.
- Laqueur, T.W. (1992) The Facts of Fatherhood. In: Thorne, B. and Yalom, M. (Eds.). *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*. Boston, Northeastern University Press. Pp. 155-175.
- Larkin, M., Watts, S. and Clifton, E. (2006) Giving Voice and Making Sense of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 3: (2), 102-120.
- LaRossa, R. (1992) Fatherhood and Social Change. In: Kimmel, M. and Messner, M. (Eds.). *Men's Lives*. New York, Macmillan. Pp. 521-535.
- Latham, A. (2010) Diaries as a Research Method. In Clifford, N., French, S. and Valentine, G. (Eds.) *Key Methods in Geography*. 2nd Edition. London, Sage. Pp. 189-201.
- Lefebvre, H. (1958) *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume I: Introduction*. Paris, L'Arche, Editeur.
- Lefebvre, H. (1961) *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*. Paris, L'Arche, Editeur.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Leinaweaver, J., Marre, D., and Frekko, S.E. (2017) 'Homework' and Transnational Adoption Screening in Spain: the Co-Production of Home and Family. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 23, 562-579.
- Leinaweaver, J. (2015) Geographies of Generation: Age Restrictions in International Adoption. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 16: (5), 508-521.
- Lewis, S. (2018) Cyborg Uterine Geography: Complicating Care and Social Reproduction *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 8: (3), 300-316.
- Lilius, J. (2016) Domesticfication of Urban Space? Mothering and Fathering While on Family Life in the Inner City of Helsinki. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 23: (12), 1763-1773.

- Lista, G. and Bresesti, I. (2020). Fatherhood During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Unexpected Turnaround. *Early Human Development*, 144, 105048.
- Liu, C. (2017) Food Practices, Gendered Intimacy and Family Life in Contemporary Guangzhou. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 24: (1), 97-107.
- Locke, A. (2017) Regendering Care or Undoing Gender Binaries of Parenting in Contemporary UK Society? *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 7: (1), 88-91.
- Longhurst, R. (2001) *Bodies: Exploring Fluid Boundaries*. London, Routledge.
- Longhurst, R. (2008) *Maternities Gender, Bodies and Space*. Oxon, Routledge.
- Longhurst, R. (2010) Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups. In: Clifford, N., French, S. and Valentine, G. (Eds.) *Key Methods in Geography*. 2nd Edition. London, Sage. Pp. 103 – 115.
- Longhurst, R. (2017) Reflecting on Regendering Care at Different Scales: Bodies, Home, Community and Nation. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 7: (1), 79-82.
- Longhurst, R. (2018) Thinking Geographically with Wombs. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 8: (3), 320-323.
- Longworth, H.L. and Kingdon, C.K. (2011) Fathers in the Birth Room: What are they Expecting and Experiencing? A Phenomenological Study. *Midwifery*. 27, 588-594.
- Lupton, D. (1998) *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration*. London, Sage.
- Lupton, D. (2013) Infant Embodiment and Interembodiment: A Review of Sociocultural Perspectives. *Childhood*. 20: (1), 37-50.
- Luzia, K. (2010) Travelling in Your Backyard: The Unfamiliar Places of Parenting. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 11: (4) 359-375.
- Luzia, K. (2011) Growing Home. *Home Cultures*. 8: (3), 297-316.
- Luzia, K. (2013) ‘Beautiful but Tough Terrain’: The Uneasy Geographies of Same-Sex Parenting. *Children’s Geographies*. 11: (2), 243-255.
- Macht, A.G. (2017) *Between Stoicism and Intimacy: The Social Construction of Paternal Love*. PhD Thesis. University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.
- Macht, A.G. (2020a) *Fatherhood and Love: The Social Construction of Masculine Emotions*. Oxford, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Macht, A.G. (2020b) Resisting the Commodification of Intimate Life? Paternal Love, Emotional Bordering and Narratives of Ambivalent Family Consumerism from Scottish and Romanian Fathers. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. 9: (2), 303-319.
- Maclaren, K. (2014) Intimacy and Embodiment: An Introduction. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 13, 55-64.

- Madge, C. and O'Connor, H. (2005) Mothers in the Making? Exploring Liminality in Cyber/Space. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30, 83-97.
- Mahalik, J.R., Di Bianca, M. and Harris, M.P. (2022) Men's Attitudes Towards Mask-Wearing during COVID-19: Understanding the Complexities of Mask-Ulinity. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 27: (5), 1187-1204.
- Mann, R. Tarrant, A and Leeson, G.W. (2016) Grandfatherhood: Shifting Masculinities in Later Life. *Sociology*. 50: (3), 594-610.
- Mansfield, B. (2012) 'Gendered Biopolitics of Public Health: Regulation and Discipline in Seafood Consumption Advisories.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 30, 588–602.
- Marsiglio, W. and Roy, K. (2012) *Nurturing Dads: Social Initiatives for Contemporary Fatherhood*. New York, Russell Sage Foundation.
- Marston, S.A., Jones, J.P. and Woodward, K. (2005) Human Geography without Scale. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30: (4), 416 – 432.
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Massey, D. (2005) *For Space*. London, Sage.
- Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Massumi, B. (2007) Potential Politics and the Primacy of Preemption. *Theory and Event*. 10: (2), 1 – 11.
- Matthews, B. and Ross, L. (2010) *Research Methods A Practical Guide for the Social Sciences*. Harlow, Pearson.
- Mauss, M. (1992) *The Gift*. London, Routledge.
- Mayr, P. and Weller, K. (2017) Think Before you Collect: Setting Up a Data Collection Approach for Social Media Studies. In: Sloan, L. and Quan-Haase, A. (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*. London, Sage. Pp. 107-124.
- MacAllister, L. (2016) Feeling, Caring, Measuring, Knowing: the Relational Co-Construction of Parenting Knowledge. *Children's Geographies*. 14: (5), 590-602.
- McAllister, T.G., Neapi, S., Dombomski, K., Halcrow, S.E. and Painting, C.J. (2021) Parity During Parenthood: Comparing Paid Parental Leave Policies in Aotearoa/New Zealand's Universities. *Women's Studies Journal*. 35: (1), 4-20.
- McCormack, D.P. (2008) Engineering Affective Atmospheres on the Moving Geographies of the 1987 Andree Expedition. *Cultural Geographies*. 15, 413-430.

- McDowell, L. (1997) Women/Gender/Feminisms: Doing Feminist Geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. 21: (3), 381-400.
- McDowell, L. (1999) *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Cambridge, Policy Press.
- McDowell, L. (2004) Masculinity, Identity and Labour Market Change: Some Reflections on the Implications of Thinking Relationally about Difference and the Politics of Inclusion. *Geografiska Annaler Series B Human Geography*. 86: (1), 45-56.
- McDowell, L. (2007) Spaces of the Home: Absence, Presence, New Connections and New Anxieties. *Home Cultures*. 4: (2), 129-146.
- McHugh, M.C. (2014) Feminist Qualitative Research: Towards Transformation of Science and Society. In: Leavy, P. (Ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Pp. 137-164.
- McKay, L. and Doucet, A. (2010) 'Without Taking Away Her Leave': A Canadian Case Study of Couples' Decisions on Fathers' Use of Paid Parental Leave. *Fathering*. 8: (3), 300-320.
- McKenzie-Norton, E. (2010) *The Emotional Lives of Men: The Complexities of Expressing Emotions*. PhD Thesis. University of Waikato.
- McNiven, A. (2016) Geographies of Dying and Death in Relation to Pregnancy Losses: Ultrasonography Experiences. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 17: (2), 233-246.
- McQueen, F. (2017). Male Emotionality: 'Boys Don't Cry' Versus 'It's Good to Talk'. *NORMA*, 12: (3-4) 205-219.
- McQueen, F. (2022) The New Feeling Rules of Emotion Work in Heterosexual Couple Relationships. *Emotions and Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1332/263169021X16541387415753>
- Meah, A. and Jackson, P. (2016) The Complex Landscape of Contemporary Fathering in the UK. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 17: (4), 491-510.
- Meah, A. (2017) Fathers, Food Practices and Circuits of Intimacy in Families in Northern England. *Gender, Place and Culture*. DOI: [10.1080/0966369X.2017.1372387](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1372387)
- Menzel, A. (2018) *Loving Fathers. Relationships, Care and Support: Exploring Love in the Everyday Geographies of Fathering*. MRes Thesis. University of Birmingham.
- Menzel, A (2022) The Coronavirus Pandemic: Exploring Expectant Fathers' Experiences. *Journal for Cultural Research*. 26: (1), 83-101.

- Menzel, A. (2024) 'The Only Thing Missing Now is Her Being on the Outside': Bodily Borders/Boundaries within Father-Foetal Bonding Interactions. For *Gender, Place and Culture*. DOI: [10.1080/0966369X.2024.2358423](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2024.2358423)
- Menzel, A. (under review) When and How Long? Anxiety and Uncertainty in Expectant Fathers' Negotiation of Paternity Leave from Work. For *Social and Cultural Geography*.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) *Phenomenology of Perception*. London, Routledge.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: IL, Northwestern University.
- Messerschmidt, J.W. (2018) *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation and Amplification*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Mikhailova, A. (2020, October 31) Victory for the War on Lone Births: Pregnant Women Will Be Given Priority for 15-Minute Covid Tests, Says PM. *Daily Mail*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8901499/Pregnant-women-given-priority-15-minute-Covid-tests-says-PM.html>
- Miller, T. (2005) *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, T. (2010) *Making Sense of Fatherhood: Gender, Caring and Work*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Milligan, C. (2014) Geographies of Care and Care-Giving. In: Cockerham, W.C., Dingwall, R. and Quah, S.R. (Eds.). *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Health, Illness, Behaviour and Society*. Oxford, Wiley Blackwell. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118410868.wbehibs053> [Accessed: 27/06/2018]
- Milligan, C. and Wiles, J. (2010) Landscapes of Care. *Progress in Human Geography*. 34: (6), 736-754.
- Mohr, S. and Almeling, R. (2020). Men, Masculinities and Reproduction – Conceptual Reflections and Empirical Explorations. *NORMA*, 15: (3-4), 163-171.
- Molesworth, M. and Denegri-Knott, J. (2013) Digital Virtual Consumption as Transformative Space. In: Belk, R.W. and Llamas, R. (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Digital Consumption*. Abingdon, Routledge. Pp. 223-234.
- Morgan, D. (1996) *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Cambridge, UK Polity Press.
- Morrison, C.A. (2012a) Heterosexuality and Home: Intimacies of Space and Spaces of Touch. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 5, 10-18.

- Morrison, C.A. (2012b) Solicited Diaries and the Everyday Geographies of Heterosexual Love and Home: Reflections on Methodological Process and Practice. *Area*. 44: (1), 68-75.
- Morrison, C.A., Johnston, L. and Longhurst, R. (2013) Critical Geographies of Love as Spatial, Relational and Political. *Progress in Human Geography*. 37: (4), 505-521.
- Muir, S. and Mason, J. (2012) Capturing Christmas: The Sensory Potential of Data from Participant Produced Video. *Sociological Research Online*. 17: 1-5.
- Neale, B., Henwood, K. and Holland, J. (2012) Researching Lives through Time: An Introduction to the Timescapes Approach. *Qualitative Research*. 12: (1), 4-15.
- Neale, B. (2021) *The Craft of Qualitative Longitudinal Research*. London, Sage.
- NHS (2023) 12-Week Scan. Available at: <<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/your-pregnancy-care/12-week-scan/>> [Accessed: 04/11/2023]
- O'Brien, M. and Twamley, K. (2017) Fathering Taking Leave Alone in the UK – A Gift Exchange Between Mother and Father? In: O'Brien, M. and Wall, K. (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality*. Springer, Open. Pp. 163-181.
- Obrador-Pons, P. (2007) A Haptic Geography of the Beach: Naked Bodies, Vision and Touch. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 8: (1), 123-141.
- Olesen, B.B. (2010) Ethnic Objects in Domestic Interiors: Space, Atmosphere and the Making of Home. *Home Cultures*. 7: (1), 25-41.
- Oliffe, J.L., Kelly, M.T., Gonzalez Montaner, G., and Yo Ko, W.F. (2021) Zoom Interviews: Benefits and Concessions. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. DOI: [10.1177/16094069211053522](https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211053522)
- Orrmalm, A. (2020) Culture by Babies: Imagining Everyday Material Culture through Babies' Engagements with Socks. *Childhood*. 27: (1), 93, 105.
- Orrmalm, A. (2021) The Flow of Things - Exploring Babies' Everyday Space-Making. *Children's Geographies*. 19: (6), 677-688.
- Owen, J. (2022) 'It Became an Anchor for Stuff I Really Want to Keep': The Stabilising Weight of Self-Storage When Moving Home and Away. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 23: (7), 990-1006.
- Owen, J. and Boyer, K. (2022) Holding on to Childhood Things: Storage, Emotion, and Curation of Children's Material Biographies. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 23: (2), 192-209.
- Painter, J. (2000) Pierre Bourdieu. In: Crang, M. and Thrift, N. (Eds.). *Thinking Space*. London, Routledge. Pp. 239 – 259.

- Parish, J. and Montsion, J.M. (2018) Geographies of Emotional and Care Labour. *Palgrave Communications* 4: (43), 1-4. DOI: [10.1057/s41599-018-0102-z](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0102-z)
- Parker, G. and Pausé (2019) Productive but not Constructive: The Work of Shame in the Affective Governance of Fat Pregnancy. *Feminism and Psychology*. 29: (2), 250-268.
- Parr, H. (2014) Emotional Geographies. In: Cloke, P. Crang, P. and Goodwin, M. (eds.). *Introducing Human Geographies*. Third Edition. London, Routledge. Pp. 746-759.
- Pasternak, G. (2013) “The Brownies in Palestina”: Politicising Geographies in Family Photographs. *Photography and Culture*. 6: (1), 41-63.
- Paterson, M. (2009) Haptic Geographies: Ethnography, Haptic Knowledges and Sensuous Dispositions. *Progress in Human Geography*. 33: (6), 766-788.
- Pedersen, S. and Lupton, D. (2018) ‘What Are You Feeling Right Now?’ Communities of Maternal Feeling on Mumsnet. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 26, 57-63.
- Peña-Vinces, J., Solakis, K. and Guillen, J. (2020) Environmental Knowledge, the Collaborative Economy and Responsible Consumption in the Context of Second-Hand Perinatal and Infant Clothes in Spain. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*. 159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.104840>
- Perrier, M-J. and Kirkby, J. (2013) Taming the ‘Dragon’: Using Voice Recognition Software for Transcription in Disability Research Within Sport and Exercise Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. 5: (1), 103 – 108.
- Perrotta, M. and Hamper, J. (2021) The Crafting of Hope: Contextualising Add-Ons in the Treatment Trajectories of IVF Patients. *Social Science and Medicine*. 287, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114317>
- Petts, R.J., Carlson, D.L. and Knoester, C. (2019) If I [Take] Leave, Will you Stay? Paternity Leave and Relationship Stability. *Journal of Social Policy*. DOI: [10.1017/S0047279419000928](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279419000928)
- Petts, R.J., Knoester, C. and Waldfogel, J. (2020) Fathers’ Paternity Leave-Taking and Children’s Perceptions of Father-Child Relationships in the United States. *Sex Roles*. 82, 173-188.
- Philip, G. (2013) ‘Extending the Analytical Lens’: A Consideration of the Concepts of ‘Care’ and ‘Intimacy’ in Relation to Fathering After Separation or Divorce. *Sociological Research Online*. 18: (1), 15 Available at: <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/18/1/15.html> [Accessed: 14/04/2018]

- Phoenix, A. and Brannen, J. (2014) Researching Family Practices in Everyday Life: Methodological Reflections from Two Studies. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. 17: (1), 11-26.
- Pile, S. (2010) Emotion and Affect in Recent Human Geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 35, 5-20.
- Ployhart, R.E. and Vandenberg, R.J. (2010) Longitudinal Research: The Theory, Design and Analysis of Change *Journal of Management*. 36: (1), 94-120.
- Premberg, Å, Carlsson, G., Hellström, A-L and Berg, M. (2011) First-time Fathers' Experiences of Childbirth- A Phenomenological Study. *Midwifery*. 27, 848-853.
- Prothero, A. (2002) Consuming Motherhood: an Introspective Journey on Consuming to Be a Good Mother. *Gender and Consumer Behaviour*. 6, 211-226.
- Pykett, J., Osborne, T. and Resch, B. (2020) From Urban Stress to Neurourbanism: How Should We Research City Wellbeing? *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*. 110: (6), 1936-1951.
- Rahman, S.A., Tuckerman, L., Vorley, T., Gherhes, C. (2021) Resilient Research in the Field: Insights and Lessons from Adapting Qualitative Research Projects During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 20, 1-16 DOI: [10.1177/16094069211016106](https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211016106)
- Ranson, G. (2014). *Fathering, Masculinity and the Embodiment of Care*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rautio, P. (2013) Children Who Carry Stones in Their Pockets: On Autotelic Material Practices in Everyday Life. *Children's Geographies*. 11: (4), 394-408.
- Reed, K., and Towers, L. (2021) Almost Confessional: Managing Emotions When Research Breaks Your Heart. *Sociological Research Online*. 28: (1), 261-278.
- Reuschke, D. and Felstead, A. (2020) Changing Workplace Geographies in the COVID-19 Crisis. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 10: (2), 208-212.
- Rose, G. (1993) *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Rose, G. (1997) Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivity and Other Tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*. 21, 305-320.
- Roulston, K. and Choi, M. (2018) Qualitative Interviews. In: Flick, U. (Ed). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. London, Sage. Pp.233 – 249.
- Roy, G. (2014) 'Taking Emotions Seriously': Feeling Female and Becoming-Surfer through UK Surf Space. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 12, 41-48.

- Ruddick, S. (1992) Thinking About Fathers' In Thorne, B. and Yalom, M. (Eds.). *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*. Boston, Northeastern University Press. Pp.176-190.
- Ruddick, S. (1995) *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Ruspini, E. (2000) Longitudinal Research in the Social Science. *Social Research Update*. 28, 20 1-8.
- Saillard, E.K., (2011) Systematic Versus Interpretive Analysis with Two CAQDAS Packages: NVivo and MAXQDA. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 12: (1), Article 34.
- Saldana, J. (2011) *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Salmons, J. (2017) Using Social Media in Data Collection: Designing Studies with the Qualitative E-Research Framework. In: Sloan, L. and Quan-Haase, A. (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*. London, Sage. Pp. 177-196
- Sandu, A. (2013) Transnational Homemaking Practices: Identity, Belonging and Informal Learning. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*. 21: (4), 496-512.
- Schoppe-Sullivan, S.J. and Fagan, J. (2020) The Evolution of Fathering Research in the 21st Century: Persistent Challenges, New Directions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 82, 175-197.
- Schurr, C. (2018) The Baby Business Booms: Economic Geographies of Assisted Reproduction. *Geography Compass*. DOI: [10.1111/gec3.12395](https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12395).
- Schurr, C. and Miltz, E. (2018) The Affective Economy of Transnational Surrogacy. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*. 50: (8), 1626-1645.
- Self, B. (2021) Conducting Interviews During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond. *Forum for Qualitative Social Research*. 22: (3), [http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-22.3.374](https://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-22.3.374)
- Silverman, D. (2020) Collecting Qualitative Data During a Pandemic. *Communication and Medicine*. 17: (1), 76-84.
- Simms, E.M. (2009) Eating One's Mother: Female Embodiment in a Toxic World. *Environmental Ethics*. 31: (3), 263-277.
- Simonsen, K. (2007) Practice, Spatiality and Embodied Emotions: An Outline of a Geography of Practice. *Human Affairs*. 17, 168 – 181.
- Simonsen, K. (2012) In Quest of a New Humanism: Embodiment, Experience and Phenomenology as Critical Geography. *Progress in Human Geography*. 37: (1), 10-26.
- Sin, C.H. (2003) Interviewing in 'Place': The Socio-Spatial Construction of Interview Data. *Area*. 35: (3), 305-312.

- Smith, G.D. and Winchester, H.P.M. (1998) Negotiating Space: Alternative Masculinities at the Work/Home Boundary. *The Australian Geographer*. 29: (3), 327-339.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., and Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London, Sage.
- Soaita, A.M. and McKee, K. (2021) Researching Home's Tangible and Intangible Materialities by Photo-Elicitation. *Housing, Theory and Society*. 38: (3), 279-299.
- Soilevuo-Grønnerød, J. (2004) On the Meanings and Uses of Laughter in Research Interviews: Relationships Between Interviewed Men and a Woman Interviewer. *Young*. 12: (1), 31-49.
- Soja, E.W. (1980) The Socio-Spatial Dialectic. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 70: (2), 207-225.
- Sparkes, A.C. and Smith, B. (2012) Embodied Research Methodologies and Seeking the Senses in Sport and Physical Culture: A Fleshing Out of Problems and Possibilities. In: Atkinson, M. (Ed.). *Qualitative Research on Sport and Physical Culture*. Bingley, Emerald Publishing. Pp. 167 – 190.
- Speranza, D., Citro, D., Padula, F., Motyl, B., Marcolin, F., Cali, M. and Martorelli, M. (2017) Additive Manufacturing Techniques for the Reconstruction of 3D Fetal Faces. *Applied Bionics and Biomechanics*. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/9701762>
- Staeheli, L.A. and Mitchell, D. (2005) The Complex Politics of Relevance in Geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 95, 357-372.
- Straughan, E., Bissell, D., and Gorman-Murray, A. (2020) The Politics of Stuckness: Waiting Lives in Mobile Worlds. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. 38: (4), 636-655 <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544199001>
- Sundström, M., Hjelm-Lidholm, S. and Radon, A. (2019) Clicking the Boredom Away – Exploring Impulse Fashion Buying Behaviour Online. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. 47, 150-156.
- Tarrant, A. (2013) Grandfathering as Spatio-Temporal Practice: Conceptualising Performances of Ageing Masculinities in Contemporary Familial Carescapes. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 14: (2), 192-210.
- Tarrant, A. (2014a) Domestic Ageing Masculinities and Grandfathering. In: Gorman-Murray, A. and Hopkins, P. (Eds.) *Masculinities and Place*. Surrey, Ashgate. Pp. 241-254.
- Tarrant, A. (2014b) Negotiating Multiple Positionalities in the Interview Setting: Researching Across Gender and Generational Boundaries. *The Professional Geographer*. 66: (3), 493-500.

- Tarrant, A. (2016) The Spatial and Gendered Politics of Displaying Family: Exploring Material Cultures in Grandfathers' Homes. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 23: (7), 969-982.
- Tarrant, A. (2021) *Fathering and Poverty: Uncovering Men's Participation in Low-Income Family Life*. Bristol, Bristol Policy Press.
- Tarrant, A and Hall, S.M. (2020) Everyday Geographies of Family: Feminist Approaches and Interdisciplinary Conversations. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 27: (5), 613-623.
- Tarrant, A., Way, L., Ladlow, L. (2021) 'Oh Sorry, I've Muted You!': Issues of Connection and Connectivity in Qualitative (Longitudinal) Research with Young Fathers and Family Support Professionals. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. DOI:[10.1080/13645579.2021.1986313](https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2021.1986313)
- The Fatherhood Institute (2024) Shifting Deckchairs on the Titanic. Available at: <https://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/post/shifting-deckchairs-on-the-titanic> [Accessed: 25/02/2024]
- Thien, D. (2005) After or Beyond Feeling? A Consideration of Affect and Emotion in Geography. *Area*. 37: (4), 450-454.
- Thien, D. (2011) Emotional Life. In: Del Casino, V., Thomas, M.E., Cloke, P. and Panelli, R. (Eds.). *A Companion to Social Geography*. Chichester, Blackwell. Pp. 309-325.
- Thomas, G. (2017) *How To Do Your Research Project A Guide for Students*. 3rd Edition. London, Sage.
- Thomsen, T.U., and Sørensen, E.B. (2006) The First Four-Wheeled Status Symbol: Pram Consumption as a Vehicle for the Construction of Motherhood Identity. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 22: (9-10), 907-927.
- Thrift, N. (2004) Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect. *Geografiska Annaler B*. 86: 1 57-78.
- Thrift, N. (2009) Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Geography. In: Clifford, N.J., Holloway, S.L., Rice, S.P. and Valentine, G. (Eds.). *Key Concepts in Geography*. 2nd Edition. London, Sage. Pp. 85 – 96.
- Todd, J.D. (2021) Experiencing and Embodying Anxiety in Spaces of Academia and Social Research. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 28: (4), 475-496.
- Tomori, C. and Boyer, K. (2019) Domestic Geographies of Parental and Infant (Co-)Becomings: Home-Space, Nighttime Breastfeeding, and Parent-Infant Sleep. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*. 109: (4), 1172 – 1187.

- Tomori, C. (2009) Breastfeeding as Men's "Kin Work" in the United States. *Phoebe*. 21: (2), 31-44.
- Tong, R. and Botts, T.F. (2017) *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. Fifth Edition. London, Routledge.
- Topping A. and Duncan, P. (2020, September 25) Only 23% of NHS Trusts Letting Birth Partners Stay for Whole of Labour. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/sep/25/only-23-of-nhs-trusts-letting-birth-partners-stay-for-whole-of-labour-covid>
- Twamley, K. and Schober, P. (2019) Shared Parental Leave: Exploring Variations in Attitudes, Eligibility, Knowledge and Take-Up Intentions of Expectant Mothers in London. *Journal of Social Policy*. 48: (2), 387-407.
- Twamley, K., Brunton, G., Sutcliffe, K., Hinds, K., and Thomas, J. (2013) Father's Involvement in the Impact on Family Mental Health: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study Analyses. *Community, Work and Family*. 16: (2), 212-224.
- Twamley, K. (2019) 'Cold Intimacies' in Parents' Negotiation of Work-Family Practices and Parental Leave? *The Sociological Review*. 67: (5), 1137-1153.
- UK Government and Parliament (2024) *Closed Petition: Give Fathers/Second Parents a Right to 6 Weeks' Paid Leave in Baby's First Year*. Available at: <<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/640814>> [Accessed: 25/02/2024]
- Valentine, G. (1996) "Oh Yes I Can." "Oh no you can't": Children and Parents' Understandings of Kids' Competence to Negotiate Public Space Safely. *Antipode*, 29: (1), 65-89.
- Valentine, G. (1997) 'My Son's a Bit Dizzy.', 'My Wife's a Bit Soft': Gender, Children and the Cultures of Parenting. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 4: (1), 37-62.
- Valentine, G. (2005) 'Tell Me About... Using Interviews as a Research Methodology.' In Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. (Eds.). *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*. Second Edition. Essex, Longman. Pp. 110-127.
- Valentine, G. (2008) The Ties that Bind: Towards Geographies of Intimacy. *Geography Compass*. 2: (6), 2097-2110.
- Valentine, G. (2013) *Social Geographies: Space and Society*. London, Routledge.
- Valentine, G. and Hughes, K. (2012) Shared Space, Distant Lives? Understanding Family and Intimacy at Home through the Lens of Internet Gambling. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 37, 242-255.

- van Hoven, B. and Hörschelmann, K. (2005). Introduction from Geographies of Men to Geographies of Women and Back Again?. In van Hoven, B. and Hörschelmann, K. (Eds.) *Spaces of Masculinities Critical Geographies*. London, Routledge. Pp. 1-16.
- Vasquez-Tokos, J. (2017) "If I Can Offer You Some Advice": Rapport and Data Collection in Interviews Between Adults of Different Ages. *Symbolic Interaction*. 40: (4), 463-482.
- Vincent, K.A. (2013) The Advantages of Repeat Interviews in a Study with Pregnant Schoolgirls and Schoolgirl Mothers: Piecing Together the Jigsaw. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*. 36: (4), 341-354.
- Waight, E. (2013) Eco Babies: Reducing a Parent's Ecological Footprint with Second-Hand Consumer Goods. *International Journal of Green Economies*. 7: (2), 197-211.
- Waight, E. (2014) Second-Hand Consumption Among Middle-Class Mothers in the UK: Thrift, Distinction and Risk. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. 3: (1), 159-162.
- Waight, E. (2015) Buying for Baby: How Middle-Class Mothers Negotiate Risk with Second-Hand Goods. In: Casey, E. and Taylor, Y. (Eds.) *Intimacies, Critical Consumption and Diverse Economies*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. Pp.197-215.
- Waight, E. (2017) 'Hand-me-down' Childrenswear and the Middle-class Economy of Nearly New Sales. In: Hall, S.M., and Ince, A. (Eds.) *Sharing Economies in Times of Crisis: Practices, Politics and Possibilities*. London, Routledge. Pp. 96-109.
- Waight, E. (2019) Mother, Consumer, Trader: Gendering the Commodification of Second-Hand Economies Since the Recession. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 19: (4), 532-550.
- Waight, E., and Boyer, K. (2018) The Role of the Non-Human in Relations of Care: Baby Things. *Cultural Geographies*. 25: (3), 459-472.
- Waite, G. and Harada, T. (2016) Parenting, Care and the Family Car. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 17: (8), 1079-1100.
- Waling, A. (2019) Rethinking Masculinity Studies: Feminism, Masculinity and Poststructural Accounts of Agency and Emotional Reflexivity. *Journal of Men's Studies*. 27: (1), 89-107.
- Walsh, T.B., Tolman, R.M., Singh, V., Davis, M.M. and Davis, R.N. (2017) Expectant Fathers' Presence at Prenatal Ultrasounds: An Opportunity for Engagement. *Social Work Research*. 41: (3), 181-185.
- Wasielewski, P.L. (2015) The Magic of Oaxaca: An Emotional Geography of Age, Gender and Nation. *Symbolic Interaction*. 38: (4), 557-574.
- Wetherell, M. (2012) *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*. London, Sage.

- Whittle, R. (2018) Baby on Board: the Impact of Sling Use on Experiences of Family Mobility with Babies and Young Children. *Mobilities*. DOI: [10.1080/17450101.2018.1533682](https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2018.1533682)
- Widarsson, M., Kerstis, B., Sundquist, K., Engström, G. and Sarkadi, A. (2012). Support Needs of Expectant Mothers and Fathers: A Qualitative Study. *The Journal of Perinatal Education*, 21: (1), 35-44.
- Widarsson, M., Engström, G., Tydén, T., Lundberg, P., Hammar, L.M. (2015) 'Paddling Upstream': Fathers' Involvement During Pregnancy as Described by Expectant Fathers and Mothers. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 24, 1059-1068.
- Williams, P., Hubbard, P., Clark, D. and Berkley, N. (2001) Consumption, Exclusion and Emotion: The Social Geographies of Shopping. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 2: (2), 203-220.
- Woodward, S. (2016) Object Interviews, Material Imaginings and 'Unsettling' Methods: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding Materials and Material Culture. *Qualitative Research*. 16: (4), 359-374.
- Woodward, S. (2021) Clutter in Domestic Spaces: Material Vibrancy, and Competing Moralities. *The Sociological Review*. 69: (6), 1214-1228.
- Wylie, J.W. (2006) Poststructuralist Theories, Critical Methods and Experimentation. In: Aitken, S. and Valentine, G. (Eds.) *Approaches to Human Geography*. London, Sage. Pp. 298-310.
- Wylie, J. (2009) Landscape, Absence and the Geographies of Love. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 34: 3 275-289.
- Yamashita, J., (2016) A Vision for Postmaternalism: Institutionalising Fathers' Engagement with Care. *Australian Feminist Studies*. 31: 90, 432-447.
- Younes, H., Noland, R.B. and Zhang, W. (2022) Browsing for Food: Will COVID-Induced Online Grocery Delivery Persist? *Regional Science Policy and Practice*. 14: (S1), 179-195.
- Young, M., Soza-Parra, J. and Circella, G. (2022) The Increase in Online Shopping During COVID-19: Who is Responsible, Will it Last and What Does it Mean for Cities? *Regional Science Policy and Practice*. 14: (S1), 162-178.

Appendices

Expectant Fathers 2021

PhD Research Project

Looking for dads-to-be (living in the UK) to **share their experiences** of becoming a father by taking part in a series of **interviews**.

(This just means having a chat about what's going on – at work, at home, online, in social/maternity care services – **from your perspective!**)

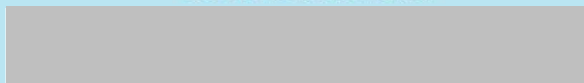


Interviews will be:

- Confidential
- Conducted remotely (online / via telephone)

Have your experiences heard !

Contact Alice:



Understanding Expectant Fathering

Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Introduction

I am Alice Menzel, a Doctoral Researcher from the School of Geography at the University of Birmingham. I am looking for participants to take part in some research for my PhD about their *experiences of being an expectant father*. This information sheet provides specific details about what participating in this project will mean for you. **Please take the time to read the following information carefully.** If there is anything you are unsure about, please feel free to ask me about it (contact details on overleaf).

What is this project about?

This research seeks to develop an understanding of *what it is like to be an expectant father*. It aims to gain insight into the individual *experiences* of expectant fathers, their *perceptions* of these experiences and the *implications* of these on their sense of being/becoming a 'father'. This includes the things expectant fathers *do* during pregnancy and into early parenthood, how they *feel* during this time, and *where* these things take place.

How will the research be conducted?

This project will primarily take the form of a **series** of in-depth **interviews**, each lasting **for approximately an hour**. These interviews should ideally take place *during* your pregnancy and for a time after the birth. This is to allow for detailed exploration of your experiences as they happen. These interviews will be arranged:

- During the **Second Trimester**
- During the **Third Trimester**
- As **soon after the birth** as possible
- A **few months after** the birth

At least one of these interviews may involve a brief creative exercise where you will be asked to describe an item which captures your experience as an expectant father. You **don't** have to do this – but it should be fun!

If you agree to participate, an initial interview will be arranged with you (at a date/time that is convenient for you). For everyone's safety, interviews will be conducted **remotely** – i.e. online or via telephone.

With your permission, it is preferable that these interviews be *audio-recorded* to allow me to create detailed transcripts. However, alternative arrangements can be made, if necessary.

To develop an even better understanding of your experiences, it may also be useful for you to provide further detail through some **optional additional activities** which have been designed for this research. These activities include taking me on a 'tour' of a place/event which is important to you as an expectant father and/or through you keeping a *diary* to document your experiences. All additional activities can be conducted **online** in a way that suits you, for example through the use of videos. This is an **additional stage** of the research for which you may 'opt in'. If you are interested in taking part in these activities, please let me know and more detail can be provided.

What are the possible disadvantages, or risks, of taking part?

There are no identified risks of participating in this project. However, it is acknowledged that the content of this research may be sensitive as it relates to your family situation. Please be assured that this research is *not* concerned with 'evaluating' your involvement or experience as an expectant father. Your participation in the project will be kept strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

Further, if you agree to participate in this research, to ensure that you are not misrepresented, and to remove any potentially identifying information, you will be given the opportunity to review all your interview transcripts and make any amendments you wish.

Who else might I need to tell?

Because there is more than one interview, it is *preferable* – though not essential – that your partner (if you have one) and the expecting mother be informed of the research to prevent any misunderstandings. If you agree to participate, you will be given a separate information sheet to pass along to them, though doing so will be at your discretion. This will not affect your right to confidentiality.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Through your participation, you will have an opportunity to **share your experiences** of being an expectant father with an impartial individual. In doing so, you will also help researchers develop a greater understanding of what it is *like to be* an expectant father in a variety of settings.

Your participation will also enable me to **complete my PhD**. It is hoped that this research may then be used in various settings **to inform more inclusive policies** for expectant fathers and their experiences. A summary of findings from this research may be made available to companies that are assisting in the recruitment of research participants, which may potentially be used to improve the experiences of future expectant parents. You will be informed if this includes your employer. Any feedback given will be *anonymous*.

How is the project being funded?

This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through the University of Birmingham. The ESRC is part of UK Research Initiative, a public body funded by the UK government (for more information, see <https://esrc.ukri.org/>).



This research is *not* being funded/commissioned by your employer in any way.

Will my data need to be archived?

As a condition of this funding, research data for this project will be deposited to the *UK Data Archive* in an *anonymised form*. This means that other researchers may be able to access and use the anonymised data in their own projects. I will only be depositing *anonymised interview transcripts* to the archive. If you would prefer not to have your data included in the archive, you may opt-out of this by letting me know. Please feel free to ask me for more information about data archiving for this project.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation in this research is *strictly voluntary*. You are under no obligation to take part. If you feel that you are being coerced into taking part, please let me know and this will be addressed.

If you decide to take part and later change your mind, this is not a problem. You will be entitled to withdraw from this project, without giving a reason, at any time up until the **1st October 2021**, after which I will begin writing my thesis. If you do decide to withdraw before this date, your contact details and data will be removed from the project.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during this project, you may contact either myself or – if necessary – my academic supervisors, Professor Peter Kraftl or Dr Jessica Pykett and your concerns will be dealt with expediently.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that you provide will be anonymised to prevent you from being identified at any stage of the research by anyone other than myself. All audio recordings, any images (or equivalent others, if necessary) and interview transcripts will be saved securely on password-protected devices and on the University's secure Data Store BEARShare. Only you, myself and my supervisors will have access to your data prior to its *full anonymisation* for writing, presentations and archiving. All data will be stored securely for no longer than is necessary in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The *only circumstance* in which I may have to break this confidentiality agreement is if information is disclosed which reveals that you, or another person, is at serious risk. In this event, I will discuss this with you, and I may be obliged to contact relevant parties empowered to act on this information.

Contact details of the researcher:

Alice Menzel – Doctoral Researcher

Email: [REDACTED]

Mobile : [REDACTED]

Academic Supervisors:

Prof. Peter Kraftl

Chair in Human Geography

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dr. Jessica Pykett

Senior Lecturer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix C – Interview Consent Form

Understanding Expectant Fathering



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Researcher

Alice Menzel

Doctoral Researcher – Email: [REDACTED] – Mobile: [REDACTED]

Please
Check Box (x)

I confirm that I have received and read the Information Sheet for this project.

☐

I confirm that I have discussed the project with the researcher and have had an opportunity to ask them any questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that my participation in this project is *completely voluntary* and that I am entitled to withdraw, without giving a reason, at any time up until **1st October 2021**. I understand that **after** this date it may not be possible to remove my data from the project.

☐

I agree to participate in this research in the form of **interviews**.

☐

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

☐

I agree to the use of **anonymised** quotes in the intended piece of writing and any presentations.

☐

I have received information about **data archiving** and agree to my *interview transcript(s)* being **anonymously** archived, which will allow other researchers to use this data in their research projects.

☐

Interview Consent Form

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Alice Menzel

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix D – Demographic Questionnaire

For multiple choice questions, please identify your answer by putting an x in the brackets provided:
i.e. (x).

1. Please state your age.

2. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual/Straight () Lesbian/Gay ()

Other (Please state) ()

3. Which of these best describes your current marital status?

Married () Unmarried, Living with partner ()

Single, Not Married () Separated ()

Divorced () Widowed ()

Other (Please state) () Prefer not to answer ()

4. Please state the race/ethnicity you most closely identify with (i.e. White British/Black Caribbean, etc.).

5. Please indicate any religious affiliation you have.

Christian () Muslim ()

Jewish () Hindu ()

Sikh () Buddhist ()

Other (Please state) () No Religion ()

6. Which of these best describes your highest level of education?

Graduate/Higher Degree (PhD/MSc) () Bachelor's Degree ()

College (A-Level/BTEC) () Secondary (GCSE/O-Level) ()

Other (Please state) () Prefer not to say ()

7. If you identify as having any disabilities, please briefly state.

8. Please indicate your preferred gender identity.

Male	()	Female	()
Transgender	()	Non-binary	()
Other (Please state)	()	Prefer not to say	()

9. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? If you are on Leave, please indicate **both** this and your typical status.

Employed full time	()	Employed part time	()
Unemployed (looking for work)	()	Unemployed (not looking for work)	()
Maternity/Paternity Leave	()	Student	()
Homemaker/Full-time Carer	()	Retired	()
Other (Please state)	()	Prefer not to say	()

10. Please give your current occupation/job title and, where possible, your employer.

11. Please indicate where in the UK you are based (i.e. Birmingham). If your place of residence differs from your place of work, please specify **both**.

12. Are you currently expecting you **first** child (biological/adopted)?

Yes	()	No	()
-----	-----	----	-----

a. If no, how many existing children do you have (biological/adopted) ?

b. How many of these currently live in your household?

c. Please give Child(ren)'s Age(s).

13. Please give the baby's approximate due date (if known):

Appendix E – Interview Guides

Interview Introduction

Cover the main interview formalities (signing of consent form; completion of demographic questionnaire; assurance of confidentiality).

Introduce self (PhD student from UoB), providing participants with a brief introduction and overview of the research. Outline the aim and structure of the interview, and how long it should last (approximately an hour).

1. Intention of this interview to gain insight into your individual experiences as an expectant father, especially interested in the *where* these take place.
2. Interview is designed to be flexible, encourage participants to raise themes they feel are important – I'm not an expectant father, they are the experts!
3. Stress that interview is confidential. I will not disclose any of their interview content to others; their name (or names of other specific people/places etc) will not be featured.
4. (Where appropriate) highlight that interview is being audio recorded – perhaps gaining secondary verbal consent – although I will be making written notes.
5. Explain to participants that participation is voluntary; they do not have to answer any question they do not want to. Reassure them that the interview can be paused, or terminated, at any time.
6. If, for any reason, they decide to withdraw from the project, they will have until 1st October 2021 - explain that after this date, I will begin writing my thesis, so it may not be possible to remove their data.
7. Identify overall focus and general structure of interview.
8. Give opportunity for any questions.

Image-Elicitation-Style Exercise – Guiding Instructions

To be read to participants in advance of first interview which will involve this (*likely* the initial interview, taking place during the second trimester). Instructions will also be sent (electronically) to participants.

For any *subsequent* interviews which will also involve a similar exercise, the researcher will again inform participants in advance to allow them to prepare the image beforehand, if they wish or to at least have time to prepare an idea to reduce pressure.

As part of this interview, I'd like to ask you to do a brief (creative) exercise. This is to make, or bring, an image which reflects your experiences as an expectant father so far. This might include, *for example*, your most prominent memory, a significant moment/place, or a visual representation of your feeling(s).

This image can be anything you want. For example, it may be a drawing/painting, or it could be photograph or another object. If you are not comfortable with drawing you could create a list of key words/phrases or a mindmap etc – really whatever you want. I'll then ask you to use this image/object to describe your experiences as an expectant father during the interview.

You can create this 'image' before the interview if you wish, and bring with it you, but I will allow for time for you to do a (quick) drawing during the interview. Highlight that image will not be assessed based on its 'artistic' quality – I'm certainly no artist! – but is an opportunity for participants to creative express how their feel.

You don't have to do this, but it should be fun!

Key Question/Probes:

- Please describe your image.
 - What does it represent?
 - What does it *mean* (to you)?
 - Why did you choose this?
 - (If links to a real experience), please talk me through this.

Second Trimester Interview

Purpose:

This interview will primarily explore participants' experiences of early pregnancy to date, including confirmation, announcement, the (first) ultrasound scan, their initial feelings about becoming a father and sense of anticipation. As the initial interview, it will also seek to develop important background insight into participants' lives and highlight any relevant circumstances/experiences which may influence their experiences/ anticipation as an (expectant) father, for example, any prior experience of caring for (young) children – not necessarily their own. It is also heavily recognised in the extant literature that experience of previous pregnancies/becoming a father, and perceptions of relationship with their own father figure play important roles in (expectant) fatherhood.

Example Interview Questions:

1. *(Introductory remarks, including filling out demographic questionnaire, etc. – see p.1).*
2. *(If using, Image-elicitation style exercise – see p.2).*
3. Please describe for me, in your own words, your pregnancy 'journey' so far. (You can use the image to help you).
4. What was it like, that moment you first found out (your partner) was expecting?
5. **Do you mind if I ask if you (or your partner) have tried for a baby before?** (if participant does not wish to discuss, do not probe further).
 - a. What impact did that have on how you felt/how you feel?
6. Who else have you told that you are expecting? Why them? How did they react?
7. Have you (been able to) attend any scans/medical appointments?
 - a. Please describe your experience of this.
 - b. What was this place *like*? How did you feel (there)? Probe around interactions with staff.
8. Has your (partner) experienced any symptoms related to the pregnancy?
 - a. Have *you* experienced any symptoms? How do these make you (physically) feel? What do you think they mean, if anything?
9. **Would it be okay if I asked about your relationship with your own father/own childhood parental relationships?** (If participant declines, do not ask probe questions).
 - a. How would you describe him as a father/ his role in the family?
 - b. In what ways, if at all, has this influenced your ideas of fathering/who you want to be as a father?
10. What is your strongest memory of the pregnancy, so far?
 - a. What other moments (perhaps more positive), stand out to you?
11. What interactions/moments have you had with the baby, so far [or your partner]?
 - a. What happened? Where did this take place? (why there?)
 - b. To what extent does the baby feel 'real'? When did this start? Do you have a 'name' for them?
12. Similarly, please describe an important interaction/conversation you've had with someone [friend, colleague, etc] about the pregnancy/becoming a father so far. Where was this? How did you feel in that place, (talking about being) as an expectant father?
13. Are there any activities, or places, which are (have become) important to you as an expectant father?
 - a. Similarly, other than those we've discussed, are there any places you've started *going* to since the start of the pregnancy?
 - b. Probe around places related to (physical/mental) health i.e. gym, parks etc). Link to anticipation of becoming a father.
14. In what ways, if at all, do people *acknowledge* that you are an expectant father?
 - a. How do you feel about this?
 - b. How this similar, or different, to what you expected would happen?
15. What conversations have you had about plans for parental leave?

- a. Probe about organisational role (identified in questionnaire) and the influence of this – i.e. responsibilities entailed, typical working hours [compared to partner], typical holiday allocation.
16. Overall, how do you *feel* about becoming a father?
17. Interview warm-down: We've talked a bit about emotions/feelings in this interview, do you mind if I ask how easy that is to talk about for you personally?
- a. Who would you feel most comfortable/confident talking to about your emotions?
 - b. Why (don't you) feel you could talk to them?
 - c. How important do you feel (talking about) emotions/feelings are for you as an expectant father? What do you think is the 'place' of emotions in expectant fathers' experiences?
 - d. Probe about social/cultural expectations (around masculinity) as necessary.
 - e. If you had to compare talking about your emotions to being in a room, how big would that room be (and how it would physically feel to be in it)? Is there a particular *kind* of room/place you imagine? [i.e. maze, cupboard, library etc.]
18. (*Wind down interview, offer opportunity to discuss anything which we haven't covered which is important to them. Thank participant for their time. Remind them they will be given copy of interview transcript which they can make any necessary changes to).*

Key Probes Across All Interviews:

Designed to draw attention to experiences of the body/emotions, as well as importance of spaces/places.

- How did you feel being there?
- How did that [place/experience] make you *feel*, (*physically*)?
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time/in that place?
- What was that like *emotionally* [to be there]?

Third Trimester Interview

Purpose:

This interview will capture experiences of (developing) father-foetal interactions, further scans and appointments; preparations made – and the work involved in – the anticipation of the baby's arrival (including the changing composition of home) and relationship changes with the expectant mother/relevant partner. It will also cover fathers' negotiations of, and plans for, leave from work, along with any (related) interactions with work colleagues pertaining to their transition to fatherhood, along with any support received, classes/workshops attended, and any (support) networks developed.

Example Interview Questions:

1. (*Go over main Introductory comments on consent, withdrawal, etc. – see p.1. Briefly recap (verbally) any key themes/topics covered in previous interview: last time we talked about a, b, c; today I'd like to talk to you about x, y, z...*).
2. How has the pregnancy progressed since last time?
 - a. Any changes to (partner's) body? How do you feel about this?
 - b. Have *you* experienced any changes to *your* body?
 - c. Please describe any important interactions you have had with the baby since last time/ bonding activities you have developed. Where do these happen?
 - d. Attendance of other scans/appointments, events with friends/family, etc.
3. Have you (and your partner) done anything to prepare for the baby's arrival, so far? Please describe this.
 - a. If not, anything you plan/*expect* to do? Why this?
 - b. Probe about particular spaces as necessary i.e. nursery, shopping for baby things, etc. How do you feel *in* these places, as an expectant father? Emotions you would associate with them?
 - c. Probe about gender roles: i.e. how do you share the work of preparing the nursery?
4. In what ways, if at all, do you feel that the pregnancy has affected your *relationship* with your partner (positive or negative)?
5. Please describe for me, in your own words, what being a father *means* (to you)?
 - a. Similarly, what do you think it means to be a 'good' father? Why is that?
 - b. As an (expectant) father, what do you perceive your 'role' to be?
6. What plans, if any have you made for parental leave? Please describe these for me.
 - a. How did people (friends, family, colleagues) react to this decision? Probe about other conversations with work colleagues, family/friends. How do *you* feel about your choice?
 - b. What options were *offered* to you (by your employer). How do you feel about the current parental leave scheme?
7. What plans, or *expectations*, do you have for the birth?
 - a. Please describe this. Where (do you expect/hope) it to be? How do you feel about it? Anything people have told you to take with you?
8. Have you (and your partner) (plans to) participate in any antenatal parenting courses?
 - a. Could you tell me about it? What motivated you to (not) attend this?
 - b. How helpful, or not, did you find this (as an expectant father)?
 - c. Did you meet anybody there?
9. An expectant father, who would you say has been your main source of support [emotionally, informatively, etc]?
 - a. Similarly, is there anywhere you feel *unable* to talk about your experiences as an expectant father?/If you were to talk about it here, how do you imagine people would react? Why?
 - b. Is there any support you feel *should* be available to expectant fathers in... workplace/healthcare? What support would you need to the parent you want to be?

Post-Birth Interview

Purpose:

This interview is designed to cover experiences of late pregnancy, labour and birth; the immediate feeling/sensation of 'becoming' a father; early bonding/care interactions with the infant and any (further) workshops/classes attended. It will be interested in fathers' experiences of leave from work (including any possible tensions/support surrounding this) and, where applicable, their experience of returning to work, along with feelings about attempting to (re)establish a (new) healthy 'work-family balance'. It will also explore early social interactions of expectant fathers in family/childcare spaces (cf. Aitken, 2000), uncovering changes to fathers' spatial routines during this time (cf. Luzia, 2010).

Example Interview Questions:

1. *(Go over main Introductory comments on consent, withdrawal, etc. – see p.1. Recap key themes covered in previous interview).*
2. Please tell me, in your own words, what is it like being the father to a new baby?
 - a. Have you decided on a name? What is the baby like? How would you describe their 'personality'/character?
3. Would you mind talking me through your experience of the labour/birth?
 - a. In what ways was it similar, or different to how you imagined?
 - b. Probe about interactions with midwives/medical staff [and partner]; whether friends/family were present.
 - c. What was it like bringing the baby home? Probe about healthcare visitor if appropriate.
4. (recap their described plans for parental leave), could you describe for me the leave you actually took?
 - a. What kinds of things have you been doing whilst on leave? Probe about places might have gone, interaction they've had there. How do (those places/things) make you feel?
 - b. Could you recall for me the first few days?
 - c. In what ways, if at all do people *acknowledge* you as a (new) father in these places?
 - d. What has it been like (emotionally) to be a new dad on leave? Or to *not* be on leave.
5. Any playgroups/baby classes are you aware of? [from healthcare worker, friends, other parents]. Do you (plan to) go to any of these?
6. Please tell me about (your plans for) returning to work.
 - a. How do you (think you will) feel being back at work? Do you feel differently about work, at all? In what way?
 - b. In what ways, if at all, do people at work *acknowledge* you as a *new* father?
7. How have you been able to bond with the baby? Why/not?
 - a. Please describe your main interactions with the baby? [or other people: the mother, friends/family, other parents/babies, etc]
 - b. What do you do, where do you go, how do you feel about these?
 - c. Important activities/places for you?
8. Could you describe a 'typical' day, since the birth?
9. Overall, how do you *feel* about becoming a father?

Follow-up Interview

Purpose:

This final interview provides a follow-up opportunity for participants to revisit perceptions, thoughts and experiences shared with the researcher in the preceding stages, reflect upon these, consolidating how their lives have actually changed during their transition to fatherhood, along with experiences of any further leave/returning to work, their relationship with the mother/relevant partner and the *success* of (re)establishing a healthy 'work-family balance' and home-life routine (see Miller, 2010).

Example Interview Questions:

1. *(Go over main Introductory comments on consent, withdrawal, etc. – see p.1. Recap key themes covered in previous interview).*
2. How have things progressed since last time?
 - a. Interactions/relationship with the baby/partner
 - b. Returning to work?
3. How would you describe yourself, as a father?
 - a. In what ways is your actual experience similar, or different, to how you imagined?
 - b. Why do you think this is? Where do you think these expectations came from, do you think? Probe about social/cultural/personal experiences as appropriate.
4. What has been the most surprising thing for you, as a father, since the birth?
5. What has been the biggest *challenge* for you, as a father, since the birth?
 - a. Probe about spaces – i.e. (partner) being at home.
6. Do you mind if I ask about your relationship is with (your partner)?
 - a. Any changes?
7. In what ways, if at all, do you think becoming a father has changed your life?
8. Similarly, in what ways, if at all, do feel that becoming a father has influenced who you are [at work/at home]
 - a. What impact do you imagine this will have on your commitment to work? [probe about career prospects where relevant].
 - b. Could you describe a 'typical' working day/week for you now?
 - c. How well do you feel your current role enables you to combine work and family?
9. What places/activities are (or have become) important to you, as a father/family?
 - a. Probe about home, leisure spaces etc.
 - b. Probe about places have *started* going since the birth, they've never been to before.
10. Tell me about something you look forward to about the future, as a father.
 - a. Probe about importance/anticipation about this.

Key Probes Across All Interviews:

Designed to draw attention to experiences of the body/emotions, as well as importance of spaces/places.

- How did you feel being there?
- How did that [place/experience] make you *feel*, (*physically*)?
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time?
- What was that like *emotionally* [to be there]?
- Is there a particular emotion/feeling you would use to describe that moment?

Appendix F – Summary Table of Participants

	Weeks Along when Contacted	Interviews Participated in	Job Sector and Pandemic Work Style	Initial Hopes for Leave	Leave Taken	Notes
Ollie (32 years old)	22 (Dec 2020)	Second Trimester (25 weeks) Third Trimester (36 weeks) Post-Birth (4-weeks post-birth) Follow-up (8-months post-birth)	Charity Sector Working-from-home	4 weeks (+ possible SPL later)	4 weeks	
Azri (31 years old)	33 (Jan 2021)	Second Trimester (34 weeks) Third Trimester (36 weeks)	Self-employed Copywriter Working-from-home	No strict plan discussed		
Frank (54 years old)	12 (Feb 2021)	Second Trimester (17 weeks)	Self-employed Physical therapist Working-from-home <i>where possible</i>	6 months		
Tom (31 years old)	17 (Mar 2021)	Second Trimester (17 weeks) Third Trimester (38 weeks) Post-Birth (14 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (9-months post-birth)	Engineering Analyst (Simulations Research) Working-from-home	SPL	5 weeks*	Started new job (after finishing PhD) *signed off on sick leave following appendicitis following birth of child
Logan (38 years old)	32 (May 2021)	Second Trimester (33 weeks) Third Trimester (35 weeks) Post-Birth (6 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (10-months post-birth)	E-Commerce Working-from-home (for over 3 years)	1 week	1 week leave + 1 week flexi	Experienced dad, expecting 3 rd child Partner had C-section
Denny (41 years old)	27 (June 2021)	Second Trimester (29 weeks) Post-Birth (7 weeks post-birth)	Events Industry Working-from-home <i>where possible</i>	4 weeks (+ 1 month SPL)	4 weeks	
Robbie (29 years old)	21 (June 2021)	Second Trimester (23 weeks) Post-Birth (3 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (6 months post-birth)	Law Enforcement Analyst Working-from-home	2-3 weeks	2 weeks + 3 days flexi	Started new job (for more security after post-doc)
Martin (37 years old)	23 (July 2021)	Second Trimester (25 weeks) Third Trimester (36 weeks) Post-Birth (4 weeks post-birth) Follow-up (5 months post-birth)	Law Enforcement Working-from-home <i>where possible</i>	2 weeks paternity (+ 3 months SPL later)	2 weeks	Started new role (with more home-based work)
John (42 years old)	Stage 2 (Apr 2021)	Stage 2 Stage 3 Post-'Matched' Post-Arrival (12 weeks post-arrival) Follow-up (9 months post-arrival)	Events Industry Going into Work	6-8 weeks	6 weeks	Adoptive father Completed additional 'post-match' interview

Appendix G – Adoption Process Roadmap



Source: Adoption UK. Available at: <<https://www.adoptionuk.org/becoming-an-adoptive-parent>>

[Accessed 19/01/2023]

Understanding Expectant Fathering

Advanced Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Introduction

This research is interested in your experiences as an expectant father which take place in a variety of settings. These will be primarily explored through *interviews*. However, to enable an even better insight and understanding of your experiences, a number of *optional additional activities* have been designed for this project. This information sheet will explain what participation in these additional activities will entail. **Please take the time to read the following information carefully.** If there is anything you are unsure about, please feel free to ask me about it (contact details on overleaf).

What is the project about?

This research seeks to develop an understanding of *what it is like to be an expectant father*. It aims to gain insight into the individual *experiences* of expectant fathers, their *perceptions* of these experiences and the *implications* of these on their sense of being/becoming a 'father'. This includes the things expectant fathers *do* during pregnancy and into early parenthood, how they *feel* during this time, and *where* these things take place.

What will these additional activities include?

Firstly, you do not have to do anything you don't want to. These activities are an **additional** part of the research which you can choose to participate in in-between interviews. You are free to take part in as much, or as little, of this project as you wish. Similarly, these activities are only suggestions. If you would like to do something *else* to capture your experiences, that is completely fine – please just let me know. There are **two** main additional activities which have been designed for this research.

Tour

This will involve 'taking' on a tour of a place/event that is important to you as an expectant father. This could be anywhere, for example your home, a shopping trip, a family gathering, perhaps even (after the birth) a playgroup – it's up to you! Ideally this should be part of your 'normal' experience of that place, in the company of people who you might usually be there with, if you are happy to do this.

Diary

This activity provides an opportunity for you to periodically record your more day-to-day experiences as an expectant father. You may use this diary to reflect on a range of experiences, including some of the things you do, interactions you have with other people (in various settings), as well as your thoughts, feelings, even dreams, which relate to your experience of pregnancy and becoming a father.

These activities will enable me to develop a greater understanding of the specific experiences of expectant fathers. I hope that these activities might also provide you with valued mementos of being an expectant father, which you may wish to share with your family/friends, as well as of your involvement in this research.

How can I take part?

These activities are designed so that they can be conducted **safely** (i.e. remotely) in a way that suits you. The tour can be done through a recorded video call where you can 'show' me around your chosen place/event, or you can share with me some pre-recorded materials (video, pictures, etc) which include a description of what is happening. The diary can be kept in a written format in a Word document, or, *alternatively* you may wish to keep a **video diary** (similar to a 'vlog') where you upload short video reflections of your experiences, potentially as they happen (effectively combining the activities above, if you wish).

Do I have to take part?

No – these are *additional activities* of the research and are entirely optional. I hope that you would like to take part in at least one of these, but understand if you do not want to.

Where will my data be kept?

A folder will be created for you on the University's secure sever, BEARShare where you can upload any files as part of these activities. Only you, and the researchers (myself and my supervisors) will have access to this folder.

How will you use my data?

Any video files you share will be transcribed in full. Where these 'transcripts' include still images of the videos this will be made sufficiently anonymous, for example by blurring out faces. You will be given the opportunity to review any of these for approval.

Extracts of data from these activities may then be used to explore and explain what expectant fathers experience and feel during pregnancy and into early parenthood. All data will be used in an *anonymous* form.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during this project, you may contact either myself or – if necessary – my academic supervisors, Professor Peter Kraftl or Dr Jessica Pykett and your concerns will be dealt with expediently.

What if I change my mind?

This is not a problem, you can stop participating in these additional activities at any time. You can also withdraw from these activities by contacting me. After you have done so, I will delete any of your uploaded documents stored in your dedicated BEARShare Folder. You can withdraw from any part of the project (including interviews) at any time before the **1st October 2021**. After this date, I will begin writing my PhD thesis and it may not be possible to remove your data from the project.

Will my taking part in these additional activities be kept confidential?

Yes. However, other people you know may be present during these additional activities (i.e. your partner, family/friends during a tour or video recording) and they will need to be informed that research is taking place. This will be to ensure that they are happy for any comments they make to be used within the project. I will not tell anyone that you are participating in this research without your expressed consent, nor will I give them access to your data.

All information that you provide, during interviews or as part of these optional additional activities, will be anonymised to prevent you from being identified at any stage of the research by anyone other than myself. All files, including transcripts, will be saved securely on password-protected devices and on the University's secure Data Store BEARShare. Only you, myself and my supervisors will have access to your data prior to its *full anonymisation* for writing, presentations and archiving. All data will be stored securely for no longer than is necessary in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The *only circumstance* in which I may have to break this confidentiality agreement is if information is disclosed which reveals that you, or another person, is at serious risk. In this event, I will discuss this with you, and I may be obliged to contact relevant parties empowered to act on this information.

Contact details of the researcher:

Alice Menzel – Doctoral Researcher

Email:

Mobile :

Academic Supervisors:

Prof. Peter Kraftl

Chair in Human Geography

Dr Jessica Pykett

Senior Lecturer

Understanding Expectant Fathering

Participant Diary



Researcher

Alice Menzel

Doctoral Researcher

Email:

Mobile:

What is the Diary for?

The diary is an opportunity for you to record your more day-to-day experiences as an expectant father, designed to build on things we have discussed in your interviews.

What does taking part involve?

You may use your diary to reflect on a range of experiences which relate to your experiences of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. This may include things you do, places you go and interactions you have with others, as well as your thoughts, feelings, even dreams, about these.

You will be given some brief Guiding Notes on things you may wish to record in your diary. However, these are *suggestions only* – it's **your** diary!

How can I take part?

The diary has been designed so that you can complete it electronically, in a way that suits you.

A Word document will be set up, on a secure University server, for you to record your experiences and reflections in a written format. Alternatively, you may choose to do a **video diary** (similar to a 'vlog') by uploading short video reflections to this secure folder. I hope that these may become valuable mementos of your experience as an expectant father.

Do I have to take part?

No – this is an **additional activity** of the research and is entirely optional. I hope that you would like to take part but understand if you do not want to.

How will you use my Data?

Your diary will tell me more about your experiences as an expectant father and enhance my understanding. Extracts from your diary may be used to explore and explain what expectant fathers experience and feel during pregnancy and early parenthood. All data will be used in an *anonymous* form in any subsequent reports, presentations and archiving.

Can I withdraw from the Diary activity?

Yes – you are under no obligation to participate in this activity and can stop at any time. You can withdraw from this project at any time before **1st October 2021**. If you decide to withdraw before this date, I will delete any of your uploaded documents from this folder. If you wish to withdraw from the project as a whole, please let me know

Please note that **after** this date, your data will be anonymously included in the project.

Please
Check Box
(x)

I confirm that I have read the **Advanced Information Sheet** for this project.

I understand that the researcher is gathering data about **expectant fathers' experiences**.

I understand that this is an *additional part* of the research which is *completely voluntary* and that I am entitled to withdraw, without giving a reason, at any time up until **1st October 2021**.

I understand that **after** this date it may not be possible to remove my data from the project.

I agree to participate in this research in the form of **a diary**, and to the use of subsequent data for the intended piece of writing and any presentations in an **anonymised** form.

I agree to the use of **anonymised** quotes from my Diary for any writing and presentations.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Alice Menzel

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

