Fathers in Everyday Family Life: Qualitative Case Studies of Ten Families

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Abstract

Fathers, fathering and fatherhood have been the subjects of much contemporary debate and investigation. The study's aims and research questions were informed by the existing body of fatherhood research which has been, predominantly, constructed and undertaken *in relation to* an 'unproblematic norm' of fatherhood, in which it is presumed that 'good fatherhood' is experienced. This study, therefore, sought to explore – through a series of ten case studies – fathers, everyday fathering and notions of 'good fatherhood' within 'normative' contexts. In doing so, the study took a relational approach, drawing on the perspectives of fathers, mothers and children in recognition of the potential of each family member to deepen and broaden understandings of fathers, fathering and fatherhood.

Findings highlight the common and divergent ways in which fathers and fathering were understood, experienced and 'done' both within and between families, and over time and space. The multiple meanings and concepts which are entangled with fathering practices were also revealed. The study has further shown that 'family display' is a useful tool for exploring the nuances of contemporary notions of 'good fatherhood'. Using the lens of 'family display', the value placed upon 'intimate fatherhood' by fathers, mothers and children in normative contexts was demonstrated. This study has also contributed new and nuanced understandings to existing work on 'intimate fatherhood' by showing that intimate fathering practices are those which can be claimed as fathering (rather than parenting more generally) and are characterised by communication and mutuality between fathers and children. Through such intimate fathering practices, family members felt that fathers and children were able to nurture and sustain close relationships.

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Chapter One: Introduction

When I embarked upon my doctoral study, I did not intend to undertake a project which problematised contexts of 'normative fatherhood'. Rather, I had elected to undertake a project which was focused, rather more specifically, on 'fathering through food'. This topic had arisen as an area for future research from the Leverhulme Trust funded 'Changing Families, Changing Food' project, led by Professor Peter Jackson (2009). As I engaged with the fatherhood literature over the course of my first year of study, I was increasingly struck by the paucity of children's perspectives on fathers and fathering, not least because a child is entirely necessary if someone is going to be a father. I was also struck by the reality that, where children's perspectives had been sought, this had overwhelmingly been within 'problematised' contexts. For example, post-separation fathering, young fathers, fathers in prison and so on. Such research foci were, and are, undoubtedly serving to create important impacts in political and institutional spheres, whilst also highlighting and improving the experiences of fathers, children and families. I was, however, increasingly conscious of the way such research positioned itself in relation to a *presumed* unproblematic context in which 'good fatherhood' might be understood to 'just happen'. After discussion with my supervisors, I returned to scoping the fatherhood literature with this 'problem' as my new focus. It was this initial impetus which led me toward a multi-perspective study which explored fathering practices within and between contexts of the presumed 'unproblematic' norm. Since then, there have been numerous times when I have doubted this decision. I came to feel that the impact agenda which, in my opinion, characterises contemporary academia, prefers social research to provide immediate, tangible and measurable outputs which, in some way, improve the lives of those who experience inequalities, or draw attention to the inequalities they experience. But the lives of the middle-class, 'normative families' - wherein I situated my research - are not widely regarded as plagued by inequalities. At least not to the extent that other contexts might be. As such, I always felt a little uncomfortable about the research, as though it was somehow self-indulgent, or lacked any practical utility. Such worries did not dissipate until I was fortunate enough to attend the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships conference in Edinburgh in 2016, particularly the key note speeches of emeritus Professor David Morgan and Professor Julia Brannen. Within their addresses, they argued the following:

> *"The family practices of the elite help define the rules by which inequalities are maintained…To examine social exclusion we have to look at the practices of the excluders, as well as those who are excluded."*

> (Morgan, 2016)

"We need to take a within family perspective as well as a between family perspective when looking at inequality."

(Brannen, 2016)

I drew confidence from these insights, which helped me to frame my understanding of *why* I undertook this project and constructed the research as I did. Ultimately, the thesis demonstrates that fathering in the culturally idealised context of 'the normative family' *is* characterised by inequalities, it is diversely 'done' and experienced, but the idealisation of 'intimate fatherhood' as 'good fatherhood' in these contexts moulds both fathering practices and their portrayal within such families.

This thesis, therefore, builds on the work of contemporary fatherhood scholars, in particular Esther Dermott and her influential work '*Intimate Fatherhood*' (2008) through its exploration of how fathers, mothers and children in normative contexts make sense of and contribute to constructions of contemporary 'good fatherhood' through the practices, relationships and displays of their everyday family lives.

The relational approach of this project enriches the understanding of fathers, fathering and fatherhood through recognition of the intra and intergenerational significance of fathers and its inclusion of fathers, mothers and children in the research. In contrast to the predominance of parental voices in the extant literature on fathers and fathering, this thesis has shown that children are not the passive recipients of fathering, but that fathers, mothers *and* children contribute actively to the negotiation of fathers' identities and of fathering practices and recount their experiences of fathers in relation to notions of 'good fatherhood'.

Fathers, mothers and children, therefore, all participated in both the 'doing' and the displaying of fathering, negotiating their portrayals of fathers, fathering and fatherhood through their interviews in relation to inter and intragenerational relationships and power relations over time. Through their displays, family members were able to *justify* their experiences of compromised fathering relative to their ideals, without challenging their understandings of the contemporary fathers they lived with as 'good fathers'.

Notions of 'good fatherhood' and how these are enacted through fathering practices are shown to be both individually interpreted and displayed, and embedded in familial, relational, historical and cultural contexts. Within the contexts explored through this study, 'good fatherhood' was associated with father involvement, the most valued aspect of which was intimate father involvement. However, this thesis further reveals that 'good fatherhood', is not something which is 'done' or

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experienced in a uniform way between or within 'normative families'. Rather, there are commonalities and divergences within and between families which reflect the multiple meanings and practices which overlap, and are entangled with, fathers and fathering. Such multiplicity is reflected in how fathers and fathering are *displayed* by family members through the research process.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter Two scopes the salient literature on family and fathers, in order to define and provide a detailed rationale for my research focus and approach. I initially provide an overview of how 'the family' and family life have been variously conceptualised and theorised. Building on this review, I argue, firstly, that a relational, practice based approach to the exploration of fathers and fathering will be taken. Secondly, I contend that what I construct as the 'normative family' has cultural status as the idealised context of family life in western, contemporary societies. It is this context in which 'good fatherhood' is perceived to be 'lived'. I go on to scope the broad ranging literature on fathers. From this, I argue that fathers, mothers and children's perspectives are valid and necessary in explorations of fathers and fathering. I conclude this chapter with my research aim and questions.

In Chapter Three, my rationale for the methodology and methods used in the research and an account of the research process as I experienced it are offered. Reflexive discussion of my decisions and experiences permeate this chapter and are situated within the extant literature pertaining to multi-perspective families research.

Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven report on the findings from the research. Chapter Four addresses parents' perceptions and accounts of intergenerational differences in fathers and fathering. 'Father involvement' is shown to be central to parents' understandings and experiences of such generational difference. In Chapter Five, the gendered division of labour between parents is detailed, including how parents justified and experienced the negotiation of paid work, domestic labour and childcare. In doing so, notions of father involvement are shown to be constructed differently between generations of fathers. Contemporary fathers' direct engagement in children's lives, rather than domestic labour or paid work, is argued to be the key arbiter of parents' constructions of contemporary fathers' involvement. Chapter Six considers the various ways in which everyday fathering was intersected by temporal issues. It goes on to show how father-child interactions could be experienced in particular ways, which promoted relational closeness between fathers and children. Finally, Chapter Seven explores how such relational closeness between fathers and children was understood and experienced by fathers, mothers and children over the course of children's childhoods. It highlights the fluidity of father-child relationships and how the changing

experience of relational closeness between fathers and children was associated with changing fathering practices over time.

Chapter Eight draws together the key findings and reflects on the strengths and limitations of the project. It goes on to situate the key findings in relation to the extant literature and the study's research aim and questions. In assessing the contribution of this thesis to the fatherhood discipline, I argue that family display is a useful tool for unpicking the complexity of notions of 'good fatherhood' and how these come to be reflected in everyday fathering practices and to shape the experiences of fathers in normative contexts. Lastly, this thesis concludes with some suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review takes the form of a narrative review (Booth, Papaioannou and Sutton, 2012) which necessarily includes the description and "examination of recent or current literature" (Grant & Booth, 2009:97). Within this method there is no explicit requirement or intent to systematically review all of the available literature in relation to the subject matter, and a variety of diverse sources may be used to inform the review process (Grant and Booth, 2009). This method seeks "to identify what has been accomplished previously, allowing for consolidation, for building on previous work, for summation, for avoiding duplication and for identifying omissions or gaps" (Grant & Booth 2009:97). Current research literature relating to fatherhood is poorly collated and inter-disciplinary cross referencing of findings is scarce. Moreover, any analysis or synthesis from current knowledge is highly complex (Lewis and Lamb, 2007). Therefore, the decision to conduct a narrative review is justified in this context.

The literature used has been sourced through an incremental and iterative process, based initially on expert recommendation of seminal sources and then obtaining further literature from reference lists and additional publications by similar authors. Attendance at academic conferences and study groups helped to further clarify my framing of the research area and the current knowledge base. Key words and phrases pertaining to the subject area were used in combination with citation searches that were informed by my initial reading to source information from electronic bibliographic databases in a technique referred to as 'pearl growing' (Booth, Papaioannou and Sutton, 2012).

The primary focus of this review is fathers. However, I first discuss the nature of family and how this has been variously conceptualised and theorized. This is because 'the father' is a role given meaning through the institution of 'the family' and through the 'doing' of family life (Morgan, 1996). The chapter then considers how the literature pertaining to fathers 'fits' within such sociological analyses of family and family life.

Consequently, it is argued that there is limited understanding or direct critique of 'the normative father' within the fatherhood literature, and little consideration of how *fathering practices* are experienced by individual fathers, mothers or children and how they relate to cultural ideals of fatherhood. This finding was used to define the research aim and questions addressed by the research project.

Conceptualising 'the family'

Family is an intangible noun. We take its existence for granted, yet it has been subject to much theorising and it is, semantically, inherently provocative (McCarthy, 2012). To nominalise it as 'the family' gives rise to the notion that it is an entity, that it has some defined structure which could be feasibly mapped (Morgan, 1996). Certainly, functionalists have sought to understand family in such institutional terms. The functionalist argument, however, forms one terminus on the spectrum of how family might be understood. Others have argued that a unilateral definition of family, or a perception of it as a timeless inflexible structure is no longer accurate, if it were ever, and that family might best be understood through how it is 'done' (Morgan, 1996). In opposition to functionalism, it has been asserted that the notion of 'family' is problematic under any circumstances (Silva and Smart, 1999) as it evokes sentiments of specifically named participants grouped together in a hierarchical structure and serves to reinforce normative ideals about intimate relationships (Smart, 2007). Beck-Gernsheim (2002; 2001) goes as far as to assert that there now exists a 'post-familial family', as what we knew to be family historically has ceased to be relevant in modern context. Therefore, it has been argued that conceptualising the broad and diverse relationships of personal life, rather than focussing on *family* relationships, may foster understanding of the true complexity of our relational connections to one another (Smart, 2007). Whatever position on this spectrum is adopted, how family is understood is fundamental to its exploration. Therefore, this first section of the review takes a broad brush, rather than an exhaustive, approach to considering family. In doing so, it demonstrates the cultural relevance of 'the family' as an ideal, the effectiveness of 'family practices' as a tool for understanding family through what it 'does', and the importance of considering family practices in a relational way so that their cultural dimensions and varied intersections might be brought to light.

Structural-functionalist definitions and cultural ideals of 'the family'

Structural functionalism was the dominant sociological approach used to understand family throughout Western industrialised societies in the mid-twentieth century. For functionalists, 'family' is a social institution, existing to fulfil social functions which ensure the proper running of the social system (Parsons and Bales, 1956; Cheal, 2002). Further, individuals are constrained through social norms and values to voluntarily fulfil their familial functions and to ensure the replication of the same norms and values in the next generation (Scott, 2009). Family, therefore, is constituted by people fulfilling particular roles which, if properly enacted, contribute to the success and harmony of the social system. In this way, 'the family' fulfils the needs of the individuals who make up family and also the needs of society (Cheal, 2002). Various functions of 'the family' were conceived. First, the production and care of children, including children's socialisation toward understanding the roles

they will play, and statuses they will hold, in society as adults. A further function concerned the development of close relationships so that such roles might be successfully embedded, ensuring social harmony and individual self-fulfilment (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011).

Underpinning functionalist theorising is the notion that 'the nuclear family' is the ideal context for family life. Arising from the observations Parsons made of white, middle class families from the United States (USA) in the mid-twentieth century, middle class nuclear families were asserted to be the cornerstone of social harmony. The 'nuclear family' proliferated in mid-twentieth century Britain as a result of two earlier economic trends. First, migration of nuclear, rather than extended, family units toward industrialised centres during the industrial revolution in order to work; though there is also evidence to suggest that such families were often reconstituted and negotiated for the mutual benefit of participants and not 'fixed' in their nuclear form (Silva and Smart, 1999). Second, the growth of the 'household wage'. A household wage was earned by a single family member, typically a man, and enabled him to support his family without the need for other family members to also be economically active, as had been necessary in pre-industrial times (Gittins, 1993). Aligned with these trends, Parsons and Bales (1956:315) stipulated that:

> *"If the nuclear family consists in a defined 'normal' complement of the male adult, female adult, and their immediate children, the male adult will play the role of instrumental leader and the female adult will play the role of expressive leader."*

Finley and Schwartz (2006) outline the male *instrumental* role as engaging with the public world of work, protecting families and undertaking the disciplining of children: by contrast the female *expressive* role involves taking responsibility for the care of children and the domestic sphere. Parsons and Bales further envisaged that each individual would be born into a nuclear family and would leave it only to take up a gendered role in their own nuclear unit as an adult (Cheal, 2002). In addition to the clearly defined gendered division of labour within a functionalist approach, there is also a dispensation within the functionalist model toward the promotion of heterosexual conjugal relationships which bear children. Moreover, the legal reification of such relationships (but not other intimate partnerships) through marriage, coupled with stringent divorce legislation, reflected the cultural endorsement of the middle class nuclear family as the perceived optimal, and indeed 'natural', context of family life in the mid-twentieth century (Cheal, 2002). Through a functionalist lens, therefore, the indefectible family contains a heterosexual, married parental dyad, who are middle class and live in coresidence with their own children. Such meanings are bound up with the idea of 'the nuclear family' and, indeed, constitute 'proper' nuclear families.

The ethnocentric observations and homogenising theories of functionalists have, however, been comprehensively critiqued (Reiss, 1965). The predominance of the nuclear family within 1950s and 1960's western societies (McRae, 1999; Lewis, 2001), combined with the idealisation of middle class nuclear families by functionalists, gave rise to the notion that the middle class nuclear family was the 'natural' family and invited the assessment of individual families for their coherence with or deviance from such an idealisation (Gillis, 1996; Silva and Smart, 1999; Edwards, Mccarthy and Gillies, 2012). Yet, the mid-twentieth century represented an unusual period of conformity in family formation within western industrialised societies (Cheal, 2002). Such conformity, it has been argued, should be seen as an aberrant example within a history of fluidity, diversity and discontinuity in family formation over time (Laslett, 1983; Gillis, 1996), rather than as a reflection of the 'naturalness' of the nuclear family. Arising from such critique, sociologists began to theorise family as 'households', an approach designed to allow exploration of family diversity because it did not pre-suppose the composition of families *within* households. Morgan (1996), however, considered that intertwining family and household mobilised the 'black box of family life', within which 'family' was enshrouded by the household and considered unworthy of sociological concern. Similarly, others asserted the need to distinguish family from household, because 'family' carries distinct meaning and manifests as particular ways of 'doing' coresidence (Wilson and Pahl, 1988). Nevertheless, the interchangeability of family and household continues to have contemporary salience in the United Kingdom (UK), where change in the composition of families within households is routinely tracked over time (Edwards, Mccarthy and Gillies, 2012).

Two further significant criticisms of functionalism have also been levied. The first arises from its assertion that social norms and values are unproblematically reproduced between generations and change only in response to societal need. In contrast, Jenks (1993:1) has argued that this underplays the agency of individuals and that there is a need to "contemplate the necessity and complementarity of continuity and change in the social experience." Second, functionalists reified the notion of social harmony, and the middle class nuclear family's perceived role in this, in a way which did not reflect on social inequity (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011). In particular, the division of labour along gendered lines has been robustly critiqued by feminist theorists who see it as generating potentially damaging inequalities in both domestic and public life for women (Oakley, 1976; Somerville, 2000; Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011). Such inequity, it has been argued, also extends to children. Within a functionalist frame, children are positioned as the passive recipients of norms and values which they absorb from their parents, not as active agents (Qvortrup *et al.*, 1994). Through such conceptual separation of children from adults, prejudicial perceptions of, and behaviours toward, children have been "confirmed, reaffirmed and perpetuated'' (James

1993:103). Children have, consequently, become subsumed *within* the family (James and James, 2004). The largely uncritical valorisation of gendered and generational distinctions posed by functionalists, therefore, limits understanding of the complex ways in which gender is constructed and experienced within, and beyond family life (Ralph, 2016).

Through such criticisms, the notion that the middle class nuclear family might be the cornerstone of social order is thrown into question. So too is the idea that observations about what family 'looks like' may serve to promote understanding of how family life is experienced. What *is* revealed is the importance of gender and generation as social structures which intersect and interact to constitute family and family life. Nevertheless, the continued demographic prevalence of the nuclear family form amongst families with children in contemporary Britain, lends the nuclear family ongoing cultural relevance and status (Gillis, 1996; Edwards, Mccarthy and Gillies, 2012).

The middle class nuclear family is given cultural status through its construction as the 'ideal' model of family. This 'standard model', in developed western cultural contexts, has been typified as the 'Cornflakes packet' family (Morgan 2011:3); a powerful cultural image of what family life *should* look like and against which we reference how we live our lives (Gillis, 1996; Morgan, 2011). Gillis calls such referents, against which the families we live with are measured, the 'families we live by'. For Morgan (2011:3), the standard model of family life in western societies is portrayed as "a mother, a father and two children, one boy and one girl." It is a nuclear family. Through such structure, the gender normativity and understandings of intergenerational relationships which Parsons theorised are alluded to. Such imagery, Morgan (1996) contends, also evokes notions of respectability and conventionality which allude to the middle classes. As noted, Parsons focussed his research on the middle classes and theories he proposed were configured around the middle classes. 'The middle class nuclear family', therefore, is embedded in western collective imaginings as the 'standard model' against which families are measured. It is the cultural 'ideal' of family life. This idealised middle class, nuclear family is henceforth referred to as 'the normative family'.

Despite comprehensive critique and a broad acceptance of its theoretical shortcomings, therefore, there is a cultural legacy of functionalist thinking which permeates collective and individual understandings and experiences of family life. Nevertheless, a concept of family as a fixed entity is not helpful in simultaneously extrapolating what family is and how it might be variously experienced by individual family members and between different families (Morgan, 1996, 1999, 2011). Further, it permits the perception that family diversity might be indicative of decline or deviance from a perceived 'standard' or 'natural' model (Gillis, 1996; Silva and Smart, 1999; Edwards, Mccarthy and Gillies, 2012).

Family Practices and the interplay between structure, agency and culture

Morgan (1996) postulates that by looking at *family practices* we might better understand how individuals are positioned and interact within families, and, through this, how the household interacts with the economy and vice versa. For Morgan (2011:3) there is "no such thing as 'The Family'," rather there is an *idea* of 'the family'. Gillis (1996) supports this, suggesting that we live family life *in relation* to our idea of family. A focus on family practices serves to draw emphasis away from the idea of family and family relationships as fixed or idealised, toward what individual families 'do', what this means, and how this might change or be maintained over time and space (Morgan, 1996, 2011). 'Family', Morgan (1996) argues, is best understood in adjectival terms. That is, 'family' comes about through the *doing* of family; through family practices.

In addition to the sense of activity which characterises a practice based approach, family practices link the perspectives of observer and actor in understanding family. Morgan (2011) asserts that the 'real value' of a practice based approach lies in such linking. This, undoubtedly, distinguishes family practices from functionalism, wherein the perspectives of the observer are privileged. Further, there is a sense of the 'everyday'. Whilst 'everyday' has been asserted to have various meanings (Morgan, 2004), two are pertinent to family practices. First, that such practices are 'everyday' because they are widely experienced between individual families and, to some extent, transcend the differences in family life between families. Second, that such practices are 'everyday' because they are seemingly mundane; they have a 'taken for granted quality' which may otherwise make them unworthy of comment (Morgan, 2011). There is also a 'sense of the regular', practices occur in a time ordered fashion which may be daily, weekly, monthly, annually and so on. Such regularity may occur within individual families or be shared between families. Next, Morgan (2011) describes a 'sense of fluidity'. He argues that family is flexibly constructed and so too, therefore, are family practices. Family practices may, interchangeably, be food practices, gendered practices, class practices, parenting practices and so on, because such practices "merge and overlap like splodges of watercolour paint" (Morgan 2011:7).

The last premise which Morgan (1996) suggests as intrinsic to 'family practices' is a linking of history and biography. Practices are, to some extent, pre-determined or pre-validated by personal, legal, economic and cultural definitions and experiences in ways which structure, but do not entirely determine, personal experiences. Personal biographies and social histories, therefore, contribute to 'doing' family and, Morgan (1996) argues, interplay between such dimensions may be explored using 'family practices'. One such social structure which Morgan considers is gender. Morgan (1996) perceives family practices to be inextricably linked to gender, with the 'doing' of family capable of obscuring, constructing, or modifying gender ideology and vice versa. Morgan (1996) contends that

the gendered identities of 'mother' and 'father' are nurtured within families environment and carry influence beyond the realms of family. In this way, 'the family' becomes an agent of socialisation and, despite differences in the structure of individual families and changes in the experience of family life over time, gendered identities often remain. There is no innate and fixed social power attached to biologically defined gender, rather the empowerment or powerlessness of any individual is associated with personal and cultural gendered expectations. Such expectations may, therefore, result in powerlessness or empowerment because of an individual's sense of conformity or divergence from how it is perceived that they *should live* as much as how they *do live.* That is, there is interplay between the social structure of gender and how the individual agent interacts with, perceives and contributes to such structure. Importantly, such interpretations are "not solely defined by past and present constructs and constraints, but by potentialities and images of the future" (Morgan 1996:92). Similarly, Smart (2007) emphasises the embeddedness of tradition, memory, biography, relationality and imaginary in family life (as well as within personal life more generally). Through this, she highlights the importance of taking a relational approach in understanding how some practices come to be privileged, or to prevail, over others in everyday life and, therefore, come to be culturally relevant, or to reflect ongoing cultural relevance. Within this approach, *relationships* are posed as a key structuring feature in people's everyday lives (Gabb, 2011). Relational sociology, it is argued, demands an analytical focus on "networks of social relations and interactions between actors…that is premised on entanglements" (Gabb 2011:10). Furthermore, Smart's work provides a means through which the entanglement of practices with cultural understandings may be explored. There is, therefore, a duality to practices which is constituted by simultaneously 'doing' family whilst "thinking and imagining family and family relationships" (Smart 2007:38). Like Morgan (1996), however, Smart (2007:47) notes that it is important to remember that "people relate to each other on several different conceptual planes at the same time" and the relational approach, whilst useful for conceptualising the interplay between culture and practices, is also intersected by gender, social class and so on. In this way, a relational ontology does not presuppose equality or sameness within relationships, nor does it refute the notion that some relationships hold greater significance than others (Gabb, 2011). Family relationships, therefore, are unique in that they are constituted by 'doing *family* things' by different family members. Consequently, a relational focus on 'the family' requires emphasis on family relationships and the networks of connections and interconnections between individual agents within the family.

Morgan (1996; 2011) also highlights time and space as important for the exploration of family practices. Ingold (2007) has argued that time and space are the basis of experience as relationships are lived out over time and within spaces, and individual experience *is* the movement through and

perceptions of bodies in spaces over time. Indeed, Scott (2009) has argued that time is the means by which social interactions become mundane and 'everyday'. Family relationships, therefore, are entangled with time and space through family practices. Notably, 'the family' is intertwined with both public and private space, but the idea of family within particular spaces "may contribute to its reification" (Morgan 2011:9). A particular 'conceptual edifice' which Morgan (1996) associates with family is 'the home'.

Home is where everyday family life is lived out; it may be a single building, a town or a country (Morgan, 1996). It is suffused with and embedded within past, present, and future understandings of family. It carries symbolic and emotional meaning as well as being materially manifest. In this way, home embodies family and family relationships, and is given meaning through the family practices which take place within and outside of it. It is also temporally significant, being associated with life events such as 'leaving home', or 'moving in together' (Morgan, 1996). Further, home was given particular salience for the private world of 'the family' through the rise of the nuclear family in industrialised western societies (Scott, 2009). Its doors are the physical boundary between public and private space; home shapes the intersubjective doing of family between such spaces (Morgan, 2011). Divisions between public and private life may, however, be blurred when the family home is also a place of work and vice versa (Seymour, 2007).

As noted, family practices are entangled with other 'types' of practices and take place across varied spatial locations which extend beyond 'the home' (Seymour, 2007). The materiality of 'home'; its form, contents and location, as well as the experience of family life within the home, are further entangled with social class (Scott, 2009). Morgan (1996), however, also highlights the importance of social class in stratifying families and family life more generally. He describes how the 'the father' and, more specifically, paternal employment predominate within definitions of class as well as highlighting particular 'classed family practices' and how these contribute to 'doing class' on an everyday basis. For example, "respectable", middle class children are seen to be well kempt and quiet in public spaces (Morgan 1996:128). Further, Gillis (1996) has argued that the mythologizing of cultural ideals of family life is, primarily, a middle class occupation. Striving to mirror the 'standard model' of family through the practices of everyday family life is, therefore, predominantly a *middle class* family project.

In summary a relational, family practice based approach permits exploration of family and family life which considers diversity, fluidity and complexity within families as well as how families are stratified by and contribute to social structures and cultural ideals (such as the normative family). Such an approach illuminates the interplay between structure and agency and emphasises the importance of

both individual and collective experiences of family. Consequently, I opted to utilise family practices as the conceptual basis for this project to shed light on both the relational complexity of family life and the meanings of family. Given that gender, class, time and space are highlighted by Morgan (1996) as key intersections in family life, an approach which allowed exploration of these was also considered essential. The entanglement of the middle classes and nuclear family forms with contemporary and functionalist idealisations of family provided a rationale for turning attention to such 'normative families'. Further, a biographical approach to the research was also deemed necessary in order to explore the significance of time and space in the 'doing' of family. In order to capture individual and collective experiences of family, however, the question of whose experiences and which family relationships are required and valid is raised.

Intra and intergenerational family relationships

Gender and intragenerational relationships

Although it has been argued that gender is largely insignificant as a social structure in contemporary, western societies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), gender normativity has also been argued to prevail in such contexts despite varying degrees of aspiration toward gender equality (Morgan, 1996). Gendered separation between parents is felt to predispose fathers to the public world of work and, in some way, preclude them from full engagement (that is, a maternal level of engagement) in the private world of the home and family life.

Frequently, father involvement in family life is, and has been, measured in relation to maternal involvement arising from a research focus on 'who does what' in both domestic and economic terms (Norman and Elliot, 2015). Indeed, Gillis (1996:180) argues that contemporary interest in fathers is no more than a "by-product of our preoccupation with motherhood." It is evident from such work that contemporary aspirations toward gender equality have not translated into the practices of everyday family life. Rather, mothers undertake significantly more unpaid labour than do fathers and, where they do undertake paid work, are more likely to reduce their hours of paid work once they become parents (Sullivan, 2000; Burnett *et al.*, 2010; Schober, 2013). The latter reality points to parenthood as a particularly significant intersection in the construction and experience of gender. Nevertheless, there is a lack of critical exploration of what maternal involvement in the domestic sphere is constituted by, or in relation to (Miller, 2011a). Underlying this representation of father involvement in relation to 'taken for granted' maternal involvement is, as Gillis (1996:179) argues, the sense that:

> *"Fathers occupy a very modest place in our symbolic universe- always at the threshold of family life, never at its centre. Men pay for their autonomy by remaining strangers in their*

own homes. Perceived as liminal figures, fathers sometimes appear threatening, but usually they are just out of place, rather ridiculous in the domestic setting...Our culture simply will not take paternity as seriously as maternity."

Through the ongoing determining power of gender (Morgan, 2002a, 2002b), inequalities have been both created and compounded for both mothers and fathers. Mothers are undertaking the majority of childcare and domestic labour, while also, typically, reducing their participation in paid work after they become mothers. Fathers are, at best, conceived as secondary parents to mothers because of the perceived 'naturalness' of women as carers (Dermott, 2008).

In explanation of such ongoing inequalities, Finch and Mason (1993) have argued that the way in which people interact is paramount, permitting them to feel reconciled with and legitimising their actions. For example, if it is felt that the domestic division of labour is structured by elements which cannot be changed and the resultant practices reflect normative gender roles, then individuals feel a moral obligation to fulfil those roles and cannot legitimise non-conformity. Our attachment of emotions to these practices gives them embodied meaning and ensures their integration and solidification within the day to day practices of 'doing family' (Smart, 2007). Such legitimised roles may even become reified. In contrast, women have described having to negotiate the conflicting obligations of looking "after their husbands and their sense of equality and fairness" (Murcott 2000:80). Constructions and experiences of gender normativity and gender equality between partners, therefore, are negotiated in relational ways and with reference to the social world beyond the family. They may be a source of certitude or conflict. Either way they are part of 'doing gender' within families. Although women have increasingly managed to establish themselves within the labour market and men are, to varying degrees, able to assume caring and domestic roles (Sullivan, 2000), this is argued by some to have resulted in a 'crisis' of contemporary masculinity (Gillis, 2000; Williams, 2008). Such practices and the contemporary idealisation of gender equality by some, therefore, are negotiated in the context of tenacious ideologies relating to normative gender roles (Finch and Mason, 1993; Gittins, 1993). This implies a need to understand how fathers and mothers interact and relate to one another in order to construct and experience gender identity in and through family life.

Childhood and intergenerational relationships
Significantly, a key structuring element of family life demonstrated in the earlier discussion of functionalism, that of generation, is not given particular attention within Morgan's (1996; 2011) work. Generation, like family, gender and social class, is a contested concept within the social sciences and is both a social construction and a structural phenomenon in children's lives (Alanen,

2001, 2003; Punch, 2005). The line separating childhood and adulthood is most simply conceived in legal terms; the age of majority in the UK being 18 in accordance with the prescription of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The legal age of majority, however, is subject to much global variance, indicating the socially constructed nature of such a distinction between children and adults. While childhood is, of course, a biological phase which all children pass through, childhood is also socially constructed (Prout, 2005).

Normative convention would hold that 'the child' becomes increasingly socialised to those processes and practices to which they are exposed by their parents. Consequently, children are increasingly able to independently express the vocabulary of values in which they have been instructed. Children are, therefore, overwhelmingly seen as the products of 'good', or 'bad', parenting through their passive receipt of care and are, therein, positioned as '*human becomings*' (Qvortrup *et al.*, 1994). Through children's perceived dependency, they are afforded less social, legal, political and economic power than their parents and adults more generally. In short, they are *dependent* on their parents and afforded less social power in the wider, adult-led world. James and James (2004:3) have argued that parents' hackneyed exhortations toward children to 'do as you're told' carry symbolic meaning. Such meaning demonstrates the principle that children "should…do what adults tell them," but also highlights a more culturally obfuscated notion: if children need to be told what to do then it is also understood that children act, at least on occasion, in accordance with their own values and desires. Children are, therefore, independent and individual social agents, but the expression of their agency is variably constrained, or enabled, by adults (James and James, 2004).

Similarly, it has been argued that children and adults are both active participants in 'generationing', a process through which children and adults respond to the structuring effects of generationally mediated social power and, through their everyday interactions, reify or reconstruct notions of childhood and adulthood (Alanen, 2001, 2003; Punch, 2005). Further, the concepts of 'the child' and 'the adult' "stand in relations of connection and interaction, and of interdependence: neither of them can exist without the other, what each of them is (a child, an adult) is dependent on its relation to the other, and change in one is tied to change in the other." (Alanen 2001:21). In this way, it is not possible to understand 'generation', or the processes of 'generationing' as a family practice, if they are devolved from their relational contexts. It is necessary to recognise how children participate in social life as social actors and also how they may shape it as social agents (Mayall, 2002; James and James, 2004). Fundamentally, the parent-child relationship is negotiated within the individual family (Alanen, 2001). There is a complex interplay between children's dependence, independence and interdependence which can be observed through family practices (Zeiher, 2001). Therefore, to

understand fathers, fathering and fatherhood, children's views are just as necessary as mothers' and fathers'.

Families research with children
Despite espousal of children's role as independent actors and the facilitation of children's agency in research by childhood scholars since the mid-1990s (James, 2013), children (as already noted) have tended to be 'subsumed within the family' (James and James, 2004) and there is a need to address the "impoverished understanding of family life from a child's point of view" (Smart et al. 2001:10). Much of the early work within childhood studies, therefore, sought to extrapolate children from the institutions of family and schools where it was felt that their subsumption had restricted their voices (Christensen and Prout, 2002; Prout, 2011). Yet, James and Prout (1997:45) have argued that "exploring children's agency divorced from one of its prime contexts of its operation fails to give a satisfactory account of the totality of children's experiences." It is, therefore, necessary to undertake family research with children *within* family context and as actors *within* family relationships.

Given the relational nature of family life I, therefore, situated my exploration of fatherhood within family relationships, in addition to taking a practice based approach. Family relationships are defined by both gender and generation and fathers, mothers and children all had potential to deepen the exploration of fathers and fathering through their inclusion as independent actors in the research.

Contemporary fatherhood
Having determined the theoretical approach to my research, this section of the review takes a broad brush approach to the discussion of contemporary fatherhood, drawing upon legal and policy contexts in addition to fatherhood research outputs from the USA, Europe, and Australasia, which underpin and are interwoven with much of the fatherhood research undertaken in the UK.

Fathers in law and policy
Men do not become fathers until they assume some social, legal, or biological responsibility for a child (Featherstone, 2009). Men who assume responsibilities for fathering children with no legal or biological basis to this relationship are described as 'social fathers' (Collier and Sheldon, 2008). Some 94 per cent of men with resident children live with their biological children, while 80 per cent of men who live with dependent children are married - as evidenced by the Modern Fatherhood project (Speight *et al.*, 2013). Contrastingly, only 11 per cent of men with resident children have 'social children' (Speight *et al.*, 2013). Fathers who are married to the child's biological mother at the time of a child's birth automatically assume legal parental responsibility for the child (Great Britain, 1989). Parents who marry after the birth of children are required to re-register their children to reflect this (Great Britain, 1953). Unmarried fathers, however, have to be named as the biological father on the

child's birth certificate in order to obtain parental responsibility. Both mother and father have to be present at the registration to agree to this (Great Britain, 2002a). Social fathers can assume legal parental responsibility for children, but this is not automatic and the legal formalisation of such arrangements is uncommon (Collier and Sheldon, 2008).

The Children Act (Great Britain, 1989) initiated a new understanding of parental responsibilities toward, rather than rights over, children in order to forefront the children's welfare (Dermott, 2008). The Child Support Act (Great Britain, 1991), however, went on to reinforce the understanding that breadwinning was a vital aspect of a biological father's role irrespective of their residency status with their children. Although the Child Support Act does, in essence, require both genders of parent to pay maintenance should they not take on the primary carer role for a child following a separation, in practice, this responsibility fell to fathers (Collier and Sheldon, 2008). As such, I shall discuss here the impact of the Act's enforcement as though fathers were the only parents to be affected by it. The rationale for and implications of the Act can be viewed from several perspectives. First, that the breadwinning role of fathers is becoming less pertinent as an aspect of masculine identity and, as such, the Government needed to take affirmative action to ensure that men did not negate this aspect of their fathering responsibilities toward children. Second, that financial support of families by fathers is necessary to prevent the potential welfare dependence of single parent families and child poverty. Third, the Act could be argued to reinforce the role of financial provider as integral to the understanding of fathering and masculine identity (Dermott, 2008). Additionally, the Act imposed financial responsibility for children, for the most part, on biological fathers (Featherstone, 2009). It has been argued, therefore, that contemporary debates and activism surrounding fathers' rights and their responsibilities toward children relative to mothers are often enmeshed with, or obscured by, discussion of children's welfare. It is in this way that the focus on birth fathers is often obscured within such debates and contexts (Featherstone, 2009).

A specific aim of fathers' rights activism has been to obfuscate any perceived differences between fathers and mothers and to ensure their identical treatment in politico-legal spheres (Featherstone, 2009). Such intentions are steeped in notions of 'good fatherhood'. By the 1990's the notion of 'good fatherhood' for activists was characterised by a belief that 'good fathers' are involved with their children and concerned for their welfare both within contexts of family togetherness and separation (Collier and Sheldon, 2008). The primary complaints expressed though fathers' rights organisations since this time have, therefore, largely centred on child contact and child residence agreements between fathers and mothers post separation (Collier, 2006). Yet, obscuring difference between fathers and mothers is not the same as promoting equality or equity between them

(Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield, 2007). It has, therefore, been argued that redressing inequalities in the treatment of fathers should be undertaken in a reflexive and joined up way with the rebalancing of inequalities which impact upon mothers' lives (Featherstone, 2009). Parental leave entitlement following the birth of children has been a political manifestation of such an effort, attempting to increase fatherly involvement in childcare and to promote women's engagement in paid work following the transition to parenthood. Recent changes to UK parental leave entitlement have, since 2015, permitted qualifying mothers and fathers to share 39 weeks of paid and a further 13 weeks of unpaid leave from employment between them following the birth of a child (Great Britain, 2014b). Prior statutory provision was more starkly delineated by gender and stipulated 2 weeks paid leave for qualifying fathers and up to 52 weeks leave (39 weeks paid) for mothers (Great Britain, 1999). Changes to paternity leave have repeatedly seen limited uptake by fathers with the reasons attributed to poor rates of financial remuneration over the leave period, worries about employer perceptions, and assumptions "that mothers would take longer maternity leave due to gender differences in earnings and a greater emphasis on maternal over paternal bonding" (Kaufman 2017:1).

Illustrated through this legal and policy lens, therefore, is the cultural significance of biological relationships between fathers and children, of marriage in legitimating father-child relationships and of breadwinning in constructions of fathering responsibilities. Further demonstrated through responses to parental leave policy is the perceived primacy of mothers as parents. Aspects of the 'normative family', therefore, permeate and are promoted within legal, political, and cultural representations of contemporary fatherhood in the UK. This serves to shape cultural debates and understandings of 'good fatherhood', in addition to shaping how individual fathers and their fathering practices are perceived and experienced.

Cultural constructions of fatherhood

Brannen (2015:1) defines fatherhood as "the experience of fathering and being fathered." Experiences of individual fathers and their practices of fathering, therefore, are given meaning *in relation to* individual and collective imaginings of how fatherhood *should* be. The contemporary cultural construction of 'good' fatherhood in the UK, and Europe more broadly, is in a state of flux (Gregory and Milner, 2011). It has been posited that "there has been an ideological shift in relation to men's orientation toward fatherhood" (Dermott 2008:16). Such a 'shift' reflects a conceptual change in relation to two issues. First, that gender should no longer define the division of paid and unpaid work between contemporary parents and, therefore, that labour division should be gender equal (Gillis, 1985; Larossa, 1988; Featherstone, 2009; Ralph, 2016) and, second, that there has been an 'emotional turn' in what fatherhood 'should' look like (Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2011a; Miller and

Dermott, 2015). Specifically, contemporary men's role in family life should no longer be solely that of a financial provider, as is perceived to be the case for historical fathers. Rather, contemporary fathers are also required to be engaged in family life and emotionally connected to their children (Dermott, 2008; Johansson and Klinth, 2008; Gregory and Milner, 2011; Miller, 2011a; Humberd, Ladge and Harrington, 2015). Nevertheless, Dermott (2008:27) has argued that that there remains a potency to the idea that the "good father is to provide financially for his children through the public world of work." 'Good fatherhood', therefore, is now seen to be inextricably linked to emotional connectedness between father and child *and* with fathers' involvement in both paid and unpaid labour (Henwood and Proctor, 2003; Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2010; Miller and Dermott, 2015) in a way that it was never previously. 'Good fathers' are, therefore, 'involved fathers'.

'Involved fatherhood', however, remains primarily a western ideal and there is a predominant western focus in the literature pertaining to fathers more generally, as Shwalb *et al* (2012) demonstrate in their recent edited volume. The 'involved father' has also been argued to have a classed dimension; middle class fathers reportedly being more readily aligned with the 'involved father' model than their working class counterparts (Plantin, 2007; Gillies, 2009). Middle class fathers have, conceptually, become 'good fathers' and 'poor fathering' has come to be associated with the working classes and with deficit situations (like family breakdown) where the preoccupation with, and practices of, involved fatherhood, are perceived to be less prevailing (Gillies, 2008; Dermott and Pomati, 2016). There is, however, much debate as to the extent to which the practices of fathering are 'classed'. The recent 'Annual Fatherhood Survey' from the think tank, The Centre for Social Justice (2016), has indicated that middle class fathers are more likely to engage in fathering practices which might be held to be indicative of their 'involvement', including, attending antenatal classes. Such classed practices of fathering may, therefore, be both constrained and enabled by, for example, economic status and employment flexibility, both of which may determine fathers' ability to attend (for example) antenatal education. Dermott (2008) supports this notion, asserting that the prevalence of more traditional forms of fathering in working class families may be because the breadwinner model is more relevant in households where finances are scarce. Through the differential access to economic resources between social classes, moralising about good parenting and bad parenting has, therefore, become conflated with social class (Gillies, 2008, 2009; Dermott and Pomati, 2016). In stark contrast to the widespread perception that the practices of involved fatherhood are classed, however, Dermott and Pomati (2016) have suggested that there is limited divergence in practices of father involvement for fathers living in different class contexts and, as such, the idea that 'good fatherhood' takes place in middle class families is perceived, rather than demonstrably evident.

Middle class status has come to be interwoven with the dominant cultural construction of 'good fatherhood'. This gives rise to the perception that middle class fathers might be 'doing' fathering in particular ways. The present corpus of fatherhood research has not reached a consensus as to the ways in which class shapes fathering practices and in defining the focus of this thesis there was, therefore, a need to further unpick the relationship between class and fathering.

Exploring father involvement

Acknowledging diversity and conflict within cultural constructions of 'good fatherhood' is important. Western, middle class constructions of 'good fatherhood' emphasise the significance of fathers' paid work *and* their participation in unpaid labour and the emotional elements of family life: their involvement across both public and private spheres. Researchers have, therefore, sought to explore the extent to which notions of 'good fatherhood' are shared between individuals and how father involvement might manifest in different contexts.

In explication of the western paradigm of fatherhood scholarship, Lamb (2000:24) states that:

> *"Corresponding with the changing conceptualization of the essence of fatherhood, paternal involvement has been viewed and indexed in different ways at different times. This makes cross-time comparisons of the extent of paternal involvement both difficult to conduct and difficult to interpret. Moreover, these difficulties became magnified because social scientists' conceptions of parental involvement were emerging simultaneously with, and were heavily influenced by, the growing popularity of time use methodologies."*

Lamb (2000), therefore, highlights two dominant concerns in investigations of father involvement since the early 1970's. First, the effect of 'fatherlessness' on families and, second, a quantitative focus on the amount of time spent by fathers in paid work, childcare and domestic labour.

Research situated within the first area of concern highlighted by Lamb (2000) has been informed by the understanding that, through their involvement in paid work and childcare, fathers might have a direct and positive impact on children's educational, health and wellbeing outcomes (Pleck, 1997, 2007; Lewis and Lamb, 2003; Opondo *et al.*, 2016; McMunn *et al.*, 2017). Fathering is, therefore, seen as central in the formation of 'good' children. Without an 'involved father', children will not benefit from the positive influence of being fathered (McLanahan, Tach and Schneider, 2013). Or, at least, this is what is implied (Featherstone, 2009). Gillies (2009:50) notes that there are "enduring concerns about the social and financial consequences of men becoming detached from the civilizing influence of the family [which] have combined with a desire to promote fatherhood as a resource for children." Gillies, therefore, implies an interdependent arrangement, wherein families need fathers,

but fathers also need families. There is, therefore, an inherent reciprocity within family relationships, including those between fathers, mothers, and children (Featherstone, 2009).

Through the perceived essentiality of fathers, family breakdown also comes to be seen as problematic as non-resident fatherhood is posed as a threat to father involvement. Attempts to challenge the dominant notion of the 'essential father', however, have had limited impact on mainstream social commentaries (Silverstein and Auerbach, 1999; Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Shwalb, Shwalb and Lamb, 2012). Indeed, many recent explorations of fathering and its impact on children, have been undertaken within 'problematised' circumstances, implicitly positioning such research contexts in relation to an unproblematic norm. Such circumstances include: non-resident, post-separation fatherhood (Philip, 2013b, 2014; Poole *et al.*, 2016), and 'marginalised fathers' (primarily single fathers and young fathers) (Lammy, 2015; Osborn, 2015; Lau Clayton, 2016). This indicates the cultural significance of the perception of the 'essential father', whilst also revealing the presumption that it is fathers, rather than mothers, who are likely to be absent from children's lives and whose essentiality in children's lives must be demonstrated. Furthermore, within the vast majority of this body of work, children are the objects of research, not active participants within it. There are, however, some notable exceptions. For example, studies have elicited the perceptions of children of divorced parents, detailing children's unique experiences of the father-child relationships after parental divorce (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). The *potential* of children to offer their own perspectives on fatherhood is, therefore, revealed.

Research which explored the second area of concern highlighted by Lamb (2000) has typically used quantitative methods to understand fathers' participation in paid and unpaid labour. Consequently, between the 1970's and the mid-2000's, there was a marked paucity of work which explored the qualitative experiences of fatherhood. The core finding from quantitative time-use surveys which have investigated the division of labour between parents is, as briefly explicated in the first section of this review, that:

> *"Men's contribution to domestic labour when women enter employment only partially and incompletely substitutes for the domestic labour of women, with the result that women end up doing more work overall than before. In addition, it is clear that when men do take on more of the domestic work, they may not be taking on an equivalent amount of domestic responsibility, study after study has shown that women retain responsibility for the management of domestic tasks even when men are (helping in) performing it."*

(Sullivan 2000:438)

The dominance of the quantitative paradigm within fatherhood research was increasingly problematised during the 1980's and 1990's, with a critique of focus on the division of paid and unpaid labour between mothers and fathers (Lamb, 2000). This approach has, undoubtedly, obscured perceptions and experiential elements of 'involved fatherhood' (Lewis and Lamb, 2007; Dermott, 2008). The need to explore fatherhood as both "behaviour and identity" (Pleck 2007:196) was, therefore, asserted and, in 1987, Lamb *et al* introduced a seminal conceptualisation of father involvement as comprised of: 'engagement, accessibility, and responsibility'. The merits of Lamb *et al's* (1987) model have also since been critiqued, highlighting a lack of focus within the model on what father involvement might *mean* for fathers (Dermott, 2008) and its emphasis on childcare activities to the exclusion of other elements of contemporary fatherhood, including fathers' paid work (Lewis and Lamb, 2007). There remains a lack of consensus as to how best to measure father involvement (Lamb, 2000; Lewis and Lamb, 2007; Dermott, 2008; Featherstone, 2009; Dermott and Miller, 2015; Miller and Dermott, 2015). Research approaches which attempt to capture the breadth of what fathers 'do' *and* what this means have, therefore, come to be at the centre of much contemporary fatherhood research (Day *et al.*, 2005; Dermott, 2008).

In contrast to the dominance of the quantitative paradigm within fatherhood research, renewed sociological interest in 'the family' in the latter decades of the twentieth century primarily utilised qualitative inquiry. Such explorations, however, were primarily informed by mothers' perspectives. This led to a desire to privilege fathers' perspectives amongst some researchers (Dermott, 2008). It is, however, only in the first decades of the twenty-first century that qualitative work exploring fatherhood began to access the perspectives of fathers as well as mothers (Dermott, 2008). During this time, researchers have sought to enrich understanding of what fathers 'do', through explication of fathers' practices, emotions and experiences in their own words.

The recent proliferation of qualitative research which has centred on fathers' perspectives has invited the perception that, through their fatherly involvement, fathers are becoming more emotionally expressive, or indeed, more emotional (Dermott, 2008; Machin, 2015; Elliott, 2016). This reflects a prevailing understanding that fatherhood is changing and that fathers now strive to be both 'emotionally and economically engaged' in family life. Yet, until the twenty first century, fathers had, almost exclusively, been researched within a public sphere, where the expression of emotion and masculine care may be differently regulated (Gillis, 1996; Connell, 2000). Consequently, the convention that "middle class western masculinity tends to suppress emotion and deny vulnerability" (Connell 2000:5) was perpetuated. To what extent fathers have ever been emotionally detached from family life is, therefore, unclear (Dermott, 2008). As such, there is now broad

agreement that fathers were 'involved' in the emotional element of family relationships long before 'involved fatherhood' became a social concern (Featherstone, 2009). Therefore, it may be that the 'emotional turn' reflects a change in research, rather than a change in family life *per se*. This point is aptly summarised by Dermott (2008:70) who states that, "that emotions of fathers (and men in general) were not recorded in the past does not mean that those emotions were absent." The foci of such explorations have, nevertheless, underscored the perceived importance of emotion and relationships in understandings of contemporary fatherhood.

Overall, the sum of research on father involvement is continually evolving and has taken a variety of approaches. Gender, generation and time have been revealed as key intersections in fatherhood research. Exploring such phenomena in relational terms and using a practice based approach was clearly indicated in the first half of this review. Doing so allows for exploration of how such phenomena are understood, negotiated and expressed within everyday family life over time. Further, this allows for consideration of how fathering practices are connected to cultural constructions of 'good fatherhood'. Privileging the perspectives of a single family member to the exclusion of others in response to their prior exclusion from studies of family life undoubtedly results in a loss of relational complexity from resultant data (Gatrell, 2007; Featherstone, 2009). There was, therefore, a clear indication for the contemporaneous inclusion of children, mothers and fathers in my own research on fathers and fathering.

Summary
- Competing understandings underpin the cultural construction of contemporary UK fatherhood and the research which has sought to understand fatherhood. This is reflected in the lack of consensus as to what constitutes 'father involvement'. Notably, 'good' fathers are seen to need to be caring and to be as involved in childcare and domestic labour as mothers, in addition to being economically engaged breadwinners. Such complexity suggests that there is significant scope for such understandings to be experienced and perceived in both common and divergent ways within and between families.
- Research on fathers, as well as cultural, legal and political representations of fathers, are suffused with allusions to 'the normative family' as a culturally standard model within which 'good fatherhood' is expected to be experienced. 'Normative fathers', therefore, are members of 'normative families'. Non-normative contexts are, through such discursive expectations, problematised. In particular, involved fatherhood, as a proxy for 'good fatherhood', is tethered to the contemporary, western, middle classes. Within such contexts it is expected that fathers will aspire to and experience involved fatherhood. The extent to

which 'involved fatherhood' is expressed in and through the practices of middle class fathers, however, is less certain.

- As highlighted in family research more generally, current research on fathers is dominated by parental perspectives and, consequently, this obfuscates the varied ways in which fatherhood might be understood and experienced within families. It further restricts understanding of the ways in which fathering is negotiated between family members over time and is intersected by social structures such as gender and generation. Fundamentally, the nuances of fatherhood cannot be understood if devolved from the relational contexts of family life, or if fathers, mothers and children are not active in the process of researching fatherhood.

- To date, there has been no research which has taken the culturally normative family, as a starting point for investigation of fathers and fatherhood and sought to explore the construction and experience of this with fathers, mothers and children.

Research aim and questions

The literature review, therefore, gave rise to the following research aim and questions:

Research Aim: To explore how fathers, mothers and children construct fatherhood in normative family circumstances and how they experience and negotiate fathering as a relational phenomenon.

Research Questions:

- How is fatherhood constructed in normative family contexts by fathers, mothers and children?

- Do experiences and perceptions of fathering influence each other and do they vary over time, or in relation to gender, or generation for fathers, mothers or children within normative family contexts?

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological considerations pertaining to this research and provides an account of the research process as I experienced it. In the literature review (Chapter Two), I asserted that the cultural ideal of fatherhood in the UK alludes to fathering in the context of the 'normative family', which comprises a middle class, heterosexual, married parental dyad who live in co-residence with their own children. I argued that understanding and critical consideration of the experience of this ideal within and between families has been limited. These key assertions informed the aim of the research and the specific questions to be addressed.

This chapter begins by locating the research within an ontological and epistemological framework, provides a critical justification for the decision to work within the qualitative paradigm and discusses the chosen methodological approach. In brief, the research comprised a series of ten family case studies. Each case was explored through semi-structured interviews with consenting family members. Following transcription, the interviews were analysed using an inductive and iterative approach.

The chapter goes on to detail the reciprocal process of data construction between researcher and participant(s). It has been noted that qualitative research reporting needs to detail the 'how' of research practice as much as justifying the 'what', in order to be both rigorous and comprehensive (Brien *et al.*, 2014). It has, therefore, been necessary to provide a frank account of the processes of data construction, including sampling, recruitment and data generation. I reflect throughout on where such processes departed from, or were consistent with, my initial expectations.

Next, data analysis is addressed. I consider the extent to which this analytical process has enabled a credible and comprehensive account to be constructed. It is hoped that such efforts toward transparent and detailed reporting of the data analysis will facilitate external judgment about the relevance and credibility of the research findings, as presented in later Chapters Four to Seven (Brien *et al.*, 2014).

The final section considers the ethical issues associated with this research endeavour. The structure of this chapter echoes the research process as I experienced it, yet the reality of being a novice researcher, simultaneously learning, 'doing' and reporting on research, inevitably meant that the process was somewhat less linear than presented here. Although reflexivity is outlined within a distinct sub-section of this chapter, my own reflections on the research methodology and methods permeate this chapter (and are also interwoven with Chapter Eight), reflecting the embeddedness of reflexivity in the interconnected ventures of doing *and* reporting the research (Doyle, 2013).

Research paradigm and methodological approach

Social science concerns itself with generating knowledge of human behaviour and relationships, and may also seek to understand social change. It is within this wide scope that my specific research objectives are situated. It is, however, the lack of consensus regarding the most appropriate exploratory approach for studying the social world, and which data gathered from these explorations are valid, which complicates the answer to how the social world may be understood and which is given particular consideration here (Trigg, 2001).

Particular approaches to research have been grouped into 'paradigms'. A paradigm represents a "cluster of beliefs about how science should be properly conducted " (Bryman 2008:14). Broadly speaking, there are two research paradigms- positivist and constructivist- which have tended to align, respectively, with quantitative and qualitative methods and which, somewhat confusingly, are also referred to as paradigms in their own right. The differing paradigms have historically been seen in opposition, even at war (Bryman, 2008), and, frequently, in hierarchical terms (Oakley, 2000). Within such hierarchical understandings, qualitative research is often pitted as unscientific and anecdotal. Yet, it has also been asserted that, "the two concepts, 'qualitative' and 'quantitative', are not so much terms for two alternative methods of social research, as they are two social constructs that group together particular sets of practices" (Alasuutari et al. 2008:1). Therefore, it has been argued that it is not the paradigm with which a researcher aligns his or herself which should determine the methods used, nor is it the uncritical perception of whether the research findings arising from varying paradigmatic approaches are meritorious. Rather, it is the degree to which the methods as chosen and enacted permit the exploration of the social context under scrutiny (Alasuutari, Bickman and Brannen, 2008). Additionally, researchers should not see themselves as either 'quantitative' or 'qualitative' researchers, given that knowledge and/or utilisation of one does not preclude the same of the other (Oakley, 2000). Nor does it prevent a more pluralistic approach (Alasuutari, Bickman and Brannen, 2008). With these caveats in mind, I provide an overview of a complex and tenacious debate regarding the paradigms and, in doing so, I aim to offer sufficient justification for my chosen methodological approach.

The ontological premise that we are simply in the process of defining the world around us and that a certain and irrefutable truth (or natural order) may eventually be wholly known, is integral to positivism (Trigg, 1985). Positivists have traditionally sought to explore the world through the application of reason and the use of the experiment (*the* scientific method), often with quantitative *methods*. The associated methods of positivist inquiry seek to reduce the social world to a set of generalisable rules or principles which are the natural order that govern our social world (Oakley,

2000). Most often, positivist inquiry is associated with research conducted within the disciplines of the natural sciences. However, the nature, meanings and causes of social interactions, such as those outlined by my own research questions, are not necessarily tangible or easily reducible to comparable data sets, nor are they readily quantifiable. Such complexity would, therefore, seem consistent with the opposing constructivist paradigm and a qualitative means of exploration (Oakley, 2000).

Constructivism, however, asserts that it is not simply what we experience, but how we perceive and interpret it that shapes understanding (Trigg, 1985). For constructivists, the means by which we acquire knowledge are complex and not nearly fully comprehended; actors are recursively and continuously creating, interpreting and recreating their social worlds (Bryman, 2008). Constructivist methods, therefore, are inductive and seek to explore, and subjectively interpret, the complexity and nuances of the social world in a way that the reductive methods of positivist inquiry are unable to do. The limited capacity for transferability of constructivist knowledge, however, has been problematised. Given that knowledge in constructivism may only ever be individually constructed, then data constructed within a constructivist paradigm is, inevitably, context bound (Mason, 2002). In contrast, Oakley (2000) asserts such contextual specificity as a strength. For Oakley (2000), a constructivist approach democratises knowledge, prioritising the quality of knowledge over its quantity. Through its detailed explorations of mundane processes, rather than the pursuit of rules, Oakley argues that a constructivist approach offers balance to positivist inquiry. Nevertheless, knowledge derived within the positivist paradigm is broadly considered to be more 'valid' than that derived from methods aligned with a constructivist paradigm (Oakley, 2000). This consensus is, however, uncritical of the fact that the constructivist paradigm has not determined a single appropriate, or ideal, means of enquiry and, as such, 'the scientific method' cannot be compared against a single, constructivist approach (Hollis, 1994). Moreover, this does not mean that qualitative inquiry must be inconsistent or invalid in process and conclusion (Pickering, 1992; Oakley, 2000). Indeed, through such methodological flexibility, constructivism may offer greater scope of potential exploratory methods and allow for rich and broad-reaching knowledge to be gained (Oakley, 2000). Further to this, Trigg (2001) argues that comparison between the approaches of the differing paradigms may be entirely inappropriate as the 'science' in social science is not semantically consistent with that of natural science. The presupposition that the paradigms might be directly comparable has resulted in the falsehood that it is fitting to compare them at all. Rather, the two paradigms are as apples and pears.

In defining my own epistemological position for the purposes of research, I ultimately felt as though I was constrained by what has been termed this 'paradigmatic mentality' (Bryman, 2008) and found the methodological factionalism that permeated the literature to be quite frustrating. I reached the conclusion that, in the design of my methods and data analysis strategy, my research questions best lent themselves to qualitative inquiry and a constructivist paradigm, in order that the subjective and individual nature of the different actors' experiences and understandings of fathers, fathering and fatherhood might be most inductively explored. Epistemologically, this also permitted acknowledgement of the researcher as a social actor embedded in the research process, whose subjective interpretations could not be divorced from the analysis of the data. Indeed, I would not *collect* data from research subjects, but rather I would *construct* it with them as an active participant in the process of research (Mason, 2002). Equally, I deemed it important that the chosen methodology permitted me to simultaneously explore both consistency and variety within the data, yet also fostered potential for *conceptual* transferability of the findings beyond the research contexts (Mason, 2002).

Methodology

This section discusses the rationale for my decision to utilise a case study approach and qualitative methods for the project. There is much debate as to what constitutes case study research. Yin (2009:18) states that a case study is "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." Stake (2000:438), however, stipulates that case study researchers seek what is "particular." It has been suggested, therefore, that "virtually every social scientific study is a case study, or can be conceived as case study, often from a variety of viewpoints. At a minimum every social scientific study is a case study because it is an analysis of social phenomena specific to time and place" (Ragin 1992:2). Importantly, there is no prescription contained within these definitions for a particular set of research processes (Luck, Jackson and Usher, 2006). It is evident, therefore, that a 'case study' approach is malleable, permitting various research foci and methodological approaches (Ragin, 1992). For this reason, case studies potentiate a 'paradigmatic bridge' (Luck, Jackson and Usher, 2006), redressing, at least in part, the factionalism of the aforementioned 'paradigm wars' through their flexibility. A case study approach was, therefore, chosen for the purposes of exploring the phenomenon of interest in the most fruitful way, rather than a desire to be a particular 'type' of researcher.

In order to be 'case-led' in informing the methods for the study, it was necessary for me to delineate the boundaries of 'the case'. Defining 'the case' seemed initially simple; each case would be a

'normative family'. Yet 'the case' can be a value laden and malleable construction in itself (Harvey, 2009). I sought middle class families with married, heterosexual, parental dyads living in co-residence with their own children. As noted in Chapter Two, many UK families reflect this familial structure (Speight *et al.*, 2013), yet the 'normative family' also represents the cultural ideal of 'good fatherhood' and within which it is expected that 'good fathering' is 'done'. Within my own constructions, therefore, both the prevalence of normative family structures in the UK and the obduracy of the 'normative family' as a cultural ideal lent ontological status to 'the normative family' *and* as a case construct. This allowed me to present my case construct to potential participants as a fixed and unproblematic entity within my recruitment materials and, for the most part, to imagine it as such in my own mind. One parental dyad who participated, however, were unmarried. Yet, the recruitment materials stipulated my request for married couples. These participants, therefore, had determined that their relationship was sufficiently 'marriage like' for this particular recruitment criterion to be overlooked. For this family, marriage, in the construction of the normative family, was of less importance than I had asserted it to be. Some individuals who initially expressed an interest in participating, later articulated that they didn't consider themselves to be in 'professional' occupations and were, therefore, unsuited to the study (I address why I used 'professional' employment status, rather than any other measure of class, in the 'intended sample' section of this chapter). I did not attempt to convince would-be participants who questioned their professional status otherwise and nor did I press participants to evidence their 'professional' status if they identified as such. Being 'a professional' was, like 'the normative family', variously interpreted by participants and would-be participants. Though I did not recognise it at the recruitment stage, attending to such dynamic meanings would come to be central to my analysis of the project's findings.

Fathers, the practices of fathering and how these are understood and experienced are embedded within the wider complexity and processes of family life and intimate relationships more generally, as well as being part of the social world as a whole (Morgan, 1996; Smart, 2007). Such complexities and mechanisms are not readily evident, nor do they lend themselves to reductive exploration if they are to be understood in detail. Therefore, it was my contention that such complexity might be best explored through what Yin (2009) terms an exploratory case study; a design which is intended as a means to scope and define the boundaries of an issue for which there is a paucity of knowledge. As outlined by the literature review (Chapter Two), there is such a paucity pertaining to relational aspects of fathering in 'unproblematic' circumstances. Stake (1995), however, states that the design of a case study should be derived from its purpose. Stake (1995:1) captures my own purpose at the point of embarking on this research in saying, "we are interested in them for both their uniqueness

and their commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories."
Specifically, I wanted to begin to unpick fathering as a "diverse set of activities where the influences
on men are complex and dynamic." (Lewis & Lamb 2007:9) and as a relational phenomenon; both
variably and coincidentally experienced and understood within and between families. With this in
mind, I decided that each case would be an 'instrumental case' (Stake, 1995), specifically, a
'normative family', within which the commonality and difference between the constituent actors
might be explored. Individual cases could then be used to inform comparisons within a collection of
cases- a *collective case study-* of fathering in normative families (Stake, 1995).

As with any research methodology, there are perceived limitations within the case study approach
and it is important to view these critically. That is, to consider the extent to which it is possible to
anticipate or overcome perceived methodological shortcomings (Yin, 2009). Given the
contextualised knowledge that a constructivist approach fosters, there is a distinction to be made
between that which might be conceptually transferable between cases and that which might be
generalisable beyond the empirical dataset (Mason, 2002). Using a collective of case studies is
perceived to be more robust as an approach than the use of a single case, as it may permit the
synthesis of overarching theoretical premises which, in turn, may be transferable between cases and
beyond the dataset (Stake, 1995). Nevertheless, the findings remain bound to the research context
and the empirical findings cannot be presumed to be generalisable (Yin, 2009). Therefore, through
the study of multiple cases I have, at least in part, sought to address the issue of the generalisability
of my findings. My capacity to recruit cases which were absolute replications of one another,
however, remained both theoretical and idealistic and, as evidenced above, 'the case' is a subjective
construction which cannot be objectively assessed or controlled. Therefore, I made no efforts to
control for the potential differences in the cases beyond outlining recruitment criteria for would-be
participants to evaluate themselves against. Rather, my intention was to utilise the anticipated
contrasts between families to further illustrate and explore the research questions (Yin, 2009). Stake
(1995) also argues, however, that the generalisability of findings from qualitative case studies is of
marginal relevance and should not be the qualitative researcher's primary concern. Rather, "the real
business of case study is particularization, not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to
know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is
emphasis on uniqueness and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but
the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself" (Stake 1995:8). What I inferred from this was
that it was imperative that the data were constructed and collected in such a way as to create in-
depth knowledge and understanding of the individual cases *before* drawing any comparisons
between them. The emphasis that Stake (1995) places on first understanding the individual case

when undertaking data analysis, as opposed to comparison between cases, however, raises the question of methodological rigour in qualitative research more generally. Specifically, how it might be demonstrated that detailed understanding has been achieved. One method of increasing the trustworthiness and demonstrating methodological rigour in qualitative case study approaches is through using a schematic to provide a transparent, visual map of the research process (Rosenberg and Yates, 2007). Below is such a schematic, demonstrating the concepts I considered in determining the methodological approach:

Figure 1. Methodological design process

Research questions
• How is fatherhood constructed in normative family contexts from the perspectives of fathers, mothers and children?   • Do experiences and perceptions of fathering vary for and between fathers, mothers and children within normative family contexts and are there commonalties?

Underpinning theoretical concepts for the research			
Constructing fatherhood	Relational approach	Family practices	Children as independent social actors
Research context			
Everyday family life	Normative families		Fathering

Paradigmatic alignment
Constructivist/qualitative

Methodological approach
Collective of family case studies

This type of methodological transparency does not, however, aspire to objectivity. The data I constructed with the research participants, necessarily, contains my subjective influence as a

researcher; not least through my presence and activity in the research process, but intrinsically so, due to the fundamental emphasis on interpretation that qualitative research is constructed upon (Stake, 1995). Throughout the project and the writing of the thesis, I have sought to acknowledge and reflect upon my integration into the social processes of doing the research which arise from my existence as an actor *within* it; an actor replete with my own values which inform my judgements and actions. This process of reflection was not one which was disentangled from doing the research, rather it formed part of the iterative undertaking of qualitative research. Stake (1995:9) describes this component of reflexivity as "progressive focussing," asserting it as a crucial component of the reflexive process and involving doing, interpreting and modifying in order to cumulatively refine and develop understanding of the case(s). (Reflexivity is discussed in greater detail in the next section).

Using qualitative case studies is perceived to allow for more than simply an appreciation of the ability of the researcher to construct and interpret knowledge, it is also thought to permit the exploration and interpretation of how the research participants do so. Subsequently, it facilitates the analytical combination of these knowledges to construct a deep understanding of the contexts explored (Mason, 2002). This is consistent with the way individuals make sense of and interpret phenomena in the social world (Yin, 2009) and is a legitimate means of deriving knowledge from the data in a constructivist paradigm (Thomas, 2011). Stake (1995) cautions against over emphasising either the researcher's or the participants' interpretations to the extent that one effectively excludes, or obscures, the other. Rather, the aspiration of qualitative case study methods should be to preserve the detail of multiple realities; to hold contradiction and difference in equal value to the construction of collective conclusions (Stake, 1995).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a fundamental facet of social research (Doyle, 2013). In the following discussion, I locate the process of reflexivity in the context of my research, asserting that the process of reflection may be either personal or professional, and that these two contexts are not mutually exclusive. What is most important is that a disciplined and conscious approach is taken toward reflexivity (Breda, 2008). As such, I do not disembed reflexivity as a distinct *research* process, but rather see it as an activity of everyday life (of which research is a part for the researcher) and acknowledge the innate complexity, perhaps futility, of attempting to disentangle researcher positionality from research findings (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Bryman, 2012).

If reflexivity is, by nature, indistinct, omnipresent and mundane, this raises the question of how a disciplined approach to reflexivity might be undertaken. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) state that reflexivity is difficult to implement in the present and that it is more easily undertaken with the

benefit of hindsight. As I have alluded to earlier, I have continually made efforts to draw and reflect upon my recollections of the research process through repeated self-interrogation. I would, however, argue that *disciplined* reflexivity is first achieved by defining reflexivity as a continuous and iterative process (Bryman, 2012; Doyle, 2013). Accordingly, reflexive detail permeates throughout my reporting of the research, rather than being a separate endeavour taking place at distinct junctures within the research process. Furthermore, my experiences, perceptions and reflections changed over time as I revisited transcripts, as my knowledge of the data developed and as I was encouraged to consider the data in new ways through the input of external academic criticism. It is, therefore, necessary to codify and define the nature of my reflexivity, so that it is recognisable as such. The reflexive processes which I have exercised during the research are broadly in line with those described by Burkitt (2012) and include recursive self-reflection, self-awareness, emotion and imagination. I have made efforts to consider and report on all of these elements of reflexivity as they were relevant during the 'doing' of the research and in writing the thesis. Such facets are reflected in this chapter and in Chapter Eight when I give attention to how I felt about certain issues, how I made sense of the research contexts, relationships and data, how I interacted with participants and the data, and what I perceived that the participants made of the research process. My reflexive endeavours have led to me conclude that this research and its outputs constitute my personal and subjective endeavour, which therefore reflects my own inevitable shortcomings and fallibilities (Rose, 1997). Such acceptance, I believe, fosters trustworthy reporting of the research, permitting a transparent account of the limitations of the research.

Data construction

The next section details how the data were constructed and the rationale for the selected methods. I first discuss how and, significantly for me, *when* the families were recruited. I then describe the study sample and its characteristics. Lastly, I critically discuss the primary data collection method; the interviews I undertook with family members.

Intended Sample

I initially intended to recruit fifteen cases. There is, however, simply no definitive means of determining how much qualitative data are adequate in the planning phase of a research project (Baker and Edwards, 2012). While the obvious solution is to continue until data saturation is reached (the point at which no new information is being derived), in reality, this may not be practical or possible. Within constructivism, the concept of data saturation is incongruous, as all knowledge is self-constructed and contextualised. Furthermore, within the notion of identifying 'data saturation', is an implicit assumption that it might be feasible to undertake sampling, data collection and data

analysis in a cyclical way, rather than as a largely linear process (Bryman, 2012). This makes saturation a difficult target in the practical application of qualitative research that is constrained by time and budgets. Therefore, it is the capacity of qualitative interviews to provide a convincing analytical narrative, rather than any pre-determined number of participants or aspiration toward data saturation which is paramount (Baker and Edwards, 2012). It has been the express intent of my research design to generate rich and complex data through exploration of a set of complex social processes in a specific context. This idiographic approach to the research led me to postulate that fifteen cases would constitute an adequate number to explore variance within the chosen phenomenon (Stake, 1995) and, as Baker & Edwards (2012) suggest, to provide a reasonable level of empirical evidence to assert that the knowledge constructed would convincingly represent the research situation to an external audience.

The planned recruitment of fifteen cases would have provided me with a minimum of thirty research participants (if only two people per case participated) and, if each family member was interviewed individually, with thirty interviews. I was, however, only able to recruit ten cases to the study (see recruitment section for a discussion of the reasons), providing thirty-six participants and involving twenty-nine interviews. This was, fortuitously, broadly similar to that which was determined as hypothetically sufficient in the planning stages of the research. I had, however, not anticipated the richness of data which was constructed; data which, in my opinion, provided a detailed and nuanced account of 'fathering in normative contexts'.

As noted, potential participants were permitted to self-define in accordance with the criteria outlined in the recruitment material and study information sheets. A primary issue for me was how to ask families to define themselves as 'middle class,' given the vague and subjective boundaries of what it is to be middle class (the issue of class status is also discussed briefly in Chapter Two and in greater detail in Chapter Eight). As such, I chose to ask for participants where at least one parent identified themselves as in a 'professional' occupation. It was the *perception* of family identity that was fundamental, rather than this having an irrefutable, evidential basis. I felt that families who identified as professional and therefore, implicitly, as middle class would be likely to express the values and practices of the middle classes which was sufficient for me to explore the research questions. Almost all mothers and fathers were employed in professional roles; they worked in information technology, academia or education, within the public, private or charitable sectors and often in roles for which they needed to be highly qualified, and which they described as demanding.

The study did not seek to recruit a representative sample of fathers and families and no explicit reference to ethnicity was made within recruitment materials. The relative ethnic homogeneity of

parents in the study sample was notable, however. Families' ethnicities are recorded in Table 1 below. The small scale of the study would, in any event, have constrained the potential to infer a relationship between fathers' ethnicity and the themes which emerged from the data, even had participating parents been more ethnically diverse. The complexities of ethnic identity for individuals and within families would make this particularly problematic. Notwithstanding this, there was some ethnic diversity within the study, which has added depth and nuance to the data and emergent themes within the findings.

Children eligible to participate were those of school age, as I considered that they would likely be able to consent and participate autonomously and independently. Nevertheless, other researchers have argued that children as young two years old can contribute meaningfully to qualitative research about their everyday lives (Irwin and Johnson, 2005).

Table 1 below presents a brief description of family structures, in interview order. All names are pseudonyms. 'Laserblast' and 'Lily' are self-assigned pseudonyms.

Table 1. Sample details

Family One	Brendan (Dad), Joanne (Mum) and their three sons; Ben (17 years old) Josh (14 years old) and Billy (11 years old). Both parents were white British.
Family Two	John (Dad), Helen (Mum) and their three children (two sons and one daughter); Laserblast (8 years old), Lily (6 years old) and Adam (1 year old: non-participant). John was white British and Helen white Irish.
Family Three	Bruce (Dad), Sarah (Mum) and their two sons; Noah (11 years old) and Connor (7 years old: chose not to participate). Bruce was white British, whilst Sarah was Black British and of Caribbean descent.
Family Four	Andrew (Dad) and Ruth (Mum) and their three children (two sons and one daughter); James (7 years old), Samuel (5 years old: chose not to participate) and Nina (3 years old: non-participant). Both parents were white British.
Family Five	Imran (Dad), Kathryn (Mum) and their son, Solomon (5 years old). Imran was of North African origin, whilst Kathryn was white British.
Family Six	Dean (Dad) and Jenny (Mum) and their three children (two daughters and one son); Rory (8 years old), Isla (5 years old) and Rose (3 years old: non-participant). Both parents were white British.
Family Seven	Paul (Dad), Ellie (Mum) and their daughter, Amy (5 years old). Both parents were white British.

Family Eight	William (Dad) and Rita (Mum) and their son and daughter; Joseph (6 years old: chose not to participate) and Millie (3 years old: non-participant). William was white British and Rita was of South African origin.
Family Nine	Edward (Dad), Emily (Mum) and their two sons; Reuben (4 years old) and Sam (3 years old: non-participant). Both parents were white British.
Family Ten	Michael (Dad), Stephanie (Mum) and their one son and three daughters; Annika (14 years old), Anja (11 years old), Freya (10 years old) and Luke (4 years old). Michael was white European and Stephanie was white British.

Participants are labelled throughout the findings so as to denote which family they were in, what their position was in the family and, in the case of children, their age. For example, Andrew, the father in Family Four, is shown as 'Andrew, F4F' when excerpts from his transcript are used. Anja, a daughter in Family Ten, is shown as 'Anja, F10D, 11 years'.

Recruitment

I began my efforts to recruit participants following receipt of confirmation of ethical approval for my study on 7th March 2015. The data generation phase ran between the end of March 2015 and the beginning of November 2015. I used a combination of snowball and purposive selection to obtain the sample. Congruently, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) state that accessing a sample is best achieved by using a variety of methods.

I initially sent a speculative recruitment e-mail via the University staff mailing list, inviting interested parties to contact me. I chose to approach staff, rather than students, as I reasoned that there would be higher numbers meeting my inclusion criteria amongst staff than amongst students. I also displayed posters in venues where I might expect to find participants. Venues included: two park cafes, a community library, two rugby clubs, a cricket club and a 'woodland centre' (a facility specifically aimed at families). Notably, other researchers have received generally poor responses when approaching men as the first point of contact for family participation (Lewis, 2009). It has been suggested, therefore, that addressing recruitment literature specifically to 'fathers' is a more fruitful recruitment technique than if the term 'parents' is used (Lewis, 2009). As such, I was careful to specifically refer to fathers in the recruitment materials, but also invited both mothers and fathers to make contact if they were interested in participating. I chose not to direct recruitment materials at children. This was in view of decision making processes within families, wherein children are not usually the primary decision makers. Using such methods, I recruited only two families, both of

whom responded to the e-mail circulated around the University mailing lists. The email that was circulated and the posters which I displayed can be found in Appendix One.

I was able to recruit Family Three via snowball sampling from Family One, but hereafter my recruitment became rather more challenging. Consequently, I sought to recruit via an online mothers' group, using mothers as the point of access to the desired sample. These efforts only accessed two further families, the first of which later withdrew from the study due to difficulties in finding convenient times to be interviewed. The second of these families became Family Eight, but it took me some months to arrange to interview them at a time we could mutually accommodate. I noted this as a particular challenge with all families, all of whom had limited time available to participate in interviews, which (collectively) often ran for several hours and/or over multiple sittings. On reflection, I feel that this may have been a significant impediment to families choosing whether or not to participate, or perhaps even to contact me for further information about the research in the first place.

Thereafter, I recirculated the email within the University, to no avail. Concurrently, I had a change in my supervisory team due to the retirement of one of my supervisors. My new supervisor was able to suggest and make initial contact with a further four families. The father of Family Four kindly circulated an email to a number of other families, which resulted in the recruitment of the final family, Family Ten. At this point, it was necessary to stop recruitment as I went on maternity leave.

Following initial contact, I sent information sheets via email to the family member with whom I had made contact (see Appendix Two for examples). I emphasised that any other family member who was interested in participating would need to read them and to indicate an interest in participation in their own right. I determined that a minimum for participation would be for at least two people from each family, affording me some potential for intra-familial comparison. Providing information sheets in advance and asking for every potential family participant to read and consider this prior to confirming that the 'whole family' might be willing to participate is asserted as good practice within studies that rely on family recruitment via an individual family member (Wigfall *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, some family members articulated that they had not seen the information sheets prior to our first face-to-face contact. This echoes Lewis' (2009) experience that information leaflets were not necessarily distributed amongst all potential family participants despite being sent out prior to meeting families. It must, therefore, be acknowledged that parents may act as 'gatekeeper's' to other family members' participation in research, whilst also potentially serving to encourage or coerce them into engagement (Lewis, 2009).

Once the family representative confirmed other family members' interest, I arranged a time to meet with the whole family to explain the project in more detail. I had hoped that this would take place within one week of the initial contact. Without exception, however, the busy lives of the research participants and my own family commitments restricted the timeliness of the first face-to-face meeting. When I did meet with the whole family, or members of the family, I discussed the project with each person individually and privately, addressing any questions arising from the information leaflets. It was of paramount importance to me to be explicit and consistent in doing this, so as not to see parents as brokers of children's consent (Lewis, 2009) and to minimise the risk of parental coercion. This was particularly pertinent given that access to the children was always arranged via parents. Again, I had hoped that this meeting would be a separate encounter and I would return at a later date to complete consent forms and the interviews themselves. Invariably, this was not the case and families preferred to 'just get on with it'. I discuss the issues around consent in a subsection of the 'ethical considerations' section of this chapter.

Overall, the reduction in the number of encounters I had with families (compared to what I had anticipated) was unintentionally fortuitous in eliminating the need to maintain a research relationship over prolonged periods during the data collection phase. The only occasion where this was necessary (with Family Eight, as aforementioned), resulted in me being unable to interview their son because of time constraints. It was initially my intent that I would be able to provide feedback on initial aggregated findings through a final round of interviews with each family group, but this proved impractical and I had to explore other methods of disseminating my findings with participants (see 'feedback' section of this chapter).
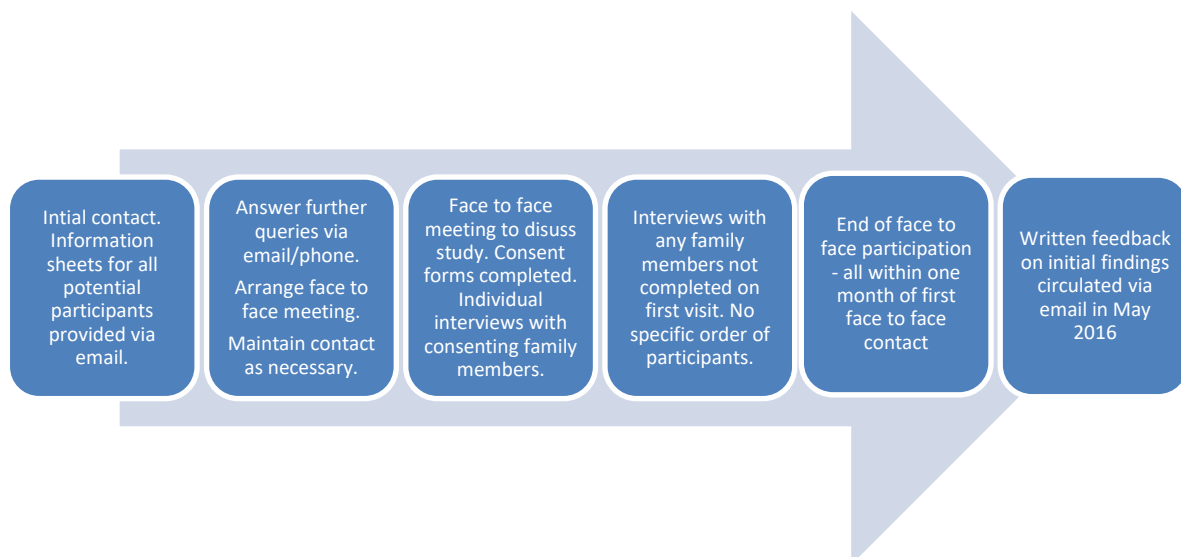
As such, the following diagrams (Figures Two and Three) show, first, the planned approach to recruitment and, second, the reality of recruitment.

Figure 2. Planned timeline of recruitment

| Intial contact. Arrange meeting to explain study. | Meeting to explain and consent participants. | Individual family interviews. Timing to be negotiated following completion of consent forms. | Once commenced, family interviews to be completed within two week timeframe. | Maintaining contact. Monthly, via e-mail phone or post. | Interview to reflect on initial findings. Within 4 months of individual interviews.* | End of participation (within 5 months of initial contact). |

*It was intended that each case receive feedback of the general findings from at least three cases, rather than feedback specific to their own case.

Figure 3. Actual timeline of recruitment

| Intial contact. Information sheets for all potential participants provided via email. | Answer further queries via email/phone. Arrange face to face meeting. Maintain contact as necessary. | Face to face meeting to disuss study. Consent forms completed. Individual interviews with consenting family members. | Interviews with any family members not completed on first visit. No specific order of participants. | End of face to face participation - all within one month of first face to face contact | Written feedback on initial findings circulated via email in May 2016 |

Data construction methods

I chose to conduct individual, semi-structured interviews with each research participant. I undertook these interviews at times and locations convenient to the participants, but most often, in their homes and in the evening. MacLean (2011) asserts that negotiating interview times flexibly with participants helps to build strong research relationships and reduces the impact of the alien

researcher being present in the family home (Thomas, 2011). I found, however, that in having a young family of my own, this flexibility did not come without personal compromise and challenge. The interviews lasted around an hour with adults and about half an hour with children. Each interview was framed by a 'topic guide' which I shared with participants in advance of the interview and left available throughout. There were different topic guides for children and adults (see Appendix Three). I recorded all the interviews using a digital recorder and recordings were later anonymised and transcribed. Pseudonyms for participants are used throughout. Some children were keen to select their own pseudonyms (see 'intended sample' section), but when this was not the case I assigned pseudonyms.

I undertook sixteen interviews with twenty adults. All parents participated. There were thirteen interviews with children. Of the sixteen child participants, ten were boys and six were girls, their ages ranged between four and seventeen years old. Eight families had more than one child and two had a singleton child. I was only able to capture multiple sibling perspectives in four families, due to children either electing not to participate or not being of school age. Overall, I interviewed four sets of parents as dyads and three pairs of children.

Despite the methodological diversity permitted by a case study approach, my choice of qualitative interviews might, at face value, consign me to the guilty heap of those having a "trained incapacity to think" (Alasuutari et al. 2008:5) through opting for a populist method of qualitative inquiry (Mason, 2002). Indeed, convention alone is not adequate reason to select one method over another. My interest lay in the *perceptions* of my participants and their *constructions* of the social world; motivations which have been cited as appropriate reasons for selecting qualitative interviews as a research method (Mason, 2002). Practically, using interviews allowed me to include family members on an individual basis, to conduct the research in the home or other locations as necessary. Given that 'fathering' is a routine aspect of some people's everyday lives it, somewhat paradoxically, became an abstract notion when people were asked to reflect upon it and upon how they positioned themselves in relation to it. I found, however, that the 'reflective contexts' provided by interviews were useful in enabling this. I did not want to unduly dominate or influence the scope and flow of the discussion, but also found that participants sought guidance in relation to their reflective process. A semi-structured interview, therefore, allowed me to explore my research questions in-depth with participants, but also to be responsive to the interaction between myself as researcher and the interviewee as a social process in its own right (Mason, 2002). Each interview experience also allowed me to iteratively develop my approach to subsequent interviews.

Home, as noted in the literature review chapter, is a particular 'conceptual edifice' of family and family life (Morgan, 1996). By situating the research in the home environment, I had hoped that I would be able to explore the lived experience of family life in its 'natural setting', where the research participants would be most comfortable. However, the presence of a researcher and the resulting disturbance in the routines and workings of family life may have encouraged, discouraged or otherwise altered particular social actions in unforeseen and unintended ways (Gabb, 2008; Thomas, 2011). As such, conducting the research in the lived environment could not elicit unadulterated insight into a pristine social context, or a context somehow disembedded from the social world. This was not necessarily problematic, but necessitated a reflexive approach to understanding my own influence within the research context. I was fortunate that the homes of my participants were spacious enough to provide a private space, away from other family members, in which to conduct the interviews; especially given that MacLean (2011) notes this as a particular difficulty arising for some researchers conducting research in participants' homes. Nonetheless, I found myself very nervous upon entering the homes of strangers. I also found it to be immensely draining when, in an attempt to encourage their open and enthusiastic participation, I endeavoured to establish an instant rapport with family members and then maintain this rapport across, quite often, several hours of interviewing. While I do think that the adult participants felt obligated to put me at ease in their homes and to make efforts to build that initial mutual rapport, this was not always the case with the child participants. Several of the younger children were initially quite reticent with me and I felt a significant burden of responsibility to ensure that they chose to participate of their own volition and did not feel intimidated or concerned by my presence. It was, perhaps, to the further detriment of these research relationships with the younger children that many of the interviews took place in the evening, after school, when they were tired and when they may not have been at their most receptive or congenial. In some cases, however, younger participants were very keen to share (presenting me with a barrage of their own questions), enthusiastic, and highly articulate. They seemed to regard the research process as neither daunting, nor especially alien. Furthermore, I encountered one teenage participant who was seemingly quite apathetic in his tone and demeanour, but who still answered my questions at length and both affirmed and reaffirmed his desire to participate when questioned. These experiences are consistent with what Harden *et al* (2010) have described; some children may feel more confident to participate in research when in their home environment, but others may be more comfortable where the 'otherness' of the researcher is not so evident (Harden *et al.*, 2010) The power relations that impact upon children within families and outside of the family context are complex and must, similarly, be seen as intersecting with the power relations of the research relationship. While I could, and have, asserted

an evidence base that made it preferential for me to situate the research in the home, this decision was clearly not without its limitations and was associated with challenges for some participants as well as myself. Where I did interview participants away from their home environment (and this happened on two occasions), I invariably interviewed parents at work. Christensen and Prout (2002) postulate that it should not be assumed that work and home life occur in different locations, while Seymour (2007) has shown the permeability between work and home. Furthermore, 'family practices' (Morgan, 1996) may take place outside of the home, thus legitimising non-home environments as an additional potential 'sites of family life'. The reality for me, however, was that the interviews conducted 'at work' felt more formal, they took place across a desk and were less like the 'conversation with purpose' (Mason, 2002) than I had both intended and hoped for. Nevertheless, I perceived no additional awkwardness from participants in such contexts; perhaps due to their familiarity with their work environments, as with their home contexts.

Morrow (2009) states that there is significant potential for the loss of self-esteem and embarrassment through participation in social research, arising from perceived difficulty in expressing one's views and having them received in a neutral way. This is an issue, not just in respect of perceptions of researcher neutrality, but also one that pertains to other interview participants, in this case, family members. This is particularly true of multiple perspectives families research, where there are clear intergenerational power imbalances (Harden *et al.*, 2010). It has been suggested that attempts by researchers to give children 'voice' and to mediate the influence of other family members over children's responses, have often uncritically assumed that this necessitates interviewing children separately (Maclean and Harden, 2014). Some children, however, may find group interviews an easier situation in which to express their views (Kirk, 2007). Further to this, there is the issue of collective family display (Finch, 2007), wherein families and individuals may present a representation of family life which complies with their perceptions and constructions of what family their family *is* or *ought* to be. Harden *et al* (2010) assert that children are less likely to collude with family display than adults and that group interviews are more likely to elicit 'display' responses due to their more public nature. On balance, I took the decision to involve participants on an individual basis so that they were free to express their own perceptions and insights into the experience of fathering without immediate influence of other family members and to ensure scope for intrafamilial comparison. Nevertheless, several parents wished to be interviewed together, citing time as the reason. Some siblings also wished to be interviewed together, though this seemed to be related to their lack of familiarity with me. Consequently, I was led by participants' preferences with regard to whether they were interviewed individually or in pairs. While this fell short of the initial 'plan' for the research, I had not anticipated just how busy the lives of the families that I recruited

were, or how highly valued their leisure time was. I believe that, had I enforced individual interviews, this could have curtailed or inhibited the participation of one or more family members, or may have created a less convivial atmosphere and resulted in a more difficult interview. In actuality, this was not the case and I found that such interviews flowed just as easily as individual interviews, if not more so, as there was an additional person to provide, or expand upon, an answer. Furthermore, where children opted to be interviewed as a dyad, this may not have stifled their participation, but rather potentiated their 'voice', as others have suggested is feasible (Maclean and Harden, 2014). Given the competing and contradictory literature surrounding how best to 'do' multiple perspectives families research, allowing participants to choose whether or not to be interviewed on their own, represented a justifiable compromise.

Interview Design

When designing a semi-structured interview, it is important for the researcher to view the structure as being akin to a 'conversation with a purpose' (Mason, 2002) and be both active and reflexive within the interview process. That is (and as earlier stipulated), as a researcher working in a constructivist paradigm, one should view the interview as a means of constructing data *with* participants, rather than extracting data from them (Mason, 2002).

During my first interview, I presented the interviewee with a series of questions, split into topic areas and held, for myself, a list of more detailed questions. This resulted in the interviewee answering the questions, or making reference to particular phrases from the questions and in myself having to repeatedly consult my list of questions. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the interview had a poor flow between questions and, when I transcribed the interview, I regretted not expanding on a number of points. I acknowledge, however, the limitations of being a novice researcher and this process has taught and continues to teach me as much about what it is to do research, as it has helped me to construct answers to the research questions. As already noted, in subsequent interviews I used a topic guide (see Appendix Three). These guides only detailed potential areas of discussion and dispensed with my own more specific reference questions, in order that I was more focussed on the individual conversation, rather than on acquiring specific answers. This worked rather better, and increasingly so, as I developed greater confidence in both initiating interviews and, subsequently, steering the conversation through its natural ebbs, flows and inevitable deviations down less relevant tributaries of thought.

A point of reflection which arose during my field work, was the extent to which I imagined and responded to the values and practices of participants and shaped my perceptions of and interactions with participants accordingly. On several occasions, I built a very easy rapport with family members

during interviews and often felt as though I 'knew' what they were going to say in answer to my questions, or found myself empathising with them during the course of the interview and even during transcription and analysis. This imagining of participants as being 'like myself' made it difficult to obtain space between myself and the data and, therefore, to permit insight which is data led and not grounded in presumption or personal experience. Conversely, it also provided the opportunity for easy conversation and, often, for clarification of specific issues. Through this, I was able to probe for further details in interviews and to explore how the participant's own experiences and perceptions may have had both continuities and discontinuities with my own. Gabb (2008:22) has suggested that "the better the researcher understands and identifies with the interviewees' situation, the better the data are likely to be." Contrastingly, during my interview with Michael and Stephanie (the parents of Family Ten), I internally 'othered' their values and practices as different to my own. During their interview, I did not want to openly disagree with Stephanie or Michael, or to appear as though I was judging their contributions in a negative way. I therefore perceived a need to manage my own reactions to their responses and to conceal the discomfort I felt about some of the assertions which they made. This made it difficult to build a rapport, or to expand upon lines of enquiry in the same way that I had with other families. The extent to which Michael and Stephanie were afforded the same opportunity to develop their accounts of their perspectives and experiences during their interview was, therefore, constrained relative to other parents who participated. There was little in the extant literature which could have prepared me for this issue of researcher positionality, or how the mundane issue of 'discomfort' might shape the interview process. My subsequent analysis of their interview transcript revealed, however, that it was not simply 'a bad interview', as I had first thought. Rather, it allowed me to further immerse myself in and develop my cross case analyses, considering where both the continuities and discontinuities between Family Ten and other families lay. On balance, this highlights the presence of my own subjectivities within the research, rather than an error of research *per se.*

The extent to which interviews are able to accommodate people's preferences and needs when articulating their meaning has been a focus of critique of interviews as a research method (O'Brien, Alldred and Jones, 1996). Further, the potential for poor recall of both participant and of the researcher in their reflexive interpretations of the research context(s) has also been asserted (Yin, 2009). In order to alleviate these issues, I strove to afford the participants some methodological autonomy; offering choices in how they constructed and conveyed their meaning. I also kept brief field notes following each interview in order to encourage a reflexive process which was both contemporaneous and developed through recollections and reflections at a later date (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

Biographies

The topic guides used in the interviews were intended to allow participating adults to construct a biographical narrative around a set of pre-determined life events (including the birth of children, children starting school and children leaving home). Biography is a means of capturing a "complex picture of social change and connections within networks of kin...they can deal with the meanings that individuals attribute to events and relationships" (Smart 2007:42). Similarly, Morgan (2011) sees such linking of biography to history as a key way through which practices come to be significant as *family practices* specifically. Biographies give us 'thick descriptions' (Mason, 2002) of nuanced, individually experienced and interpreted, social processes. I intended that, in focussing on the elicitation of biographical accounts, I would allow for the discussion of memories and how meanings and interpretations change over time and interact with the present, or an imagined future. Biographical exploration structured the interviews with children and with adults who participated in the study, so as to provide a rounded understanding of fathering as a relational process over time.

Biographies, however, relate, primarily, to the individual and it was my aim to simultaneously explore the 'imaginary' of the fathering relationship; how it exists and develops within individual imaginaries (Smart, 2007). While the 'normative family' was the defined site within which individual imaginings were explored, it is notable that a relational understanding of family life, asserts that family members' individual imaginings are constructed in relation to the wider social, historical and cultural contexts in which they are articulated (Smart, 2007; Roseneil and Ketokivi, 2015). Imaginary can also inform, therefore, how historical understandings of the 'normative family' are reproduced, altered or rejected across generations (Gillis, 1996). Equally, imagined futures have the same power to indicate our aspirations to adhere to a particular form of family and family life (Smart, 2007). The biographical approach taken, therefore, allowed for exploration of how individual biographies were *embedded* in social contexts.

Participatory tasks and methods

I invited adult participants to bring along meaningful objects, such as family photographs or other artefacts which they found evocative of their understandings or experiences of fathering. Materiality can be a useful tool in the application of biographical methods to studies of family life, as material objects may be invested with particular meaning or histories (Smart, 2007). While it was suggested to adult participants prior to the interview that they may wish to bring such objects, none chose to present any for discussion. I can only speculate as to the reasons for this, but consider that, for the most part, the research participants wanted, at least initially, to be guided by my questioning and were content to rely on the topic guide to navigate and inform the interview, rather than shaping it

themselves in advance. Furthermore, participants were not given very long to consider what they might like to bring with them (because there was often no delay between consenting to participate and the interview taking place) and perhaps did not have time to find, or wish to spend time finding, something suitable.

As children were positioned as independent social actors in the research process, the research was designed to support their autonomous contributions (Mason and Hood, 2011). It has been stated that "the context in which research with children is conducted is generally characterized by institutionalized, asymmetrical adult–child relations, in which age acts as a structural factor. This has the effect of limiting researcher facilitation of children's agency" (Mason & Hood 2011:493). 'The family' is one such site to be characterized by these asymmetrical relations (Alanen, 2001). Therefore, deconstructing, or at least being conscious of, some of the power imbalance that exists between children and adult actors was necessary, in order that children might "speak up and be heard" (O'Kane 2008:126). There is a debate as to whether children need specific methods to better facilitate their participation, or whether participatory methods are advantageous for all persons. Given the lack of consensus surrounding which methods might be preferential in fostering children's agency and voice (Kirk, 2007) it was, therefore, imperative to design methods that were suitable for children *reflexively*. There has been limited critique of 'novel methods' with children in research and these 'novel methods' have often been adopted with the unproblematised assumption that task centred activity is somehow more fun, or more engaging, for children (Punch, 2002). Drawings have been shown as a useful means of instigating conversation and aiding recall, but some children have found them problematic due to their perceptions that they lacked of drawing ability (Kirk, 2007). A combination of traditional interview methods and more task-centred activities have been argued to be useful for engaging children and redressing any anxiety that they may feel at being required to provide a verbal answer immediately (Coad, 2007). Artifacts created through the use of participatory tasks may also serve to offer a focus around which discussions may be structured (Harden *et al.*, 2010). Clearly, a balance had to be struck between offering children the autonomy to participate in research independently, and to self-determine their competence to do so, whilst concurrently ensuring that they were not marginalised in their ability to contibute by unequal power relations (Punch, 2002; Kirk, 2007). I determined that it was both practical and pragmatic to conduct semi-structured interviews with children as with adults, but with the option for children to undertake participatory tasks in accordance with their preferences. Children's age was a significant factor in shaping which tasks they selected to integrate into their interviews. The older the children were, the fewer participatory methods were used. Providing a variety of tasks was especially useful with younger children for maintaining their interest and for diverting attention away from myself as a

stranger and, potentially, as quite an intimidating presence in the home. I am not convinced that such methods were beneficial in allowing children to express their ideas more readily than if they were just asked questions, however. The integrated tasks, especially ones which required children to draw or focus on creating something tangible, seemed to act more as a distraction, making it harder to keep the conversation on topic. Generally speaking, it was easier to interview the children who had been attending school for longer periods of time, who were more accustomed to being asked questions and understood the expectation to formulate a verbal response.

The selection of tasks available to children included:

- a series of discussion prompts which contained an image of family life with a title which reflected a particular aspect of the topic guide.
- a collection of images of 'real life dads' from which they were asked to select ones which they thought were interesting, or particularly similar or dissimilar to their own father.
- a 'drawing dad' task (an example of this can be found in Appendix Four).

Where children were reticent to offer descriptive verbal responses about their experiences of 'what fathers do' using these prompts, there was also potential for them to create diagrams and drawings. I did not retain these drawing and diagrams as data, but left them with the participants.

Ascertaining if children did or did not wish to participate in these tasks was challenging. I made it verbally clear to children that they were in control of the interview, their participation and their choice of tasks. Although children were asked to verbalise their preferences, it was also necessary to be sensitive to their non-verbal cues (Kirk, 2007). The extent to which I achieved a high degree of responsiveness to children's preferences is one I continue to debate, not least in relation to how I could possibly *know*, in any categorical way, the thought processes of another actor. I think, overall, this is an irreconcilable issue for this research and that being aware of the issues, whilst erring toward a cautionary stance regarding children's ongoing consent to participate is the best, albeit, compromised resolution.

Feedback

I did not routinely return interview transcripts to participants to review. This decision was made in light of the risk of a confidentiality breach within the family network (Harden *et al.*, 2010). In order to offer participants autonomy, they were advised that if they specifically wanted their interview transcripts, then they could have them (Nunkoosing, 2005). (See consent section of this chapter for further detail).

I had intended to offer whole family feedback interviews, which could also be used as data and drawn upon for analysis. When it became clear that timescales did not allow for this, it seemed that an alternative means of feedback would need to be devised. I was keen that such a method would not require further time and effort from the families who had participated (now a year earlier), but would allow me to fulfil the moral obligation, and expressed commitment, to offer something in return for participants' participation (Mason, 2002; Shaw, Brady and Davey, 2011).

I, therefore, provided a summary sheet of initial findings to participants, via email, once I had undertaken sufficient analysis to inform this in a meaningful way. This feedback was generalised, rather than case specific (as had also been the intent in the original feedback 'plan'), so that families could not identity data from family members in order to protect confidentiality (the feedback sheet emailed to participants can be found in Appendix Five). Shortcomings of this approach included being unable to guarantee that participants had received the feedback or to ascertain if the feedback had been circulated to all participating family members. No participant offered any response about the feedback provided.

Data Analysis

This section of the chapter records the data analysis methods for the research. Mason (2002) states that data analysis should be rigorous and reported in a transparent way, so as to facilitate *appropriate* generalisations which may be framed in wider social contexts. That is to say, "in such a way that they feed into wider sets of issues or questions, or help to initiate debate about issues and questions which you see as legitimate public concerns" (Mason 2002:202). As noted, qualitative case study aspires to arrive at a sufficiently detailed understanding to enable credible reporting of findings (Ragin, 1992; Stake, 1995, 2000; Harvey, 2009; Yin, 2009). The following sections, therefore, will attend to *how* I explored cases 'in detail' and the credibility of the interpretations that are presented.

Stages of data analysis

> *"Qualitative research has a special version of Parkinson's Law: data expands to fill the time available"*

(Richards 2009:58).

My analysis was continually evolving but this process needed, ultimately, to be reined in so that some semblance of a 'write up' might eventually be possible. The push and pull of these competing tensions was something I struggled with throughout. Due to the 'back-loading' of my interviews within the year of my PhD allocated to data collection, I failed, in any substantial way, to adhere to

Silverman's (2014) number one 'rule' for qualitative data analysis - to start analysis early. This may have contributed to my underlying disquiet about whether I had done enough with, or said enough about, the data. Such disquiet is perhaps an inevitability in the constructivist paradigm, wherein an inductive approach is theoretically advocated but, in practice, presents the question of not "whether to reduce the data…[but] when" (Richards 2009:58).

Following transcription and anonymisation of all interviews, transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo (version 11). Consequently, I found myself both learning how to analyse data *and* how to use NVivo. The intention underpinning the use of NVivo was to promote a more systematic and auditable approach to qualitative data analysis; a lack of rigour, as already noted, being a shortcoming asserted of qualitative research in general (Fielding and Warnes, 2009). Nevertheless, I found it simpler in the first instance, and repeatedly thereafter, to work with hard copies of the transcripts; reading, re-reading and reflecting on these to develop my understanding of the dataset, first, in its entirety and, latterly, in detail (Mason, 2002). Reading hard copies of whole interview transcripts was particularly useful as a re-familiarisation exercise after returning to my studies after a leave of absence. Despite my initial plan to undertake intrafamilial analysis prior to undertaking interfamilial analysis (as outlined in the methodology section of this chapter), this proved difficult. I found I could not get a sense of a particular 'case' and where it converged or diverged from the dataset as whole without first constructing an understanding of all the cases collectively (the implications of this are considered in Chapter Eight). NVivo would have allowed me to consider cases individually and then cross reference these, but my level of proficiency with the programme did not afford me an appreciation of this until I had completed my analysis within the software. Deep exploration of the particulars of each case did not emerge until I was engaged with the process of 'writing up' my findings, in contrast, therefore, to my initial intentions.

Once I had developed an understanding of the dataset as a whole, I began to group the data into what NVivo calls 'nodes', but what are also referred to as 'codes' within the wider literature (Mason, 2002; Richards, 2009). These codes were descriptive headings used to break the data down into groups pertaining to the same issue. As I progressed through the dataset, I became increasingly conscious of the malleability of codes and found it helpful to deconstruct some codes into several component parts, whilst converging other codes into one as their conceptual autonomy became increasingly indistinguishable to me. In accordance with the flexible approach to 'opening up' data which Richards (2009) has described, codes came together in a creative way into what I have described as categories. The broad category headings under which codes were grouped were 'describing family', 'events', 'everyday practices' and 'relationships'. NVivo allowed me to represent

my codes and categories as a 'coding tree' which could be iteratively developed as my analysis progressed. I developed, therefore, several versions of the 'coding tree' which represented my sorting of the data within NVivo (my final 'coding tree' is shown in Appendix Six).

There were a number of neuroses which plagued me during coding, however. Codes included 'activities with dad or mum', 'daily routines', 'work' and 'food'. While these examples are descriptive, I also developed codes such as 'family values' which were more analytical. I made much use of the ability to annotate data excerpts in NVivo, using this tool as a means to highlight what I found specifically interesting, to ask a question, or to relate it to other extracts of data or codes. Consequently, I found it difficult to stop myself from 'taking off' (Richards, 2009) from the data. I think, however, this reflected both my own analytical style and the complex ways in which the practices of fathers, and understandings of fatherhood, were bound together in the everyday lives and accounts of participants.

Whilst I understood that the 'right' number of codes and categories was not quantifiable prior to conducting the iterative process of analysis, it has been asserted that codes and categories should be sufficient to map the scope of diversity in the accounts of the participants (Mason, 2002). That is, they should be particular, but also represent the whole (Sandelowski, 1995). The question remained, however, as to how I could *know* with any certitude that I had achieved the task of 'mapping the scope of diversity'. Such uncertainty, however, is argued to be a problem for qualitative researchers and research more generally (James, 2012).

The visual representation of codes in a coding tree also allowed me to further develop my analysis. I used the coding tree as a base from which to ask questions of the data and to develop my thinking from codes and categories into themes. Using the tree and the questions, I repeatedly returned to the data, reinterpreting and remodelling the codes into themes which were, in essence, the 'story' I was beginning to construct from the data. The themes I arrived at through this process were 'dad as provider', 'dad as role model', 'constructing childhoods' and 'time and space' (an excerpt from the 'time and space' theme can be found in Appendix Six). NVivo certainly had its merits here, allowing me to easily sort and sift through the data at this stage and to subdivide themes by family and family member. Nevertheless, data in NVivo is decontextualized from its wider contexts and it was, at various points, useful to return to a data excerpt *in situ*, either as part of a whole interview transcript, or in relation to a similar issue in a different individual's transcript. I felt I was, as Warin *et al* (2007:121) have asserted, both "swapping stories and comparing plots"- simultaneously evolving an understanding of the general story of the dataset as whole and the specificities within the general story. Mason (2002) has argued that coding and cross-sectional analysis of codes, can give credence

to the notion that the data extracts contained within codes are fixed, obscuring the potential for conflicting and multiple meanings. In contrast, I found that I undertook large volumes of 'multiple coding', wherein the same, or similar, data extracts were coded under multiple headings. This was an inevitability given that there is no *a priori* way of knowing what is significant to the research participants or how the "structures of signification" (Geertz 1973:9) in the data might eventually be interpreted by the researcher in their reporting of it. Further, multiple coding allowed me to retain a sense of the multiplicity of the data and their embeddedness in the wider dataset. The multiple meanings underpinning the data have also arisen as a key element in the discussion of the findings (see Chapter Eight).

My analytical work, however, was not accomplished solely through NVivo, but involved moving between pen and paper, a word processor, transcripts and the codified content in NVivo. The data transcripts and NVivo provided me with a concrete base from which to undertake the messy, iterative, recursive, non-linear and creative interpretations which characterise, and are essential components of, inductive analysis (Mason, 2002; James, 2012). The themes which I constructed underpin and remain tethered to what is written in the findings, but the analysis did not stop with these themes, rather it continued to happen 'on the pages' of my thesis (often against my wishes to 'get on and write it') and throughout the write up of the findings.

Constructing a credible story

"Comparison of accounts of family members within the same family group provides an opportunity for validating accounts," and exploring nuances, yet "it also presents a threat, as the complexity becomes unwieldy" (Warin, Solomon and Lewis, 2007). Indeed, whilst I had the best of intentions to achieve a "more rounded picture of family life" (Harden et al. 2010:441), in taking a multi-perspective approach within families and undertaking a collective of case studies, this presented (as already noted) a number of challenges and, at times, I sensed that I was mired in such complexity that I might never make sense of it, let alone communicate it sensibly to others. Having posed fathers and fathering as both gendered and generational phenomena, I invited, in my own mind, the presumption that the relationship between such dimensions, fathers and fathering might be easily deconstructed. Rather, as Harden *et al* (2010) have argued, such dimensions are entangled and accounts of the experience of family life may reflect multiple such dimensions at once. I needed, therefore, to avoid a situation where the write up was comprehensive and detailed, but through having such qualities, became incomprehensible and ceased to be useful. This was not a process for which I understand there to be a fixed formula. Rather, intra and interfamilial analyses were achieved, I hope, through repeated redrafting of chapters, through checking that families, mothers,

fathers, children, boys, girls and different ages of children were, as far as was appropriate to the interfamilial arguments made, represented in my accounts of the data. Data excerpts illustrate and support the claims I made of the data, helping me to root my analysis in the data and to avoid my 'analytical imagination' (James, 2012) transgressing toward abstraction from the data (though I certainly had to be reined in from doing so on a number of occasions). Further, and by way of balance, I sought to be sufficiently expansive in the arguments I constructed from the data so that I did not reduce my analysis to simply pointing out that data might be 'interesting' or 'meaningful' (Silverman, 2014). There is, however, a particular example of reductive decision making in the write up of my findings which warrants further and specific explanation; the decision not to include children's voices from the initial two chapters of the findings (Chapters Four and Five). This choice was, in one sense, pragmatic, and designed to ensure that the 'story' which threads through the findings was not lost to the complexity of multiple competing voices, but also a decision rooted in the data. The absence of children's voices from Chapter Four, which considers perceptions and experiences of the grandfather generation, was simultaneously pragmatic and methodologically mediated. Specifically, children did not talk about their grandfathers and this was, primarily, because I did not ask. The decision to exclude children's accounts from Chapter Five, pertained to the *negotiation* of paid and unpaid work between parents. Given that the negotiation of paid and unpaid work and how this was arranged was a decision made by adults, this decision seemed justified. Nevertheless, the notion that children, for the most part, do not contribute to the 'family work project' (Harden *et al.*, 2012) is considered more critically in Chapter Eight

I also encountered a number of other points of reflection realised through my analyses and interpretations during my write up of the findings. First, it was increasingly evident to me as the writing of my findings chapters progressed, that the reduction of children into a single category of 'school age' was problematic. Age was an important intersection in the findings but my analysis of this was constrained through the small number and narrow distribution of children of particular ages. On reflection, there was a certain irony in the juxtaposition of my well-intended assertions that I would be inclusive of 'all children' and that all children had capacity for contributing meaningfully to research, and my failure to appreciate the true diversity of children. I fell foul, therefore, of the very view which researchers working with the social studies of childhood seek to redress; the view that children might be, in some or any way, homogeneous.

Second, I was struck by the idea that generational power was present, not just within the interviews, but during the process of analysis. I interpreted and reported on children's views in ways which were informed by my adult perspectives and worried that children's perspectives might, therefore, be, to

some degree, "lost to the adult world" (James 2007:261). In researchers' accounts of children's lives, therefore, 'the child' might run the risk of becoming a "symbolic voice of authenticity", rather than a reflection of children as "knowing subjects" (James 2007:261). While I could not hope to overcome my adultness in my analysis, and did not entirely overcome the prevailing notion of children as a unitary category, I have sought to make children's voices count (James, 2007). I have done this by ensuring that, where it was appropriate to do so, their perspectives are present in my discussions of contemporary fathers and fathering.

Third, I was struck by the idea that the interpretations and interpolations that I was making of the data were somehow 'not true'. There were various instances where I wondered if what family members were telling me was a frank account, or if their accounts represented a purposively shaped portrayal of how they would wish their lives to be seen. Despite having been aware of the potential for 'family display' (Finch, 2007) as I have earlier described, unpicking the layers of what was actually going on was intellectually impossible in the moment of data collection and just as difficult two years later when the material context of the interview had faded within my memory. Working within a qualitative paradigm, however, does not require one to attain an external truth, but to create a credible and subjective truth. As detailed in Chapter Eight, however, 'family display' (Finch, 2007) has proven a useful tool in explicating my experiences and interpretations and situating these within the extant literature. I hope, therefore, that despite such shortcomings and anxieties that I achieved sufficiently detailed understanding to have constructed a credible, but personal, account and interpretation of the data.

Ethical considerations

This section considers the ethical implications of conducting research with multiple family members in the home environment and how these may be reconciled with the research design. Ethics approval for the study was awarded by the University of Sheffield in March 2015 (the confirmation of ethical approval for the study can be found in Appendix Seven). It was necessary to consider and be responsive to the ethical issues that arose throughout the research process, including those which may not have been anticipated prior to undertaking the research. This section is structured in relation to three specific ethical issues: consent, confidentiality and harm.

Consent

Informed consent has been viewed as based on three fundamental principles, those of comprehension of information, voluntary consent and capacity to consent (Kirk, 2007). In order to facilitate understanding of the study, information sheets were made available prior to seeking consent. Time was provided for potential participants to reflect upon this information.

Discussions about the study took place in private with each participant. This was to negate the potential for parental gatekeeping, either through coercion to participate or, conversely, as an obstacle to participation Separate consent forms for all individuals involved were used (see Appendix Eight), situating consent as an individually negotiated and agreed premise (Harden *et al.*, 2010). The provision of 'child specific' information and consent forms was particularly important as children have been asserted to perceive research as something done to them and from which they do not directly benefit (Kirk, 2007). Despite this, a broad brush approach to conceptualising 'children' as a homogeneous social category when formulating my information sheets meant that the resulting document needed to be read to and discussed with very young children, but the simplified tone of the document felt inappropriate for teenage participants in the study. In practice, I found that the information sheets provided a useful starting point for discussion and better enabled me to tailor the journey toward informed consent for, and with, each *individual* participant.

The issue of recruiting families through a single family member (see recruitment section of this chapter) implies that the ethical considerations I undertook in relation to obtaining consent did not transcend internal family processes and obligations (Gabb, 2008). Therefore, I can only evidence that my ethical behaviours have been reflexive and consistent with guidance and critique regarding best practice, not whether I have attained an irrefutable goal of 'being ethical'.

Furthermore, consent should be seen as a continual dialogue throughout a research process (Alderson, 2004); a consent form can, therefore, only provide an indication of consent to take part in the interview (Nunkoosing, 2005). Indeed a signed consent form cannot be considered to constitute fully informed consent prior to actually doing the interview (Gabb, 2008). Participants were, therefore, made aware of their right to withdraw their consent at any stage of the research, and/or to remove any part of their interview from the resulting transcripts if they wished to do so (Nunkoosing, 2005) (see feedback section of this chapter). In actuality, only two children asked for their transcripts back and no retractions were made. Once consent forms were signed by all parties, the participant was given a copy as well as a copy of the information sheet. (UoS, 2012). A copy of the signed and dated consent form was retained and kept securely.

As already noted, it was necessary to be alert to the verbal and non-verbal ways in which children may have wished to withdraw consent for their involvement in the process (Kirk, 2007). However, it was similarly important to consider the interview as a conversation characterised by both "expression and repression" for adults (Nunkoosing 2005:703). Withholding information, which could be seen as transient withdrawals of consent, can manifest also as both verbal and non-verbal articulations in interviews with adults (Punch, 2002; Nunkoosing, 2005). In practice, it was difficult to

determine when a silence and altered body language indicated more time required for thought, or was an implicit withdrawal of consent. I navigated this as best I was able, but my capacity to do so was ultimately reliant on my intuition and intuitive processes could hardly be claimed to be congruent with a transparent approach to research. I am convinced, however, that such an experience is inevitable, particularly in exploring the private world of the family (Gabb, 2008), and that being aware and sensitive to the potential pitfalls of this constitutes ethical research practice.

Finally, the issue of competence to consent. There is no legal age within UK law at which a child under the age of sixteen may give consent and it is the task of the researcher, therefore, to determine if a child is competent to consent to take part (Kirk, 2007). I took the view that each child had potential capacity to consent, but that this would need to be individually assessed with each child. The rationale for including only school age children and above in the study arose from a presumption that it would be harder to ensure comprehension of the study information for younger children and their capacity to consent would be impaired. I made this pragmatic decision despite intellectually acknowledging and aligning my own ideology to the contradictory stance that age should be seen as a social, rather than a natural variable, in research with children (James et al. 1998:175).

Confidentiality

As previously stipulated, recorded interviews were transcribed and anonymised. This was done either by myself or a University approved transcription service. These transcripts were kept securely on a password protected computer, whereas paper copies of the transcripts and field notes were retained in a locked cupboard when not in use. The audio recordings from the projects were used only for the purposes of transcription, after which they were deleted. All subsequent uses of the data drew on the anonymised transcripts and were in accordance with the uses delineated on the participant consent forms.

Interviews were conducted in a private space within the family home, or an alternative location, as determined by the participant, to ensure that the content of the interview remained confidential. Finding a private space in the homes of the families I interviewed was largely unproblematic, maintaining privacy throughout the interview, however, was more problematic. Interruptions from other family members during the course of the interview were not uncommon, requiring starts and stops within the interview which were sometimes troublesome for maintaining their flow (Mauthner, 1997).

Feedback to participants of the study findings was general, rather than case-specific, so as to prevent individual family members and families from being identifiable other participants. This was a particular concern given the snowball sampling methods deployed.

All data and field notes were kept, and continue to be kept, strictly confidential. As discussed with participants, the only situation in which I would have breached confidentiality would have been if a safeguarding issue had come to light. It is possible, however, that in taking a multi-perspective approach to the research phenomenon, individuals may have shared information about themselves or others that another may not have chosen to disclose (Gabb, 2008). I explained this to participants prior to their consenting to the study, as is considered good research practice (Kirk, 2007; Gabb, 2008).

Harm

There is a need in any research with human participants to consider the potential for harm or distress to be caused to children through their participation in the research process. This required me to be sensitive to the feelings of "conflict, guilt, threat to self-esteem, fear of failure [and] embarrassment" (Kirk 2007:1254) that children, and adults (Gabb, 2008), may experience. I sought to address these potential emotional issues, firstly, by offering all participants choice and, therefore, a degree of autonomy, within the methodological approach to the research and, secondly, by involving children as independent social actors in the research, whilst being responsive to their cues that they were uncomfortable. Although it is, of course, also necessary to respond to the ways in which adult participants might express distress in a similarly responsive way, generally speaking, adults may be better positioned to verbally articulate their concerns (Punch, 2002; Kirk, 2007).

A Disclosure and Barring Service check was conducted in order to demonstrate my suitability to work with children which was submitted to the University as part of my application for ethical approval. It was, however, also necessary to consider the risk of harm to myself as researcher, particularly when conducting research in intimate settings such as people's homes (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2007). It was paramount to build rapport with the participants in such a way that this facilitated their confidence in disclosing their experiences within the interview setting, although there are obvious limitations as to the extent to which this was or could be achieved in a single meeting of a couple of hours' duration (Gabb, 2008). It is simultaneously necessary to maintain an appropriate level of distance that preserves the boundaries of the researcher/participant relationship (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2007), or there may be a risk of misrepresenting the research process as a "more like a friendship" (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:332) than a professional relationship. Therefore, I needed to balance my

own level of disclosure in a way that was appropriate to build rapport, but did not leave me vulnerable to a muddying of my role as researcher.

The imposition of myself, as a researcher, into the family dynamic was also significant and it was necessary to be sensitive to the fact that the home is an intimate and private environment (Gabb, 2008). As such, the extent to which the research process impinges on routine family life was minimised as far as I was able to, by offering flexibility in the timing of the interviews, whilst also limiting them to around an hour in length, and half an hour for children.

Lastly, and from a more practical perspective, I had to take precautionary measures in respect of my own personal safety when entering people's private environments by ensuring that all visits were planned in advance and had a clear timeframe within which I would enter and, subsequently, leave the field (Jamieson, 2000). These plans were communicated between myself and my supervisors through the use of sealed envelopes containing interview location details which my supervisors would open if I had not contacted them by a specified time following an interview. Protecting my own safety during field work, therefore, did not compromise the anonymity of the research participants.

Chapter Four: Constructing generational differences in fathering

The study findings are presented in this, and the following three, chapters. The themes introduced in these chapters are then discussed in light of the extant literature in the final section of the thesis, Chapter Eight.

The theme of 'family display' emerges throughout the findings chapters and is considered in detail in Chapter Eight. Display, in this thesis, pertains, for the most part, to the portrayals of fatherhood, fathering and fathers which took place within interviews and between family members. The audiences for these forms of display which I go on to discuss are, therefore, myself and family members. References to public displays of fathering were evident in the data but are not considered in detail in this thesis (though see Earley et al [forthcoming] in which displays of fathering through physical activity are examined).

This chapter discusses parents' perceptions of men in the grandfather generation and, particularly, their involvement as fathers. 'Involvement', was conceptually evasive and comprised entangled understandings of men in the grandfather generation's participation in paid work, childcare and domestic labour. Within their accounts, parents emphasised their own fathers' relationships with paid work.

Parents' accounts of their own fathers' fathering reflected the imperfection of memory, the subjectivity of interpretation and the selectivity of biographical narration. One father, Andrew (F4F), specifically acknowledged the potential for memory to be partial and incomplete and the significance of this in shaping his understanding of his father:

> I never remember him sitting down with me doing homework or discussing what I'd learnt, unless I've just got a complete blank on it, I just don't have any recollection at all of that sort of thing.

> (Andrew, F4F)

Similarly, Andrew's wife, Ruth (F4M), noted that she did not "remember huge amounts about it" in her recollections of her father. The pictures created of grandfathers in the data, therefore, are imperfectly recalled experiences and purposively deployed stories. They are not necessarily factual, but are strongly impressionistic. Through such purposive selections, characteristics of an 'othered' generation of fathers were constructed and a largely consensual picture was created of what parents understood the grandfather generation to be like. It became possible, therefore, for fathers and

mothers to utilise this representation in a way which constructed their own fathers as being either consistent with, or divergent from, what they felt to be *typical* of the grandfather generation.

For fathers, reflection on fathering was stimulated by their own transition to fatherhood and, specifically, by the birth of their first child. This was illustrated by Bruce (F3F) when he was asked when the practices of his father, which he had highlighted as formative of his own fathering, became pertinent in shaping his ideas about what fathering should look like:

> *Not until I became a father. Do you know what I mean? So I didn't really have any*
> *preconceived ideas about how I was going to be as a Dad.*

> (Bruce, F3F)

Many fathers explicitly highlighted clear distinctions between their own and their fathers' fathering practices. Bruce (F3F), Brendan (F1F), Imran (F5F) and Edward (F9F) all stipulated that they were "different" to their own fathers, while William (F8F) emphasised this difference by asserting that his own fathering "doesn't really compare."

Fathers attributed varying degrees of intentionality to such generational differences between themselves and their own fathers. Most fathers were, however, keen to ensure that what they saw as lacking in their own childhoods was not replicated in their own children's childhoods:

> *I think there's an element of trying to make up for things that you felt were missing from*
> *your own childhood.*

> (Dean, F6F)

However, Paul (F7F), acknowledged that his partner Ellie (F7M) had attested to similarities, rather than differences, between him and his father:

> *Ellie thinks I'm a bit like him anyway in my personality traits sometimes, only the bad ones.*
> *No, yes, I don't think I'm consciously trying to be different.*

> (Paul, F7F)

Mothers said even less about their own fathers than fathers did about theirs. Rather, their accounts were either focussed on the present, or they did not distinguish between their mother and their father in our discussions. Further, mothers tended not to make direct comparisons between their own fathers and contemporary fathers. Kathryn (F5M) was, however, an exception. She explained

that her husband, Imran (F5F), was more *involved* in family life than her own father had been in her childhood, despite her father's participation in domestic labour:

> *I wouldn't have said he has the level of input that Imran has, but on the other hand he did do jobs in the house quite normal.*

> (Kathryn, F5M)

Differences and similarities between contemporary fathers and parents' own fathers, therefore, were largely framed in negative terms. Intergenerational 'difference', specifically, was conceptually vague, malleable and inconsistent within fathers' accounts. Parents did, however, consistently refer to their own fathers as "very traditional" (Joanne, F1M). 'Being traditional', it will be argued, comprised two main components. First, being a traditional family, which pertained to family structure. Second, undertaking 'traditional' practices of father involvement.

For mothers, in particular, traditional fathering practices were embedded within specific family structures. Kathryn (F5M) associated her "traditional UK upbringing" with her parents being "not divorced or anything." Ellie (F7M) and Brendan (F1F) respectively described similar circumstances as "very traditional and nice" and "very stable." Parents' accounts of traditional family structures, therefore, reflected normative notions of family which the study sought to understand and interrogate, and emphasised the importance of marriage and of coresidence within such understandings.

For some, therefore, 'tradition' rested in *family structure* and was presented positively. In significant contrast, where 'tradition' manifested and was experienced in relation to *family practices*, this was constructed in more pejorative terms.

Within parents' accounts, traditional – or 'old-fashioned'- fathering practices positioned fathers from the grandfather generation as hardworking providers of financial resources for the family, who were always at some degree of temporal, physical and emotional distance from the mundanities of everyday family life. As William (F8F) noted, his mother "generally did all the parenting." Similarly, Bruce (F3F) described how "Mum did everything and Dad didn't do much at all." For Emily (F9M), her father "did, and still does, appear to spend a lot more time doing leisure activities." Similarly, for Andrew:

> *He was quite an old-fashioned dad I think, mum brought up the kids and did all the cooking and all that sort of thing, she had housekeeping money and all that sort of thing.*

> (Andrew, F4F)

Parents' own fathers were perceived to be separated from the domestic sphere and from children's lives; they were simply not "that involved" (Dean, F6F). Rather, men in the grandfather generation were understood, in the first instance, to occupy the world of paid work.

Paid work was the most consistently asserted influence over men in the grandfather generation's 'involvement' in family life. Most parents recalled that their own fathers were "always working" (William, F8F), "working all the time" (Joanne, F1M), or worked "a lot" (Dean F6F; Paul, F7F) and, as such, that they were the primary, or sole, earner in the family. Consequently, they were "absent most of the time" (Imran, F5F) or tended to "come in late" (Paul, F7F). Though, as Rita (F8M) explained, her father did use the time he was at home to ensure he directly engaged with her and her siblings:

> *He did make a huge effort when he was at home to make the absolute most of his time with us, he wouldn't be kind of working in the office while it was weekends or anything, he would definitely not do that.*

> (Rita, F8M)

In spite of the recollection that that men in the grandfather generation were 'always working', many parents described their fathers returning home in time for the evening meal as a family; an experience typified by Andrew (F4F):

> *He'd work in the day. I remember he'd come back, it was normally about tea time,*

> (Andrew, F4F)

In contrast, mothers in the grandparent generation either "didn't work" (Brendan, F1F), or worked part time. The idea that their own mothers were "very much a housewife" (Imran, F5F) permeated parents' accounts. Childcare and domestic labour, therefore, were posed as primarily the responsibility of mothers in the grandparental generation:

> *I mean she did everything basically. My dad worked long hours.*

> (Emily, F9M)

Notably, where parents' fathers were reported to participate in domestic labour it was "typical blokey type stuff" (Joanne, F1M). They might do "all the DIY, the sort of painting and decorating and garden" (Joanne, F1M). Some parents' fathers were noted to participate in cooking, though this was mainly limited to weekends (Joanne, F1M), or when a mother was ill (William, F8F). However, Paul (F7F) explained, just as Andrew (F4F) stipulated earlier, that his father "didn't cook" at all.

Some mothers' accounts of their parents' paid and unpaid work were more nuanced. Jenny (F6M) explained that both her father and her mother had worked and her father had been more able to be involved in her everyday life as a child. Given the absence of any mention of her father's involvement in domestic labour from Jenny's description, his increased involvement in family life may not have extended to involvement in domestic labour:

> *I used to go to my dad but then my parents had different work patterns. They didn't have a lot of money at all and my mum worked evenings and weekends, so essentially they'd swap shifts and come back for the kids. So my mum was not there at bedtimes and she was not there at weekends, and my dad was there all through the school holidays. So he was very much part of my life, he was the one you went and did things with.*

> (Jenny, F6M)

Similarly, Kathryn described her father as an active, if not quite equal, participant in parenting and in domestic labour because both her parents worked:

> *My mum worked and my dad used to take responsibility for some things. I don't think we had a specific task like he did all the baths or he did all the cooking or anything, but he did definitely get involved with everything.*

> (Kathryn, F5M)

Notably, such accounts of maternal grandfathers' involvement in domestic labour and childcare came from families in which the maternal grandmother undertook paid work. Importantly, parents' accounts of their fathers highlight that perceptions of men in the grandfather generation's involvement comprised understandings of their participation in paid work, in childcare *and* in domestic labour.

Men in the grandfather generation were most frequently characterised in terms of their not being "particularly active" (Bruce, F3F), or, "quite supporting…but never proactive" (Andrew, F4F). Certainly, however, parents' fathers were described as having been engaged and interested in supporting their children's education. William (F8F) delineated how his father would "help with school work and things." Joanne (F1M) recounted an anecdote in which her father "had to go to school" for parent's evening with his hat on and "purple pink hair sticking out from under it" because of a hair dye accident. Yet, despite the public embarrassment of being seen with brightly coloured hair, this did not dissuade her father from attending, rather he "took it in his stride," being more interested in her educational progress than his public image. Andrew's (F4F) experience was,

therefore, unusual; he asserted that his father had never helped him with homework. He stipulated that his father was "not really involved in, even my education," though he acknowledged that he might have "read a school report." Parents' fathers were also noted to contribute to childcare through their provision of a 'taxi service' for their older children. Some parents also provided specific examples of tasks which the current generation of fathers did, but which parents' own fathers did not do. Such examples included participating in children's bath-times, children's bedtimes, and reading to children (contemporary fathers' participation in the bedtime routine is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven in the section 'constructing and communicating closeness between fathers and children through reading'):

> *I don't think my dad, he didn't do bath times and things like that, my mum did all that.*

> (Paul, F7F)

Such examples of the grandfather generation's involvement in their children's lives, imply that particular practices of father involvement were central to the understandings of intergenerational differences in fathering.

Intergenerational differences between fathers were also interwoven with parents' understandings of changing gender normativities and how these shaped the practices of fathers. There were, however, two ways in which the division of paid and unpaid work between parents in the grandparent generation were explained. First, as a reflection of 'natural' gender roles which were fixed and, second, as an historically located and constructed normativity which was, therefore, amenable to change. John (F2F) articulated a view of contemporary family life which was characterised by consistently defined roles and gendered dispositions for fathers and mothers respectively. This mirrored his own experience of being fathered as a child, which John also stipulated was "quite traditional:"

> *I mean I always saw the roles of my parents as distinct, he was very much a father and my mum very much a mother, so, in some ways, I'm sure we've carried that over into our parenting roles now.*

> (John, F2F)

Similarly, Michael (F10F) saw little difference between the practices of his own and his father's fathering, asserting that "Dad always worked. My Mum never worked" and, consequently, that much of how domestic labour, work and parenting responsibilities were divided in their family life now could be seen to "come from them."

For John (F2F), gendered distinctions between mothers and fathers were constant and unchanging across generations because it was the 'natural' order of family life:

> *Just sort of thinking, back in how it would have been, you know, like in cavemen times, you know, the mother would have been the one protecting, nurturing the child and the man, father, possibly – I mean, I don't know whether this is the case, with a spear fighting off the wild animals coming in, sort of thing.*

> (John, F2F)

For John and Michael, therefore, the idea that there might be similarities between generations of fathers was not problematic, but inevitable.

Contradictorily, John (F2F) also noted that "roles have changed." Expanding on this, John (F2F) and Helen (F2M) explained that Helen's father had felt obligated to publicly enact the expectations incumbent upon his generation, illustrating dissonance between private and public practices of family life:

> John: *So one interesting example was your dad. I don't know whether I should be saying this, but your dad will help with the cooking and stuff unless another man comes into the house and he'll immediately stop so he's not seen to be doing that.*

> Helen: *Anybody. It's any visitor, yes.*

> John: *Anybody, yes, so he doesn't want to be seen to be doing that because his understanding is that's not what a father or a husband should be doing, even though he does do it.*

> Helen: *So he'll be drying the dishes – he'll be washing the dishes and the doorbell will ring and he'll go and quickly dry himself and sit down, you know and be sitting down nice and relaxed.*

> John: *Whereas my perspective is I'd like to be seeing doing that because people say, "Oh, well he's really involved and really engaged and he's doing the jobs." I think that's a generational change there.*

> (John and Helen, F2F&M).

Here John and Helen suggested that social mores associated with fatherhood may change over time. Once embedded within a generational consciousness, however, they are robust. They suggest that

public displays of fathering to other men, are particularly shaped by such generationally embedded understandings. Similarly, Rita (F8M) noted the difficulties which might arise from fathering in ways perceived to be inconsistent with the behavioural norms predominating in a particular cultural and historical context; perhaps also seeking to absolve the grandfather generation of responsibility for any perceived deficit in their fathering practices:

> *I think it's much harder for men to step out of that cultural expectation. Certainly my dad was a traditional breadwinner in that sense, you know, and my mother was the one who did all the hard work and it meant a lot to us.*
>
> (Rita, F8M)

Parents' constructions of the grandfather generation as 'traditional', therefore, were, for the most part, seen through specific culturally and historically located lenses which reframed them as old fashioned and as 'other' to contemporary fathers.

Some parents drew, not so much upon historically located referents of fatherhood, but on varied contemporary cultures of fatherhood to inform and explain their understandings of their own fathering and of the contemporary fathers they lived with as somehow different to their own fathers. Sarah (F3M) perceived that the prevailing culture of Caribbean fatherhood did not measure up favourably with contemporary, Western-European fatherhood. Caribbean fathers, she suggested, were neither consistent in their presence, nor emotionally close to their children:

> *I think being West Indian, it's unfortunate that a lot of very high percentage of West Indian families, the role of the father is very blurry, a lot of the time unfortunately non-existent. When there is a father figure it tends to be as a real disciplinarian.*
>
> (Sarah, F3M)

A further example was Imran (F5F), who described the temporal, physical and emotional segregation of fathers from children in his North African country of birth, though he drew no comparison with UK culture:

> *I don't know what's the role of the father generally. My father, for instance, I don't think he spent so much time and he definitely didn't give us as much attention but that is my background. I don't know how it works here in the UK.*
>
> (Imran, F5F)

Nevertheless, Imran did reflect on his perception of the greater democratisation of father-child relationships within the UK and the importance of father-child communication compared to his country of birth. In doing so, he alluded to an intergenerationally stable culture of fatherhood in his country of birth, which continued to be "all about respect" and wherein the father-child relationship was "very hierarchical:"

> *Where you've got the fathers and they talk only to their peers, and let the children just talk to each other. Very much in the UK what I've noticed is the parents talk to their kids equal...*

(Imran, F5F)

This portrait of North African fatherhood, however, reflected elements of 'traditional fatherhood' described by men in the UK in relation to the grandfather generation and resonated with what one father described as the "austere Victorian father" (Dean, F6F) of generations past.

Different cultures and eras of fatherhood were, therefore, seen to be interwoven with and implicated in the determination of fathering practices. Specifically, they were asserted to be implicated in the extent to which fathers participated in childcare and domestic labour, how such participation manifested in father-child interactions, and the degree to which there might be emotional or physical distance between fathers and children in everyday life.

In summary, contemporary fathers utilised their own fathers as a reference against which they measured themselves. Most parents felt that their fathers typified 'traditional fatherhood', holding this as 'different', or 'othered', to contemporary fatherhood. Negative accounts of traditional fatherhood were tethered to the understanding that men in the grandfather generation were 'uninvolved'. Involvement was articulated in relation to three interwoven facets of their everyday lives: their participation in paid work, their participation in domestic labour and their participation in childcare. Typically, parents own fathers were felt to be prohibited from engaging in family life because of their relationship with paid work. When they were at home, for the most part, they did not contribute to childcare or domestic labour, rather this was perceived as 'women's work'. Where there were exceptions to such arrangements, these were mediated by women in the grandparental generation's participation in paid work, necessitating fathers' participation in childcare.

The notion that gender roles have changed, either between generations or between cultural contexts, was clearly asserted within the data and seen to be enmeshed with and formative of fathering practices.

The assertion that contemporary fathers were differently involved in children's lives, however, seemed to be tethered to very specific practices; for example, to those associated with children's bedtime routines, or in how fathers communicated with children. Contemporary fathers 'difference' to fathers in the grandfather generation, therefore, requires further exploration. Given that 'difference' can only be understood in comparative terms, considering how participating parents constituted, negotiated and experienced the three facets of involvement in their accounts of contemporary fathers is necessary.

Chapter Five: Parental negotiation of paid and unpaid work

The preceding chapter highlighted the complex relationship between men in the grandfather generation's paid work, and their participation in domestic labour and childcare in parents' accounts. It also underscored the notion that gendered understandings shaped fathering practices and that, for most parents, gender roles were perceived to have changed between generations of fathers. This chapter will, therefore, unpick the relationship between paid work, childcare and domestic labour in parents' constructions and experiences of contemporary father involvement.

Contemporary fathers, it will be argued, saw themselves as involved despite their paid work: their own paid work inhibited rather than prohibited their involvement. Such inhibitions were largely seen as non-negotiable and externally imposed. Interwoven with this was the notion of contemporary gender equality which parents found difficult to navigate in their everyday lives, but which they strove to align themselves with in their accounts. In many cases, the arrangement of paid and unpaid work between parents appeared to be strikingly similar to those negotiated by their own parents. What was different, it is contended, was the meanings attached to contemporary configurations of paid work, domestic labour and childcare by contemporary parents.

Gender ideology and the hyper-valuation of paid work

The following section considers how the arrangement of paid work, childcare and domestic labour was underpinned by understandings of the value of different types of work and how such perceptions became conflated with gender; contradicting parents' asserted commitment to gender equality.

Childcare and domestic labour were relegated by parents to the world of the mundane, while paid work was reified as important and of a greater value than domestic labour and childcare. Given that, in most families, fathers undertook a greater share of paid work than mothers, such perceptions conflated different types of work *with* gender. Indeed, mothers constituted referents against which fathers' participation in domestic labour and childcare was measured. Domestic labour and childcare were seen, first and foremost, as mothers' work:

> *I'm sure it would be easier for Brendan if I was here all the time. If I was a traditional Mum, stayed at home and had the dinner on the table and all those things for the kids. I think it is harder for modern men, not modern men, but men that are more engaged with their family because, yeah, to work and to do family stuff is hard.*

> (Joanne, F1M)

I just couldn't do it with the kids as well. I tried for years, I was only working three days a week and I ended up hating it because I just couldn't juggle to that extent. It took me a long time to realise that it was actually the situation that was the problem, rather than me.

(Jenny, F6M)

Comparisons between mothers' and fathers' respective workloads concerned the 'hardness', 'impressiveness' and volume of the tasks of childcare, domestic labour and paid work. Such comparisons, therefore, provided common currency for the evaluation of who was working hardest and whose work carried most value. One mother, Ellie (F7M), described how conversations between herself and her partner Paul about who was working 'hardest' could be fraught because, unlike fathers' paid work, the tasks of childcare and domestic labour extended beyond 'working hours.' Outside of the paid working hours of 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, when both parties were already tired from work, debates arose as to whose responsibility childcare and domestic labour was at these times:

You don't quite have that conversation but there's that, "well, you can hoover because I'm more tired than you." Who knows the truth of that? Who knows who's more tired or who's done more? I might think, I've put X number of loads of washing in, I've done this much shopping, I've sorted Amy out for this and this, I've organised that, that, that. I've juggled all these things and you've walked in to a relatively calm house. He's thinking, but I've been at work for nine hours and my brain is completely frazzled.

(Ellie, F7M)

Jenny (F6M) reflected on the inevitability that domestic work and childcare seemed "less impressive" than paid work. Consequently, she rarely spoke with her husband, Dean (F6F), about her own juggling of paid work, domestic labour and childcare. The "million" things she did each day, therefore, were largely unknown to Dean. Jenny and Dean, however, were both inadvertently complicit in downgrading the importance of Jenny's daily endeavours through discussion of what Dean, but not what Jenny, did each day:

There is a tendency as well to try and nurture the poor, tired, hardworking male when he comes in. He doesn't quite get a cup of tea and an ironed newspaper but he gets the chance to talk about his day and so by the time he's told you exactly what's wrong with something that sounds really important, like a report to 'The Office', you're just going "oh wow that sounds really difficult and hard." I had terrible trouble trying to find some sparkly trainers today is just... you feel like a big wimp.

However, some fathers made a conscious effort to value and appreciate the work that they and mothers did:

> *I'd probably find it harder to be at home two days a week. I mean, looking after children is probably the hardest job in the world.*

(Paul, F7F)

Nevertheless, fathers' paid work was hyper-valued compared to other expressions of everyday labour which went largely unnoticed. By contrast, Rita (F8M) and William (F8F) sought to confront this prevailing experiential norm and the hyper-valuation of paid work:

> *I think we were always very keen to try to work only enough, so that we had plenty of time to be at home to see the children equally.*

(Rita, F8M)

Rita suggested that their singular perspective on this issue was a response to William's "dysfunctional" relationship with his own father. Because of this, they were consciously trying to ensure a better relationship between William and their children and this, they believed, required William to spend time with the children, rather than focussing on working.

The tenacity of gender normativity in practices of paid and unpaid work between generations was, therefore, evident in most parents' accounts. The hyper-valuation of paid work was a key mechanism through which contemporary experiences of gender normative divisions of labour were rationalised by parents.

Commitment to gender equality

Despite parents' experiences of inequality in the division of paid and unpaid work, they still espoused gender equality within their interviews. Although, parents acknowledged either gender inequality or gender normativity in their everyday lives, most parents found it difficult to talk about such inequalities. For example, Bruce (F3F) was loath to stipulate 'what mothers do and what fathers do', indicating his perception of a need for gender equality in the practices of his everyday life. Bruce felt that anything which might be seen to sanction or promote gender normativity was "chauvinistic." Individual fathers and mothers were, therefore, constrained by the idea of gender equality, as they were liberated by it: although parents presented gender equality as potentiating fathers' participation in family life, their capacity to represent fathers as engaged in family life was

restricted if their everyday arrangement of paid and unpaid work did not meet with cultural ideals of gender equality:

> *I go out early, come back late and do a lot of work and stuff like that. It is quite traditional and perhaps not what we would have expected I suppose.*

> (Dean, F6F)

The embeddedness of culturally normative notions of gender equality was demonstrated in many interviews in which parents were reluctant to expose everyday practices that contradicted contemporary expectations of gender neutral fatherhood:

> *There was never any gender. There was never any decision made around gender and the thought it would be better for me to be at home because I'm the mother or anything like that.*

> (Emily, F9M)

In contrast, Michael (F10F) and Stephanie (F10M) described the starkest gendered delineation of paid and unpaid work amongst participating families. This, they asserted, arose from their playing "to their strengths" (Stephanie, F10M) rather than because they felt that this was how things 'should' be. Michael and Stephanie, therefore, reframed their gender normative practices as gender equality.

These examples demonstrate the different ways in which gender equality was portrayed and, therefore, the different lenses through which gender equality might be viewed: either as each parent carrying out their separate gendered role in support of the other, or through both parents sharing all the tasks of daily labour equally and without gendered distinction. Such examples further demonstrate that couples constructed characteristics of aspirational fatherhood in their imaginaries, which they upheld even where their lives did not match this ideal. Such disparities were rationalised so that their significance as a challenge to parents' commitment to gender equality might be diminished. This suggests, therefore, that it is not necessarily what fathers do which is meaningful for fathers' participation in paid and unpaid labour, but rather it is the lens through which such practices are viewed which is paramount. Specifically, parents experienced similar gendered practices in terms of the everyday division of labour to those of their own parents. While such practices were related to traditional gender normativities in accounts of the grandparental generation, they were reframed in parents' interpretations of their own lives through their commitment to contemporary understandings of gender equality.

Negotiating work patterns between parents

In order to explore how parents navigated their gendered understandings and the primacy of paid work, the remaining sections of this chapter consider how the division of paid and unpaid work played out in individual families, and how negotiations were interwoven with understandings of fathers' participation in domestic labour and childcare.

There was much commonality between families in terms of how paid work, domestic labour and childcare were arranged between parents. All fathers except William (F8F) worked full time, Monday to Friday. One father, Edward (F9F), worked full time hours in four, rather than five, working days. Brendan (F1F), worked flexibly between home and his office. William, by contrast, worked part time and within school hours, but also on weekends. All mothers worked part time, apart from Stephanie (F10M), who did not work. Typically, fathers worked within 'normal hours', or 'office hours', of nine in the morning until five in the afternoon, with varying lengths of commute either side of this. They also had weekends free of paid work. For Michael (F10F), this was not the case as he worked on Sundays but did not work on Fridays. Due to short term contract work, Bruce's (F3F) hours were subject to change in accordance with the needs of his current employer. Mothers, however, largely reported structuring their work to accommodate childcare. While mothers also had weekends free of paid work, their working weeks were much more varied than fathers'. Mothers tried to keep their working hours within the school day and to minimise the use of formal childcare. Most worked between three and four days per week.

Work patterns and the transition to parenthood

Almost universally, families reported that both parents had been employed full time prior to the birth of children and that mothers reduced their hours to work part time afterwards. The transition to fatherhood, therefore, largely served to reconstruct 'traditional' arrangements of paid and unpaid work between parents.

Joanne (F1M) was the only mother who initially returned to work full time after the birth of her first child, but latterly she too reduced her hours. Stephanie (F10M), initially reduced her employment hours after the birth of their first child and, subsequently, left paid work entirely following the birth of further children. Stephanie's husband, Michael (F10F), asserted that these decisions arose from their "Christian conviction" and the equal value they placed on paid work, childcare and domestic labour. For Stephanie, however, the reasons were less tangible; dividing herself between paid work and childcare had not 'felt right'. She had felt that if she had continued to work, this would have been detrimental to the children and that they should "change something:" it was this that shaped her decision to leave work entirely:

Well, you could carry on like this, but you are going to short change the children.

(Stephanie, F10M)

While Stephanie felt solely responsible for the arrangement of childcare for her children and did not expect otherwise, Emily (F9M) and Edward (F9F) "sat down and worked out who can do what and whose hours worked better for doing pickups and drop offs and things like that." Their joint acceptance of equal responsibility for, and explicit negotiation of, how they would manage the strains of juggling paid work and childcare was unusual among participants. Jenny (F6M), for example, felt that she was somewhat unsupported by her husband, Dean (F6F), in juggling work and care because, as earlier noted, the everyday tasks of unpaid work were invisible to him. Despite these contrasting accounts, it is notable that all mothers renegotiated their paid working patterns after the birth of children, but, as it will be shown, only a few fathers did so. Mothers, therefore, took primary responsibility for the organisation and provision of childcare.

In explanation, Ellie (F7M) articulated what seemed implicit in other mothers' accounts. She described how the transition to motherhood had been transformative of her attitude to paid work, rendering it largely inconsequential compared to childcare. Similarly, Jenny (F6M) underlined the importance which mothers attached to motherhood, asserting that "what I'm doing is phenomenally important, socialising the children. I believe it is." Fathers, nevertheless, did also assert the significance of their role in socialising children and their participation in the "hard yards" (Andrew, F4F) of parenting.

Despite the transformative effect of motherhood which Ellie (F7M) alluded to, Joanne (F1M) felt that she still got "an awful lot" from her career and saw it as important to be an "individual as well as...a mum and a wife." Similarly, Emily (F9M) acknowledged how "important" her career was to her and how this had shaped her and her husband, Edward's (F9F), negotiations of their respective working patterns. Nevertheless, the reality of juggling paid work and motherhood was harder than imagined for many mothers:

> *VE:* *So did you go back full time after Ben?*
>
> *Joanne:* *Yeah I did, and that was fine. Well no it was hard work, but I suppose, I mean Ben was, I don't know, your first baby is your first baby and you just don't know what to expect do you?*

(Joanne, F1M)

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Joanne (F1M) anticipated remaining in part time employment until her three children had completed their secondary education. Similar to Stephanie (F10M), this desire was mediated by a perception that the children needed her presence:

> *Yeah I was thinking maybe I'll change my hours, but at the moment I think in high school, I think they need you.*

> (Joanne, F1M)

In contrast, Sarah (F3M) saw herself taking on more hours of paid work, as her youngest son, Connor (F3S, 7 years), moved up to junior school. Perhaps this contrast arose because there was a greater sense of financial necessity associated with Sarah's work, than for mothers in other families. As her husband, Bruce (F3F), explained they did not "have much leeway" when it came to their finances:

> *I mean I think I would like to be working more once Charlie gets into junior school. I'm already retraining now.*

> (Sarah, F3M)

Mothers' experiences of the transition to parenthood also illuminate the experiences of fathers because they highlight what fathers *did not* experience. Fathers' working patterns changed little following the birth of children and in explicating their experiences of combining paid work and fatherhood, they made reference to different challenges to those described by mothers. Typically, mothers wanted to continue to work, but for fewer hours. They also often continued to renegotiate their working patterns iteratively after the birth of children, in order to better facilitate childcare. Fathers felt that they wanted to undertake a more equal share of childcare but, for the most part, could not envisage a scenario in which they might be able to reduce their working hours. Of the few fathers who did work flexibly, most either took work home, or worked longer hours on the days they were at work to compensate for their flexible working.

The transition to fatherhood, therefore, was not immediately transformative of working life for most fathers, or, at least not to the extent that it was for mothers. For Dean (F6F), Paul (F7F), and Imran (F5F), there was no question of their doing anything other than returning to work full time after the birth of their children. Their wives confirmed that it just would not have occurred to them to do otherwise:

> *It was never questioned. I did at one point say to him have you thought about working part time, you could go down to four days a week and he just said "no way, no chance, my job, no, couldn't do it."*

Edward (F9F) provided another notable example: employed full time, he had Wednesdays off in order to look after the children. He, therefore, worked very long days on the days he did go into work. This arrangement, however, was noted to have pre-dated the arrival of any of their three children and had remained constant over the course of married life, suggesting that fatherhood was not the primary motivator for this arrangement:

> *Edward already worked. He already had one day off a week anyway. I think we always felt that it would be really nice if we could keep that going. He worked four days a week prior to Reuben, our first, being born. We never really discussed it but we decided to keep that in place.*

(Emily, F9M)

One other father (Brendan, F1F) also worked flexibly which he felt 'freed up' time to for him be involved in family life. This necessitated his working from home, or undertaking paid work during family time on some days, rather than his working part time. He would, for example, take work along with him to undertake whilst his children were participating in activities. Taking "the laptop to swimming lessons" allowed him to feel that he was involved in his children's lives, both as a spectator and as a facilitator who provided a 'taxi service' to and from the pool. Brendan (F1F) had exerted a conscious effort to blend work and family life in this way:

> *And a lot of it just boils down to negotiation of who is kind of the least pressured at work, or, you know, whether you can take the laptop to swimming lessons. All that kind of thing.*

(Brendan, F1F)

In stark contrast, William (F8F) was the only father who worked part time. He was, initially, a stay at home dad following the birth of their first child as this had coincided with when he had been studying full time. He later returned to part time paid work when their second child was due to arrive and his wife, Rita (F8M), stopped paid work for her maternity leave. Notably, after this second period of maternity leave, Rita returned to paid work part time and William continued in part time employment. However, William also noted that "Rita and I are in a privileged position as we can afford it," whereas most other families described financial limitations as shaping their choices. This financial privilege may, therefore, also have contributed to the rejection of the hyper-valuation of paid work noted earlier for this family.

There was both commonality and dissonance in the arrangement of paid working patterns between parents in individual families. While these patterns emerged as couples made the transition to parenthood, divergences between families were shaped by other contextual factors which it is necessary to explicate.

Contextual framing of patterns of paid work and unpaid work

Parents perceived the choices they made regarding the negotiation of their paid and unpaid working patterns to be constrained by gender normative notions of parenthood and specific, work mediated factors which will now be explicated. Parents largely saw such impediments as beyond their control.

The social and biological primacy of mothers in parental leave arrangements

The social and biological primacy of mothers in the transition to parenthood was seen as integral to the decisions made about parental leave and how work might be rearranged within parental dyads thereafter. Mothers talked about having extended periods of maternity leave compared to a much shorter statutory entitlement of two weeks for fathers. Kathryn (F5M) noted, as did most mothers, that she "had a year maternity leave" before returning to work part time.

Mothers repeatedly highlighted that fathers were excluded from the privilege of parental leave. They attributed this exclusion to both the weight of cultural expectation and the legislative framework:

> *I just think there's that built-in perception amongst a lot of people, dads always go back to work full-time. They have their two weeks' paternity, they go back full-time, mums do the whole, they take the maternity leave.*

> (Ellie, F7M)

Further, Ellie hinted at the difficulties which might arise for fathers who chose to share parental leave, as doing so would constitute a non-normative experience:

> *I don't know what's happening now with the change in the law that dads can take a... The only stories I've heard of dads who have, I've heard the odd one or two stories where the dad has said, "Actually, I'll take six months". I know someone where the woman took the first three and then it worked for the husband to then take six or nine or whatever it was and he got a really hard time from his employers and they even offered him redundancy on the back of it.*

> (Ellie, F7M)

Similarly, Bruce (F3F) articulated that it was seen as a "mother's right to take that maternity leave." One father, Edward (F9F), was entitled to a longer leave period than two weeks[1], their baby being due after recent changes to parental leave entitlements. However, because he owned his own business, Edward was only entitled to statutory pay whilst on parental leave and he, therefore, planned only to utilise the two weeks leave in which he would be financially remunerated at ninety per cent[2] of his full rate of normal pay:

> *He gets his two weeks' paternity leave that's paid for which he's going to take. Yes, but because that's never been an option, it's not something we've ever discussed really.*

> (Emily, F9M)

Emily therefore suggested that the social and biological primacy of mothers may have, at least in part, been redressed through legislation, but the ongoing financial necessity of fathers' paid work and the varied rates of pay which characterised individual experiences of paid parental leave, continued to shape the gendered practices of parental leave. Ellie's (F7M) partner, Paul, was also asked about the new parental leave entitlements and asserted that "yes, we would have definitely done something like that, yes." Herein, Paul challenged other participants' accounts within which the normative expectation and experience of mothers taking extended parental leave periods and fathers taking much shorter leave periods was so embedded as to be felt as a "natural rule" (Bruce, F3F).

Joanne (F1M) felt that fathers did not experience the same 'special connection' with infants that mothers did because their two weeks' leave did not afford fathers the same opportunity to establish such a close connection to their infant children as mothers were able to:

> *Two weeks' paternity and then they go back, so it's not a wrench. Whereas as a mother, you know, nine months off with your baby, or however long and then back, that's, oh my gosh, it's just some other connection or something I suppose.*

> (Joanne, F1M)

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[1] Because of recent changes to UK parental leave entitlement which, since 2015, have permitted qualifying mothers and fathers to share 39 weeks of paid and a further 13 weeks of unpaid leave between them as they choose following the birth of a child (Great Britain, 2014b). Prior statutory provision was delineated by gender and stipulated 2 weeks paid leave for qualifying fathers and up to 52 weeks leave (39 weeks paid) for mothers (Great Britain, 1999).
[2] Statutory financial entitlements for self-employed workers taking paternity leave are complex, but are governed primarily by the Children and Families Act (Great Britain, 2014a), the Work and Families Act (Great Britain, 2006) and the Employment Act (Great Britain, 2002b).

Conversely, Ellie (F7M) noted that it was "sad" that her partner, Paul (F7F), had to return to work after such a brief period of leave and that Paul had made an effort to extend the leave he was statutorily offered by adding on holiday time to his paternity leave. She indicated that, for Paul at least, it was emotionally wrenching to leave his new family and return to work, suggesting that a close connection between fathers and infants might not require an extended period of parental leave.

Although Joanne (F1M) and Ellie (F7M) appeared to occupy conflicting stances, what was implicit in both their positions, and in the wider data on parental leave, was that fathers being physically present in children's everyday lives was seen as important for building a 'connection' to children. Nevertheless, parents' normative experiences and expectations of parental leave served to highlight and compound the financial necessity of fathers' paid work; thus constraining fathers' capacity to take longer leave periods and limiting their early involvement in childcare.

Family finances, 'breadwinning' and masculinity

Parents emphasised the financial necessity of their paid work; such necessity was seen to underpin all negotiations of paid and unpaid work between parents. The financial necessity of paid work was, however, amplified during parents' transition to parenthood, initially through the reduction of family income during mothers' maternity leave:

> *I'd worked solidly through that and I was bringing in that full time wage. For us to then suddenly swap around and Sarah go into a full time job and for me then to back out was just difficult and complicated I think. And we relied on the full time wage.*

> (Bruce, F3F)

Family finances, for the most part, also continued to shape the negotiation of paid work when mothers returned to work. Because fathers were, typically, the higher earners in families, it 'made sense' for mothers to reduce their paid working hours to minimise the reduction in family income:

> *I think we had to make a decision based really on finances as well because he earns a lot more than I do. It wouldn't have made sense for him to drop down. I think that's probably it really.*

> (Emily, F9F)

Fathers' paid work was also, somewhat ironically, seen as a tenacious part of masculine identity given most parents' contemporaneous espousal of gender equality. Although only one father, Dean (F6F) explicitly linked masculinity with being the primary earner in a family, other parents drew

attention to the importance they attached to broader notions of 'providing' in their accounts of fathering:

> *And also, partly actually, providing for them, working and getting a salary. I see that as one of the reasons that I work is to provide for my family and I see that as quite an important role.*

> (John, F2F)

Because of the interweaving of financial provisioning with masculinity, gendered patterns of work were seen as hard to challenge or change, both culturally and in personal family life:

> *Some of that is engrained patterns of working and things that you just get into that mind set and it's quite difficult to change that, I think. Inevitably I think it's easier and more accepted that a man will do that. I think that's quite an engrained cultural thing really. I think we have got established in this kind of thing. It's quite difficult to change it.*

> (Dean, F6F)

In other families, however, being the primary earner was openly refuted as underpinning masculinity or fathers' identities and, therefore, as formative of fathering practices:

> *VE: Do you think that he views that as part of his fathering or important to him at all or is it just something that he – or just a pragmatic thing?*

> *Emily: Yes. I think it's just a pragmatic thing. I mean he obviously is the major breadwinner but I don't think that's what motivates what he does.*

> (Emily, F9M)

> *The good thing with Kathryn is she earns more than I do. So if she goes part time she's still on good money.*

> (Imran, F5F)

Indeed, for most parents, asserting that being the primary earner might be a key motivator for contemporary fatherhood was contentious and "an old pre-conceived idea of what the father does" (Bruce, F3F). Consequently, Bruce's wife, Sarah (F3M), reframed Bruce's position as the primary earner. For Sarah, being the primary earner was associated with the provision of financial resources, but also with the provision of tangible elements of family life; in this case, the home:

I think the more practical things, making sure he's providing for his children, making sure he's got a warm home to come in.

(Sarah, F3M)

A reliable income was also necessary for Andrew (F4F) and Ruth (F4M) to maintain their particular lifestyle. As such, the prospect of an alternative scenario to their current 'traditional' working arrangements seemed unlikely because it might jeopardise such security:

So it's not something we've explored, but it's something that isn't beyond possibility, unlikely that it would work to find four days for me and say a day for Ruth, because there's a certain income that we need to keep this house in this area going.

(Andrew, F4F)

Similarly, Bruce (F3F) listed the securities a wage offered and the importance he attached to these. While Bruce defined these securities in terms of food and shelter, Dean (F6F) noted that being able to offer his children "opportunities" such as paying for extra-curricular activities like tennis were part of what his earnings secured for his family. This was not "massively important," however. Rather it was "just a nice thing to be able to give them access to."

Perceptions of contemporary fathers' wage earning were interwoven both with notions of supporting and maintaining families and with masculinity. Paid work was an expression of fathers' care and love for their families as well as their obligations towards their families. It was important for fathers to work even though it might inhibit involvement in family life at home and paid work was reframed, in a somewhat abstract way, as indicative of fatherly involvement with children. Contemporary fathers' paid work, therefore, took on different meanings to that of men in the grandfather generation which was seen as suffused with 'traditional', and less desirable, expressions of masculinity.

Perceived employer and commuter inflexibility
Despite the embeddedness of fathers' relationship with paid work, some fathers had managed to alter their working patterns. These fathers either worked part time, or had flexible working patterns that allowed them to redefine what they saw as the normative full time working pattern. However, most parents foresaw difficulties for fathers who sought to change their paid working patterns. As Imran (F5F) noted, "I can't really, particularly do part time work." Employer constraint was portrayed as problematic both during and after the transition to parenthood. Parents considered fathers' jobs

to be inflexible and, even though they might wish to change things, they were not permitted to do so:

> Ruth: Well we've talked about it off and on, haven't we?
>
> Andrew: Hmm.
>
> Ruth: And how feasible it is and whether it's doable, I mean I'm not sure whether from your point of view or from the school's point of view, rather, they would allow it, or whether it's possible for them to allow you to do it in terms of their capacity. I mean I wouldn't be averse to you dropping hours or whatever it was to help make your work life balance a bit easier, and also to give you opportunity to – or maybe even sort of as the children were at home to have experienced a little bit of that as well, would have been nice from your point of view. I don't know.
>
> Andrew: No, I'd be quite happy to be part time. I'd quite like that, yes. No, I mean I'm a senior leader so it's not the sort of role that lends itself to part time work.

(Ruth and Andrew, F4M&F)

While for Andrew (F4F) this inflexibility was related to the seniority of his role, for Bruce (F3F) it was due to the contractual nature of his work:

> I mean, I work and my work's contract based. So I don't have that much leeway in saying, 'oh do you mind if I work flexible hours' or anything like that. I sign up for basically three or six months' contracts, so I'm kind of expected to work and be there. So opportunities for work from home and flexible working aren't really that hot, so most of that gets put on Sarah and she's always been very happy in that.

(Bruce, F3F)

Dean (F6F) reiterated this sentiment, noting that perceptions of employer inflexibility typified fathers' understandings of their employment, rather than mothers' employment:

> Inevitably my job takes precedence a little bit really. That in itself, it's one of those things where Jenny is working at the university, it is a bit more flexible and a bit more child friendly. The work that I do, while it's not actually that bad, it's still a little bit more rigid and a little bit more unforgiving of that kind of thing really.

(Dean, F6F)

In contrast, Brendan (F1F) saw both his own and his wife, Joanne's (F1M) employers as flexible. Consequently, Brendan was one of the few fathers who did work flexibly:

Yeah, I mean, I suppose, it's quite nice with an academic role and my wife's company are reasonably flexible around her working you know I can leave work early and do some work at the swimming pool in the evening. It's, it kind of goes with the territory.

(Brendan, F1F)

Yet, even William (F8F), who had consciously restricted his hours to work within the school day, noted that:

Well my boss is always trying to get me to do more hours, he is always trying to get me on a full time contract and all sorts of things. I think it's probably better for the children to have me around, I think. I think it's worth having a smaller salary for that really.

(William, F8F)

Despite the repeated assertion by both fathers and mothers that men's employers were inflexible, Dean (F6F) noted that such inflexibility might be more perceived than actual:

Yes. I don't know. It's difficult to know how much of that is an expectation put on you and how much of it is an expectation you put on yourself, that you expect to be able to do that kind of thing.

(Dean, F6F)

Fathers themselves may, therefore, have been complicit in the restriction of their involvement in family through the assumptions they made about the inflexibility of their working patterns, rather than vice versa. However, it is also feasible that the fathers who sought and obtained flexible working did indeed have more flexible employers. The overwhelming consensus, however, was that the ability to renegotiate working patterns was something beyond fathers' control, imposed upon them by employers. Employers who, perhaps, held similarly normative expectations regarding men's working patterns to which Dean alluded.

Further to the notion of employer-imposed inflexibility, some fathers noted the difficulties arising from the location of their work and the inflexibilities created by working a long distance from the family home. Commuter inflexibility was seen to inhibit fathers' participation in family life because

they simply could not be home for longer periods in the morning, or in the early evenings. As Ruth (F4M) noted, once her husband, Andrew, left for work in the morning he was "done until after tea," because his combined work and commute took him away from home for twelve hours per day.

Unlike other constraints, however, some fathers saw it as possible to reduce the time they spent away from home: both Dean (F6F) and Imran (F5F) had both previously had long commutes, but had recently moved to jobs which were much closer to home. In contrast, Paul (F7F) and Bruce (F3F) had reduced the amount of 'extra work' they did by reducing their freelance and consultancy work which they had undertaken in addition to their main roles. Importantly, this was so they could be "home for bath times and things like that" (Paul F7F).

Understandings of employer inflexibility were therefore constituted in relation to the 'normative working hours' which fathers felt were imposed upon them by employers and also by the geographical location of fathers' employment. Parents, for the most part, acquiesced to fathers' inflexible working patterns and accepted these as inevitable. Such constraints served to inhibit the time that fathers spent at home. It was, however, seen as particularly important for fathers to be home in the early evenings, suggesting their involvement at this time had heightened significance (a detailed discussion of how involvement at particular times was given significance is provided in Chapter Six within the section on 'temporal negotiations and experiences of fathering across the week').

Negotiating domestic labour

In addition to emphasising their involvement in paid work and childcare, fathers were also keen to assert their efforts as domestic participants. This served to emphasise their commitment to gender equality and, therefore, contrasted with the portrayal of their own fathers:

> *Yes, it's very much a team game when we're here, I would think, you know, I'm not sitting on the sofa watching Ruth* [F4M] *scurry around.*
>
> (Andrew, F4F)

Brendan (F1M) acknowledged, however, that his wife, Joanne, "might not see it that way." Domestic labour was, therefore, a contentious issue, both in terms of the extent of fathers' participation and in how this was variably perceived by partners within families.

For the most part, parents defined domestic labour as the household tasks which were not conditional on a child's presence[3]. As Ellie (F7M) explained, "you have to do those things anyway, they're not a condition of having a child." Nevertheless, there was a lack of consensus between participants as to whether domestic labour included the practical tasks of childcare, or vice versa:

> VE: *Those domestic chores we've talked about; do you think that they are part of your parenting role or are they just separate activities really?*
>
> Paul: *I think they are part of my parenting role. It's to set an example for Amy.*
>
> (Paul, F7F)

Participating in domestic labour was interwoven with parenting for Paul; he saw it as part of his obligation to instil particular values and behaviours in his daughter, Amy (F6D, 5 years) through enacting such behaviours himself.

At one point, Kathryn (F5M) conflated parenting tasks with domestic labour and noted that, "we do share most household tasks - childcare and so on," but later contradicted this, saying:

> *So I kind of see those as domestic things that everybody would have to do. Having Solomon* [F5S, 5 years] *here doesn't make any difference in terms of cooking or washing up because we all need the same stuff and it doesn't make any difference.*
>
> (Kathryn, F5M)

Such was the conceptual fluidity of the relationship between domestic labour and fathers' engagement in childcare involvement, that there was inconsistency in how this relationship was articulated in individual accounts, within parental dyads and between families.

For example, 'overseeing' was proffered as indicative of Michael's (F10F) fatherly involvement even though his participation in domestic activity was minimal. Michael implied that his role in domestic duties was limited to the exceptional, dealing only with the occasional tasks which his wife, Stephanie (F10M), could not manage on her own. Consequently, Michael felt he was ensuring the continued smooth running of family life for Stephanie *and* his children:

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[3] Domestic labour is defined as such for the purposes of this thesis

Yes, it is that overseeing, and making sure that things are tidied up, or, so that the house can continue to run smoothly. That sometimes means doing the washing up or cleaning up or tidying up or getting the washing out, or whatever it is, which I would not do all the time.

(Michael, F10F)

In contrast, the parents in Family Five had a quota of four household and childcare tasks which were undertaken each day, of which they did two each. It was Imran (F5F) and Kathryn's (F5M) perception that doing non-childcare tasks freed up time to do childcare tasks, and vice versa. Therefore, the tasks were inextricable from, and supportive of, each other and Imran could be seen to be 'fathering' irrespective of which tasks he undertook:

We have a kind of agreement that I think we've had since he was born where, it's changed slightly, but we have like doing the cooking, doing the dishes, doing the bath and doing the bed. Four things at that time when everybody is really tired and we have to do two each. We used to say one of them had to be child focused. If you chose cooking and then you had to choose bath or bed.

(Kathryn, F5M)

Nevertheless, Imran typically did both childcare tasks each night, not because he prioritised childcare above domestic labour, but rather because Kathryn had chosen the domestic labours in preference to the childcare tasks:

Kathryn: I used to do the bed.

Imran: Whereas now Kathryn prefers to do cooking, washing and then she's out of the equation.

(Kathryn and Imran, F5M&F)

Parents, therefore, negotiated the division of such everyday domestic tasks between themselves and rationalised their decisions accordingly. As Michael (F10F) asserted, he and his wife, Stephanie (F10M), had "an understanding of who does what," while Helen (F2M) explained that "I don't know what we decide consciously, I think I see the need for things more often." In explicating such negotiations, Brendan (F1F) implied that any disparity between the egalitarian ideal and how this

played out was, perhaps somewhat contradictorily, by coincidence rather than design. Additionally, Brendan dismissed the tasks of housework as of lesser importance to the work of childcare:

> *Yeah, I think there's been a, we've never sat down and said well those are my jobs and those are your jobs. And there's things that have kind of migrated to one, or the other. So my wife certainly does a lot, well, I do no laundry, so. There's stuff that I do more of. Well, broadly, I suppose that we're both really busy all the time doing stuff for the kids.*

> (Brendan, F1F)

The notion that housework was a distraction from the priority of caring for children was prevailing. This emphasised the perceived significance of fathers' involvement in children's lives, rather than their lack of involvement in domestic labour:

> *I think we do stuff with them; I think we do that well, and I think to the detriment of, for example, the tidiness of the house. You could spend all day having a nice tidy house but actually it's one of the things that gives a lot because we do things with our children and I think we do that well.*

> (Andrew, F4F)

Whilst prioritising childcare was a conscious choice for Brendan (F1F) and Andrew (F4F), it was an unintended one for Dean (F6F). Dean felt that his three children had come to "dominate everything." Notably, all three families which expressly stated that housework came second to the demands of children, had three children. Presumably, this placed greater constraints on the time available for housework within these families in comparison to those with fewer children.

It was striking that most fathers, much like their own fathers, undertook traditional 'male jobs' around the home and there was little discernible intergenerational difference in this regard. Fathers were reported to "empty the bins" (John, F2F), to do DIY, or to work in the garden to "cut the grass or cut the hedge" (Dean, F6F). However, many spoke about cooking, some were reported to do the washing up, and, in one case, a small amount of ironing. Brendan's participation in ironing was, notably, because Joanne disliked it, indicating how notions of personal preference were interwoven with accounts of the gendered division of domestic labour:

Yeah so Brendan [F1F], yeah that's quite weird, we were talking about this the other day. Brendan does the outside stuff, garden, painting, mowing, the heavy lifting, that sort of stuff. I will do the shopping, washing, drying the clothes. Brendan might do a bit of ironing, because I hate that.

(Joanne, F1M)

Many fathers described cooking routinely, or their willingness to do so had they the time. This was the only significant difference between accounts of their participation and their own fathers' participation in everyday domestic tasks. Most fathers cooked a few times a week, or used cooking as a means of demonstrating what they would do if they were at home more. They positioned themselves as willing, if not necessarily able. For example, Imran might cook "sometimes at the weekend," because he was too late home after work to be able to get dinner ready in time for them all to eat together. Brendan and Joanne, however, alternated cooking depending on who was home from work first. Not all fathers cooked, however. Paul (F7F) did not cook even though his daughter, Amy, ate early and he and Ellie had their evening meal after Amy had gone to bed, suggesting that there may have been time available for either parent to cook the adults' evening meal:

Yes. I feel she likes to be in control of the kitchen. Ellie is a pescetarian so she eats fish but not meat. I'm a meat eater, a carnivore. I don't know. That's my excuse anyway. She does the cooking.

(Paul, F7F)

Fathers' patterns of paid work, therefore, exerted only partial influence in the negotiation of which parent cooked each weeknight. William (F8F) was a notable exception amongst fathers, as he undertook most of the cooking in their family. He also encouraged the children to participate in this with him on one day each week. Through the engagement of the children in cooking with William, cooking was asserted as indicative of William's fatherly involvement:

…every Monday, he cooks with them, he wipes their bottoms, he's a very involved father.

(Rita, F8M)

Similarly, Brendan (F1F) described how cooking had become, albeit somewhat fleetingly, a shared activity between himself and his eldest son and could, therefore, be taken as evidence of his participation in *both* domestic labour and childcare:

So one of the kind of things that we'd agreed as kind of New Year's Resolutions was that he'd, with me, cook a meal, a day a week. That's not quite panning out. But the principle is still there that he, and he was keen on that as well. He can see the value in learning to cook from his Dad, simple meals that he can then replicate when he's away.

(Brendan, F1F)

Dean (F6F), however, argued that his work prevented him from engaging in a variety of forms of domestic labours, not just cooking:

Jenny ends up doing a lot of the cooking, a lot of the washing and stuff like that. I go out early, come back late and do a lot of work and stuff like that

(Dean, F6F)

Perhaps cooking was more readily associated with benefitting children, being closely linked to the idea of providing and to the promotion of children's health and wellbeing. Such multiple, positive meanings were not associated with cleaning and other domestic labours, thus making cooking a more meaningful aspect of men's participation in domestic labour. Nevertheless, some fathers reported cooking with their children, experientially conflating cooking with childcare and, therefore, making accounts of their cooking indicative of their simultaneous participation in domestic labour and childcare.

The lack of time available for domestic labour was a theme which underpinned fathers' accounts of domestic work. Cleaning was an activity which fathers, like the grandfather generation, generally did not undertake. No fathers spoke about cleaning in detail and many did not mention it at all. Only Paul (F7F) explained that he undertook the hoovering because their stairs were so steep that only he could manhandle the hoover up them. While Joanne (F1M) earlier suggested that their employment of a cleaner was related to her and her husband Brendan's dislike of cleaning, there was a further, more discursive, undertone to Brendan's limited participation in cleaning:

Brendan will do a little bit of cleaning, although I don't like him doing it. I don't know, that's, that's just probably, we were reading an article about it in the Guardian and it was saying I think it's when your biology starts taking over and you think, oh I don't like seeing Brendan clean or, you know.

(Joanne, F1M)

The division of domestic labour, Joanne implied, was, at least to some extent, perceived to be biologically as well as socially mediated; such was the embeddedness of such normativities within participants' imaginaries. These resonated with participants' expectations surrounding parental leave after the birth of children. Ellie (F7M) echoed such perceptions in noting how she 'treated' them to a cleaner; perhaps suggesting that she, rather than her husband Paul (F7F), was aware they were not managing the cleaning adequately and also that it was also *her* ultimate responsibility either to clean or to provide an alternative solution:

> *I confess we do have a cleaner once a fortnight, which was my treat, because I found that we were never fully getting on top of it.*

> (Ellie, F7M)

Similarly, Helen (F2M) described how she had to "catch up on" cleaning during the working week when her partner and the children were not there:

> *On an ordinary, calm weekend, when nobody is coming and nothing is happening, we don't necessarily get very much cleaning done. But I can usually catch up on the days that I'm at home during the week.*

> (Helen, F2M)

Gender was interwoven with domestic labour in such a manner that domestic labour became mothers' work, or at the very least, particular aspects of domestic labour became gendered. Fathers supported mothers in their undertaking of domestic labour and childcare tasks, but did not assume ultimate responsibility for such tasks. Accounts of fathers' engagement in domestic family life comprised entangled constructions and understandings of childcare and domestic labour, but the relationship between these was slippery. Where fathers found ways to engage children in particular types of domestic labour, these were claimed as childcare activities. Fathers' participation in domestic labour was rationalised with reference to fathers' paid work patterns which constrained their availability and in relation to fathers' prioritisation of time spent with children when they were at home.

In summary, the division of paid work, domestic labour and childcare was variably configured between parents in individual families but, for the most part, reflected the arrangements which parents described for the grandparental generation. The transition to parenthood was a key moment in the negotiation of paid and unpaid work between parents, serving to reshape such

patterns into more 'traditional' forms. It was, therefore, not the practices of father involvement which were different between generations, but the meanings which were seen to underpin such practices.

Accounts of gender normative working practices were typically acknowledged uneasily by parents, reflecting their ideological commitment to contemporary notions of gender equality. Consequently, experiences of contemporary gender normativity were articulated in relation to various contextual elements which shaped parents' decisions about employment after the birth of children. These included the assumed legislative, and inferred biological and social precedence of mothers in children's infancy. Further, the hyper-valuation of men's paid work and the necessity of maintaining family income levels, particularly after the birth of children, were significant. The perceived inflexibility of some fathers' employers and lengthy commutes to work perpetuated the sense that alternative working arrangements could, for the most part, not be negotiated. An entangled relationship between financial provisioning and masculine identity was also evident in parents' accounts. Due to the gender normativity reflected in such an association, parents sought to reframe contemporary fathers' financial provisioning in more favourable terms. Contemporary fathers' financial provisioning was, therefore, not just about financial resourcing, but also related to providing a home, a particular lifestyle, security and opportunity for children. Paid work, therefore, was seen as a means through which contemporary fathers engaged, albeit indirectly, in children's lives. Through such imaginings, contemporary fathers' understandings of themselves as 'different' to their own fathers was uncontested for the majority.

Fathers also undertook a limited amount and variety of domestic labours; they were described as either doing 'blokey' labour or cooking. Such limited undertakings were justified through fathers' prioritisation of time spent with children when they were at home. For most fathers, however, time at home was heavily constrained by their paid work. Where fathers undertook 'traditionally' female domestic labour, like cooking, accounts of this were often enmeshed with accounts of childcare, reframing them as evidence of fathers' participation in childcare *and* domestic labour.

Importantly, there were temporal constraints over fathers' participation in children's lives which resulted in the heightened significance of childcare tasks and particularly of childcare tasks which took place at specific times of day, for example, children's bath-times. The temporal schema within which fathers' engagement in children's lives took place will, therefore, form the basis of discussions in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Temporality and fathers' engagement in children's everyday lives

The previous chapter highlighted a number of key issues. First, that parents prioritised fathers' engagement in children's lives in constructions of contemporary father involvement. Second, that fathers' engagement in children's lives was temporally restricted. Fathers wished to spend the limited time which they did have at home with their children and heightened significance was also placed upon the time which fathers spent with children in the evenings. Such temporal schema and the meanings which underpinned fathering practices at different times will now be explored. In doing so, data from parents and children will be drawn upon.

Constructing fathering practices

Fathering practices could also be parenting practices, because mothers and fathers could do them "interchangeably" (Rita F8M). That every childcare task might be adequately characterised as gender-neutral parenting, reflects the gender neutral ideal of parenthood to which parents aspired. In everyday life, however, specific tasks became constituted as fathering under particular conditions. In addition to exploring the understanding and experience of such conditions, this chapter will argue that particular fathering practices were valorised for their potential to nurture relational 'closeness' between fathers and children.

Time and fathering practices

An interweaving of time and fathering practices in understandings and experiences of father-child relationships was evident in parents' accounts, though such interweaving was often difficult to unpick. As William (F8F) noted of his children, "I think it's just good for them to spend time with me really." The following two sections, therefore, explore how time was related to the notion of 'closeness' within father-child relationships and how time was interwoven with fathers' claims over particular parenting practices.

Family members stipulated that it was important for fathers to 'be there'. 'Being there' was articulated in terms of "consistency" (Joanne, F1M) and "just being there…all the time" (Imran, F5F), "being a physical presence" (Ellie, F7M). Fathers 'being there' was perceived to help children "to feel secure and confident" (Ellie, F7M) in their relationships with their fathers. As Josh (F1S, 13 years) noted when asked to reflect on images of fathers, his father was unlike one image because he would not "ever leave me." 'Being there' was, therefore, seen to necessitate fathers' physical presence in children's everyday lives in order to build and sustain trust and confidence within father-child relationships. Fathers' perceptions of being *closely* connected to their children, however, were

strengthened by the amount of time they spent with them. In essence, it was understood that the more time fathers spent with children, the closer their connections to one another would be:

> *There's definitely times when if you have to work away or I'm working late a lot, consistently, you do begin to lose a bit of the bond, I have noticed that…So, you'd feel a bit a distance, but it wouldn't be really noticeable until, say, you'd go away on holiday and you'd got a solid week together and by the end of the week that, that relationship is just totally filled up again isn't it?*

> (Bruce, F3F)

The relationship between fathers and children was also perceived to require nurturing in order to develop and be maintained as a 'close connection'. There was, therefore, a juxtaposition of the ideas that 'being there' was important for father-child relationships and a sense that such relationships also needed to be 'worked at' through significant amounts of time spent in direct father-child interaction. As Josh (F1S, 13 years) suggests, 'doing stuff' with his father was important in distinguishing simply 'being there' from fathering practices which created a sense of specialness in his relationship with his father:

> Josh: *I think he does more stuff with me. He talks to me more and takes me to places more than my other friends' dads.*

> VE: *And should dads do that?*

> Josh: *Yeah.*

> VE: *Why's that?*

> Josh: *Because if they don't the children won't like them and think they're just there to do jobs.*

> (Josh, F1S, 13 years)

Here Josh also suggests children's awareness of the normative gendered division of labour in which men do 'blokey stuff' which is somewhat distanced from childcare.

The quantity *and* the quality of father-child interactions were, therefore, constructed as important in nurturing relational closeness between fathers and children. A strong connection between fathers and children required the foundation of 'being there' but, more importantly, it also required 'doing

fathering' in particular ways over time. Temporality was, therefore, a significant component in the construction and experience of father-child relationships.

The following section, therefore, will look at the negotiation of 'when' fathering practices were carried out and the subsequent section will explore the facets of 'doing' fathering at particular times in ways which were understood to foster relational closeness between fathers and children.

Temporal negotiations and experiences of fathering across the week

Opportunities for father-child interactions were negotiated with reference to family members' temporally located commitments and the perception of these as either flexible or inflexible. Weekday mornings were a pertinent example of temporal inflexibility in family members' accounts:

> *Yes. It's just that stress. Knowing that there are absolute deadlines. She's got to be at school, he's got to be at work and we need to get on with the day and he knows that.*

(Ellie, F7M)

> *Anja: We get up at 6:30, and then we do various things, like get dressed, Bible study, things like that.*
>
> *Freya: Like get dressed.*
>
> *Anja: And then we all come here for breakfast.*
>
> *Freya: At 7:00.*
>
> *Anja: And one of us has to set the table. Yes, at 7:00. And then breakfast usually last from about 7:00 to 7:30, because we have a Bible study as well in that. And then we all disperse, so I usually practice my trumpet, and then my sister does maths, and we have jobs. So every morning, one of us has to set the table, one of us does the washing up, and one of us has to clean the table.*
>
> *Freya: Luke doesn't.*
>
> *Anja: And then, at about eight o'clock, I go and catch the bus to school. So I'm at school, so I don't really know what you do after that, because you would go to-*

(Anja and Freya, F10D&D, 11 and 10 years)

Such perceived inflexibility was prominent in accounts of many fathers' working patterns. As Kathryn (F5M) noted, it was effectively "cast in stone" that her husband, Imran would start work at 8:30 each

day. Such inflexibility was also evident in accounts of children's daily routines. For Kathryn (F5M), her son's transition to school had compounded the sense of temporal inflexibility on weekday mornings:

> *I found it very difficult because there was all that rigidity around time, whereas you don't have that at the pre-school. If you're ten minutes' late nobody cares, at this school it's all really important.*
>
> (Kathryn, F5M)

Despite most mothers also working and needing to get to work each day, time constraints were less prominent in accounts of their morning routines than in those of other family members:

> *And then on a Tuesday I can get up and leave at whatever time. But then, I can't get up and just go at seven. I have to, like, do stuff for the kids and make sure the breakfast is out. And he'll say 'oh you can just go!' And then on Thursdays I could just go, but I don't. I just do a little bit and I'll say do you want a lift to school boys, or they'll say can you give me a lift to school Mum?*
>
> (Joanne, F1M)

Because most fathers either left the house before, or shortly after, children got up each morning, mothers typically undertook the morning tasks for, or with, children. Or children did these tasks for themselves, as James (F4S, 7 years) and Luke (F10S, 4 years) described:

> *We need to, we get up, we get dressed and then we have breakfast.*
>
> (James, F4S, 7 years)

> *VE:*   *Okay, and you pick out your own clothes or is that already done for you?*
>
> *Luke:*   *I pick out my own clothes.*
>
> *VE:*   *Then you come downstairs?*
>
> *Luke:*   *Yes, and have breakfast.*
>
> (Luke, F10S, 4 years)

Here James (F4S, 7 years) also highlighted the routine, sequential ordering of tasks during the day. Consequently, interactions between fathers and children became located within such temporal schema. As Annika (F10D, 14 years) noted, once she and her siblings went to school or nursery, they did not see their father (or other family members) until much later in the day:

> *Then we all go off and get ready and do whatever we need to do. So Anja then leaves to catch the bus at five to eight, so she goes. Then Freya goes. Then if Luke is going to nursery he goes. During the day we're all separate, doing our own thing.*

> (Annika, F10D, 14 years)

For fathers, therefore, there was no time for anything other than rigidly ordered and necessary tasks on weekday mornings. Such tasks included: getting up, washing, getting dressed, eating, and getting out of the house. There was no sense that any additional time might be negotiated by fathers, or that available time might be utilised for father-child interaction. Constraint over the amount and use of time on weekday mornings was felt to be imposed upon fathers and children by school and work, rather than chosen. These constraints were absolute and non-negotiable. Fathers *had* to go to work and children *had* to go to school or to other childcare, and they had to do this at set times and within set timeframes each day. In traversing the "mad rush" (John, F2F) that weekday mornings perpetuated, time was experienced as stressful by family members; further limiting any potential for father-child interaction. In contrast, most mothers did describe interacting with children each morning, making time to do this on mornings which they worked and experienced competing temporally located obligations themselves. Harried mornings, therefore, often resulted in reversion to a gender normative division of childcare responsibilities which parents, typically, problematised and sought to avoid.

Time limitations on weekday mornings, however, were not just externally imposed by work and school. Children, mothers and fathers further shaped the amount of available time each weekday morning and how this was experienced. Children could influence such negotiations, but this had limited impact on fathering. For example, Josh (F1S, 13 years) and his brothers would normally take their bikes to school, but would sometimes get lifts from their mother, not their father:

> Josh: *Yeah. Sometimes we get lifts.*

> VE: *Ok and who would take you to school in the morning then? Is it Mum or Dad?*

> Josh: *Usually Mum.*

> (Josh, F1S, 13 years)

Mothers, however, could shape fathers' participation each morning. Paul (F7F) did most of the weekday morning tasks on behalf of his daughter, Amy (F7D, 5 years). This was, they explained, because his partner, Ellie (F7M), took longer to get herself ready than he did. Neither Ellie nor Paul elaborated on why this might be the case:

> *I mean most of the time I get Amy dressed and things like that because obviously Ellie takes a bit longer to get ready in the morning. I do all that. I brush her hair. I get her down for breakfast. Yes, most days in the week I'll be doing that.*

> (Paul, F7F)

In contrast to most fathers, William (F8F) did not always have to go to work after getting the children to school or childcare and this removed the sense of an absolute time constraint which other families experienced on weekday mornings. Similarly, only one of his children had to go to school, whilst the other went to nursery. William's wife, Rita, worked longer hours than him and, consequently, had to leave the house first most weekday mornings. Time constraints still impinged, but they did not have to be as rigidly coordinated as in other families. William, therefore, also undertook the majority of morning tasks in his family. Although Rita and William had negotiated their paid working hours to facilitate this, they were also unique amongst participating parents in that William worked weekends. Consequently, William and Rita placed equal emphasis across all times of the day and week in their accounts of father involvement. For Rita, William was "never really absent from any of it." For their family, unlike most other families but like Family Seven, weekday mornings were very much a focus of father involvement:

> *Well I suppose a typical morning I usually get up first - well Joseph usually gets up first, but yes - so I'll get up and see what chaos is happening downstairs and then wake Rita up either at twenty past seven if she's got to go to work, or after eight o'clock if she doesn't. I also make sure she's had a coffee and things and start getting the children to get dressed and get them fed, get their breakfast down so that they can go to school, nursery or whatever they are going to. Then if it were a day where I'm working, then after the children are bundled off, I go to work and I work part time so I can come home and sort out supper for the children as well.*

> (William, F8F)

Nevertheless, weekday morning interactions between fathers and children were, in the majority of families, highly limited and rigidly ordered. The experience of time as rushed, stressed or chaotic further shaped how father-child interaction was 'done'. Weekday evenings and weekends, in

contrast, were less rushed and stressful because they were not shaped by the absolute imperatives for fathers to get to work and children to get to school:

> *No. I mean it is more relaxed. Yes, kind of more relaxed but it's still a similar pattern in terms of who gets up first, who sets out the breakfast and all that kind of thing. Then we'll try and do things together, if we can, at the weekend*

> (Dean, F6F)

There was, undoubtedly, more time for father-child interaction on weekday evenings and during weekends. Weekday evenings were, nevertheless, still characterised as "stressful" (Josh, F1S, 13 years) because parents and children were "tired" (Imran, F5F) at the end of the working day. Similarly, weekends could be described as rushed and harried because of the need to catch up on tasks not done in the week and the desire to maximise the use of time to fulfil all competing obligations:

> *I mean weekends, they tend to be a bit more feast or famine really. Sometimes you get a chance to have a rest but then other times you're trying to do all the things with the kids. You're trying to cut the grass or cut the hedge back or whatever, doing all these kind of chores that you never seem to have any time to fit in and trying to work it around all of that.*

> (Dean, F6F)

Use of time at weekends was continually renegotiated in order to ensure a balance between getting lots done, doing "lots of things together" (Amy, F7D, 5 years) and promoting "calm" (Helen, F2M):

> *Well, clearly we have packed too much into that weekend. Let's make sure that doesn't happen again.*

> (Michael, F10F)

> *I don't feel I get a lot of time to myself, because when I am here at the weekend particularly, I always want to be with the family. So, things get left; there's various jobs around the house, there's things that I want to do, go out for big bike rides or big walks in the hills and I don't do that because I've got a family that I don't see in the week.*

> (Andrew, F4F)

Whilst there was a greater amount of time available on weekday evenings compared with mornings, and more time at weekends compared with mid-week, the experience of time as well as the

numerous other calls on parents' time during weekday evenings and weekends could draw fathers and children away from interacting with one another. Many of the demands on parents' time centred on domestic labour – despite fathers' assertions that they prioritised time spent with children when they were at home. However, demands also came from the overspill of fathers' paid work into home life and through fathers' desire to pursue independent leisure activities. As Rory (F6S, 8 years) explained, his father played tennis, which affected their ability to eat together as a family during evenings and weekends:

> *Well we really just have all our teas and lunches with all the family except if it's tea and it's tennis night and Daddy's not there.*

> (Rory, F6S, 8 years)

There were varied demands, not just on fathers' time at evenings and weekends, but also on children's. Children of all ages attended extra-curricular activities, younger children attended "parties" (Dean F6F) and older children reported going out with friends:

> *I usually go to town with my friends on Saturday.*

> (Josh, F1S, 13 years)

Children also brought work home from school and the obligation to do this shaped their use of weekday evening and weekend time. For younger children, their homework could provide a space for father-child interaction:

> *I think my role is changing in the way home schooling a bit more because she's getting homework, she's learning to read.*

> (Paul, F7F)

Older children, however, required less support with homework and, progressively, homework became a solitary activity for children. Nevertheless, fathers had an ongoing role in encouraging children to do their homework (or, perhaps, mandating that children did their homework) even as children aged:

> *One Sunday morning Dad woke me up, sat me at the table and I had to do three hours of Biology.*

> Ben (F1S, 17 years)

Like their parents, children were also obligated to contribute to domestic labour, which made demands on their time. As James noted, these chores were imposed upon children by their parents:

> James: Yeah. We have the rules are over there.
>
> VE: Are they? Can you tell me about them?
>
> James: Yeah, one of them is to have a daily job.
>
> VE: What sort of jobs do you have to do?
>
> James: We need to do jobs for, we need to empty the dishwasher, sometimes we need to tidy our room but that's only when we have enough time.
>
> (James, F4S, 7 years)

As Freya (F10D, 10 years) and Anja (F10D, 11 years) indicated, children were aware of both the obligations on their own time and fathers' evening and weekend obligations. Consequently, children, like their parents, navigated around these obligations, shaping their expectations of father-child interaction accordingly:

> Freya: Yes, usually, if we're doing some homework or something, it's probably with Mum-
>
> Anja: It would be with Mum, because-
>
> Freya: -because Dad probably finds it easier to work in the evening, when Luke's not there.
>
> (Freya and Anja, F10D&D, 10 and 11 years)

Demands on family members' time were, however, configured differently in individual families and across the lifecourse. In turn, this shaped the tasks and activities which fathers and children did in families and their scope for interaction during these times. Jenny (F6M) demonstrated this in her description of how weekday evenings had changed since her husband, Dean (F6F), had taken a job close to home. As such, he could now help with bath-time, tea-time and 'tired-time' every night:

> Having somebody back at 5.30-45 in the evening as compared to not having them back until 7 when you've already done bath-time and tea-time and tired-time, that's marvellous.
>
> (Jenny, F6M)

In contrast, Ruth (F4M) highlighted how Andrew did not arrive home from work until after the children had eaten dinner. He could, therefore, only participate in activities after the children's

evening meal during weekday evenings. These activities were further defined by the temporal location and ordering of children's bedtime routines:

> *Yes, so you very often – well, nine times out of ten in the week, Andrew will do bedtime, and read their stories and do songs and prayers and things with them.*

(Ruth, F4M)

Such flexibility and fluidity within everyday experiences and was shaped, over time, by children's age and position within the family. As Annika (F10D, 14 years) noted, "I think the key things haven't changed but there may be smaller things or timings or something that have changed." The evolution of daily routines was clearly explicated through accounts of children's bedtimes. In one family the imperative of 'bedtime' was iteratively reconstructed for each child, so that each subsequent child after the eldest had more flexible bedtimes:

> *Brendan:*   *But also, I treat, not deliberately, or partially, but they're definitely getting an easier ride because someone's been down that road before.*
>
> *VE:*   *Right. Are there any sort of specific things that you can think of?*
>
> *Brendan:*   *Well, they get much more relaxed bedtimes which seems a perfectly obvious one. Because, you know, if you've got kids all milling round and lots of noise in the house, you can't get small ones off to sleep. I say small, you know, eight, nine, ten.*

(Brendan, F1F)

Whereas, in other families, children were allowed to go to bed later as they got older:

> *Noah:*   *But because I go to sleep later than Connor usually just me.*
>
> *VE:*   *Yeah. So how much later do you get to stay up than Connor?*
>
> *Noah:*   *An hour.*
>
> *VE:*   *An hour, okay. And when will Connor get to stay up later?*
>
> *Noah:*   *…*
>
> *VE:*   *How old were you when you got to stay up to this bed time?*
>
> *Noah:*   *10.*

Therefore, weekday evenings and weekends presented greater *opportunity* for father-child interaction than weekday mornings, but were not solely utilised for the purpose of father-child interaction. Specific times were perceived to be enabling or constraining in their potential to foster father involvement. Consequently, fathering practices became, more or less, temporally located, as Luke indicated:

Sunday is daddy day.

(Luke, F10S, 4 years)

In summary, four temporal elements intersected father-child interaction. Time constraints were both externally imposed, and internally constructed and negotiated between participants. Through the complex and changing configuration of these elements across the day, the week and across children's childhoods, these elements served to enable or constrain interaction between fathers and children.

Time was firstly experienced as a finite resource. The second element related to the temporal ordering of family life, its negotiation and association with particular routines. The third involved the construction of demands on time, other than father-child interaction, and the extent to which these were perceived as non-negotiable. Finally, how time was perceived and experienced was paramount. Where time was stressed or rushed, fathers felt that they could not interact with children in ways which might nurture closeness within their relationships with their children. Time was further implicated in father-child relationships, through the notion of fathers 'being there' and through the significance attributed to amount of time which fathers spent directly interacting with children.

Significantly, there was more commonality than dissonance between families in the amount of time and in the specific times available for father-child interaction. This resulted in strikingly similar temporally located events being highlighted as significant for father-child interaction within family members' accounts. Such events included, family meals. Such events, however, may also have held pre-existing significance that made them important to negotiate time for. Nevertheless, both the 'how' and the 'when' of fathering practices were important in determining their significance. Unpicking how these events were understood to be significant for father-child relationships will form

the focus of the following section. In doing so, the section will draw on a specific illustrative example – that of the family meal.

From family practices to fathering practices

All families made time on weekday evenings and weekends for father-child interaction. Across all families, particular, temporally located events were described in accounts of daily father-child interaction. The most consistently noted shared family activity each day, was the evening meal; an event which combined both fatherly presence and interaction with children.

Family meals were evocative of a sense of whole family togetherness and as such, were interwoven with the experience and portrayal of 'family' more generally. As William (F8F) noted, "we try to have a meal around the table or something together pretty much every day."

All families ate together at weekends and took particular care to stipulate this if they did not eat together in the week. For many families, however, the evening meal in the working week was often the first, and only, opportunity for most families to spend time together each day and through this routine quality, took on a particular resonance for family togetherness:

> VE: *Ok, so do you eat your meals together every night?*
>
> Isla: *Yeah.*
>
> VE: *And every morning as well?*
>
> Rory: *Well…*
>
> Isla: *Not every morning because Mum and Dad are asleep in the morning when it's just turned morning.*

(Isla and Rory, F6D&S, 5 and 8 years)

In the working week, half of the participating fathers were either home from work in time to eat with their family, or worked from home which also enabled them to eat with the family. Families in which fathers were not home in time to eat with children typically had younger children who needed to go to bed early and were, unsurprisingly, less likely to eat together than other families where children stayed up later. In such families, children either ate alone, or with siblings, and parents ate together when the children had gone to bed:

> VE: *When you have dinner, do you all eat dinner together? No. So do you and Sam eat together and then Mummy and Daddy eat later?*

Reuben: They eat later.

(Reuben, F9S, 4 years)

VE: So you have dinner before Daddy gets home?

Amy: Yeah.

VE: Do you have dinner with Mummy or on your own?

Amy: On my own.

(Amy, F7D, 5 years)

Family meals were significant on two levels. First, fathers' presence during family meals was significant because it was this that made it a *family meal*. If fathers were not around to eat with children, mothers did not describe eating with children either. Therefore, family meals took on particular meaning as a site of fathering, even though mothers were also present. Second, fathers' presence during family meals was significant, it will be shown, because of *how* fathers interacted with their children during family meals.

For most families, eating together at the table was primarily seen to offer family members opportunity for communication focused around verbal interaction:

VE: And is it quite important to have that whole family time together?

Anja: I think it is, because you don't normally see each other if you're at school-

Freya: Yes___

Anja: -and then you don't normally see each other, so it's nice to be able to share the news and talk to each other about the day and things at meal times.

Freya: ___ at dinner.

(Anja and Freya, F10D&D, 11 and 10 years)

Consequently, families felt they were able to reconnect after being apart during the working day, as well as engaging in the mutual endeavour of eating together. Communication was, therefore, key to the construction of family meals as a family practice.

Further, children's perceived communicative competence was integral to how interactions over family meals became significant for fathering and, therefore, assumed significance for relational

closeness between fathers and children. At seventeen years old, Ben (F1S) was the oldest child in the study by three years. Ben was seen by his father, Brendan, to be able to communicate with adult peers in an adult-like way:

> *I think you don't always you don't always see the things as a parent that make you proud. Particularly with my eldest… I think the way my eldest interacts with adults in my peer group makes me very proud. That he can hold his own in conversation, is very interesting, is very witty. That he wants to engage with adults.*

(Brendan, F1F)

In contrast, Brendan's youngest son, Billy (F1S, 11 years), was talked to, rather than talked with over family meals. His father, Brendan, shared his insights into the wider social world over the dinner table with his children in ways that Billy reflected in his own account:

> *Billy:*   *Sometimes Dad will like show us things that we didn't really know, like about people. Normally at conversations at the table he'll talk about how stupid people are. It's normally Mr Gove.*
>
> *VE:*   *Ok, the Education Secretary?*
>
> *Billy:*   *Yeah*
>
> *VE:*   *Ok. Why does he think that?*
>
> *Billy:*   *Well he is stupid, technically.*
>
> *VE:*   *What's he done that's stupid?*
>
> *Billy:*   *He's just not very clever in all ways.*

(Billy, F1S, 11 years)

Unlike his brother, Billy, Ben (F1S, 17 years) described the enjoyment gained through his ability to assert and debate his own perspective during mealtime conversations with his father. Importantly, such interactions were both motivated by, and served to reciprocally develop Ben and Brendan's understanding of each other and their sense of being special to one another. In this way, communication through verbal interactions over family meals between fathers and children became significant for relational closeness between fathers and children:

> Ben: Depends, sometimes it's like debates on politics. Sometimes we talk about, like, the political spectrum cos I think we're quite like. We both support Labour and a new Tory policy comes up or UKIP says something completely crazy and we're both 'Ahh' and start talking about it. But also we talk about, we talk about all sorts of different topics and I'm doing science exams, so you know, being a scientist himself, he can help me with that…
>
> VE: …What sort of things do you talk about then? About politics?
>
> Ben: Well sometimes it just starts out with me just spouting facts, because I do Politics for an A Level. And he's like, did you know this, did you know this? And I ask him about his opinion on the EU. Like, should we stay in, should we stay out, what he thinks, why he thinks what he thinks. Which I find quite interesting because we normally take the same side, but can have conflicting views on things sometimes. Which, you know, having political debate with someone quite fun.
>
> VE: Do you think he enjoys those as well?
>
> Ben: Well I think he enjoys them and talking to his sons. And if I'm, obviously, like being on an intellectual level with him and being able to converse with him on a certain topic then both sides will enjoy it.

(Ben, F1S, 17 years)

Ben noted, however, that his younger brother Billy was not able to engage in conversation with their father in the same way that he did. Moreover, Ben felt that his peers might be able to communicated in the same way with their own fathers. This was because Billy was "only young, as opposed to my friends who are all quite older. So, you know. Dialect is different, in a way." Evening meals, therefore, were important family time but took on significance for father-child relationships when children were older and were seen to have greater verbal competence to communicate with fathers and could discuss topics of mutual interest.

So, whilst younger children might be seen to be excluded by fathers from conversations which, through their interactional characteristics, held significance for father-child relationships, younger children also shaped their participation in meal time conversations, Billy (F1S, 11 years) explained that he would "laze around while they're having their conversations." Solomon (F5S, 5 years), however, described how his mother and father would ask what "I've done every day when I come back at home" and how he would "never remember." Such forgetfulness may have reflected a

choice not to participate in such conversation, or that, as Solomon stipulated, that he simply could not recall. Younger children, therefore, showed that while they were not necessarily competent to communicate in 'adult like' ways with their fathers, they were also not always interested in participating in mealtime discussions with their fathers either - contesting any assumption that their exclusion was solely associated with their lack of competence. Through the construction of children's aged based competence, younger children's potential to verbally communicate with their fathers at mealtimes in mutually enjoyable ways was curbed. Consequently, the communications between fathers and younger children and fathers during family meals were not seen as significant for father-child relationships. Nevertheless, older children were not always open to communication with their fathers either, as Brendan (F1F) explained:

> *Sometimes teenagers can just, for no reason, and for nothing you've done, just be absolutely uncommunicative or bad tempered for long periods of time.*

(Brendan, F1F)

Importantly, the lack of reciprocal enjoyment and younger children's perceived lack of competence meant that communication between fathers and younger children during family meals was not seen to contribute to the development of fathers' and younger children's understanding of each other or to their sense of being special to one another. There were, however, only two families who had teenage children; limiting further exploration of how age and its entanglement with children's perceived communication skills intersected father-child conversations during family meals.

In summary, family members felt that fathers were increasingly able to communicate with their children on topics of mutual interest as children aged and were perceived to develop sophisticated verbal skills. Children's age was, therefore, interwoven with notions of their competence. Mutuality of verbal communication, it was perceived, was enjoyed by fathers and older children, allowing them to increasingly develop their knowledge and understanding of one another as individuals and to nurture a sense of being special to one another. A key site for such communication was the evening family meal, eaten around the dinner table. The shared family meal, therefore, held resonance, not just as a fathering practice, but as one which was significant for closeness within father-child relationships with older children.

Evening family meals, therefore, were given significance as fathering practices through their temporal location and also through how they were experienced. Consequently, and, intersected by children's age and perceived competence, evening family meals assumed significance for creating

and sustaining a close bond between fathers and children. Nevertheless, the relationship between children's age and fathers and children's relational closeness requires further exploration.

Chapter Seven: Relational closeness between fathers and children across children's childhoods.

The prior chapter demonstrated, first, that fathering practices were typically 'done' at regular and particular times and, second, that when such practices were seen to foster relational closeness between fathers and children, their 'doing' was associated with particular characteristics. Mutuality was a key component in the construction and experience of relational closeness between fathers and children. Children's competence in verbal communication intersected the experience of mutuality in conversations over family meals. Expectations and perceptions of children's competence were bound up with their age; younger children being seen as less competent and older children as more competent. Consequently, this chapter explores the experience of relational closeness between fathers and children across children's childhoods.

Fathers' relationships with infants and very young children

Children had little to say about their infancy and very young childhood, for obvious reasons. The only time babyhood was mentioned by children was in the joint interview with Rory (F6S, 8 years) and Isla (F6D, 5 years). Isla recounted the story of her birth and that of her two siblings – stories which Rory noted that "mainly Mum" had told them. Indeed, Rory explained that when he was born his father "was actually at work and when he came back he saw a little me." Parents were, therefore, the genitors of these family stories, which extended and became incorporated into children's own biographical accounts. In general, parents' accounts stipulated that fathers were present and participated in infant children's lives, but that their interactions with children at this time were secondary to those between children and their mothers.

Most fathers were described as undertaking practical tasks for infant children, such as changing their nappies, or bathing them. However, like other tasks, these elements of childcare were also described as being undertaken by either parent:

> *We might both be changing Adam's nappy.*
>
> (John, F2F)

Nevertheless, Dean (F6F) stated that he would have agreed to a fourth child only if his wife, Jenny, had agreed to "change all the nappies," suggesting that, with their existing children, this had either always been understood to be part of his role, or the responsibility for changing nappies had been an historical source of tension between himself and Jenny. It further suggests that changing nappies was not a task inevitably tied to fatherhood and that this task *could* be assigned to mothering.

Fathers Brendan and Bruce both asserted a prevalent theme in the data; despite fathers' routine participation in the care of infants, such practical activities did not readily allow fathers to relate to infant children in ways which were felt to be significant for father-child relationships:

> *You know, I certainly did things. Running the household, looking after the children. You know I was there all the time for them. But I don't think you feel the bond. Or I didn't feel the bond the same way that I do now.*

> (Brendan, F1F)

> *Oh yeah. Obviously, when they're smaller you pretty much do everything for them, it's a hands on thing. If they need to be fed, if they need to go to the toilet. So that practical side of it has changed, so it's more of an emotional thing now.*

> (Bruce, F3F)

It is necessary, therefore, to further explore the relational qualities of father-child interactions at this time in children's lives in order to understand how 'the bond' and the enduring emotionality in father-child relations were constituted.

Jenny (F6M) described how her husband, Dean, had gone "into shock for about a year and a half" after the birth of their first child and that, during this time, Dean's participation in his infant children's care was perfunctory. Consequently, Jenny felt that Dean was not enabled to know his infant children well. Dean himself did not offer a comment on this in his own interview:

> *I don't remember Dean having a huge input to be honest and he quite often said that he didn't really understand babies.*

> (Jenny, F6M)

Hence, parents felt that fathers struggled to interact with infants and very young children in ways which developed their understanding or knowledge of infants as individuals, or which nurtured a sense of specialness in their relationships with infants comparative to that which they experienced in their relationships with children when children were older. Yet, fathers felt confident in their understanding of the individualities and particularities of their older children:

> *Samuel* [F4S, 5 years]*, I think, will be a much more multitalented person, I think he'll have a greater choice of things to be involved with; I think he could be academic, I think he could be highly sporty, I think he's – even though he's only five, I might have completely rose tinted spectacles, but he appears to have a lot of things going for him. Very different to James* [F4S, 7 years] *in terms of music, but in terms of coordination and ability to take on new things and*

skills and want to get involved in the nuance of disciplines, I think he's very, very astute. Nina
[F4D, 3 years], I don't know, she's a bit young really to…

(Andrew, F4F)

Brendan explained that, in addition to being unaccustomed to fatherhood, he could not communicate effectively with his children when they were very young. As a result, he did not feel a deep sense of engagement with his children at that point in their lives:

Well I was perfectly practical, but not sort of deeply engaged with play or whatever. And,
and, so I found it quite difficult to engage with children that won't respond to reason. And so,
yeah, it was all sort of very new to me. It still all is, to some degree.

(Brendan, F1F)

Further, the impediments Brendan's infant children placed on the free use of his time resulted in a lack of enjoyment of the time he did spend with them:

There was a degree to which it was just a bit of frustration that I couldn't get out and do
what I wanted to do at the time or that I found it less rewarding.

(Brendan, F1F)

Fathers' understandings of children as 'very young' were, therefore, implicated in the experience and construction of the father-child relationship. For Brendan (F1F), irrational infants and very young children constrained his potential to feel closely connected to them. While, for Andrew (F4F), infancy and very young childhood constrained his ability to know his children's personalities. Mothers were also aware that fathers felt that they were unable to enjoy interactions with their infant children in the same ways they did, or might expect to, when their children were older:

I think he enjoys them a lot more than he did when they were tiny babies. But he did his fair
share of wiping bottoms and spoon feeding.

(Rita, F8M)

This lack of enjoyment was associated, in part, with a perceived lack of competence as new parents, but exacerbated by babies' lack of competence to engage with fathers in ways which fathers did not find limiting. Fathers did not, therefore, feel motivated to be 'deeply engaged' in the practical tasks of fathering at this time despite participating regularly in a number of such tasks.

At the same time, it was felt that babies had a biological need for their mothers and 'naturally' expressed a preference for interaction with their mothers during infancy and very young childhood:

maternal primacy was constructed as both inevitable and appropriate during the early months and years of children's lives:

I'm expecting my child while he's very little he needs his mother more than he does need his dad. Whether that's true or wrong, I don't know, but that's the general understanding.

(Imran, F5F)

In several families, the perception of 'special' mother-infant relationships – relative to those which fathers and infants experienced – was articulated in relation to the practice of breastfeeding. As Bruce (F3F) noted, "both boys were breastfed, that's something I can't do, so yeah." Here Bruce suggests a biological basis to the primacy of mothers in infant children's lives, noting that fathers were, therefore, precluded from such interaction. Some infants were also described as unwilling to take a bottle, highlighting the perceived agency of infants in determining infant-father interaction and underscoring the parental notion that babies needed and preferred their mothers foremost of their parents:

I've breastfed the other two and I've still been feeding them in the day up until the point at which I go to work. They've both been very difficult to get to take a bottle so that would be another challenge in terms of that.

(Emily, F9M)

Nevertheless, Paul (F7F), described bottle feeding his daughter, Amy (F7D, 5 years). This replicated, to some extent, the infant feeding practice which most mothers undertook and which was felt to be integral to the development of the infant-mother bond. Consequently, Paul felt that he understood and could fulfil his daughter's needs and that there was a closer connection between them:

When I started to use the bottle and feed Amy, I felt a stronger bond and more engagement with Amy.

(Paul, F7F)

Mothers' role as primary parent to infants meant that older children had to relinquish a degree of maternal attention and this, subsequently, allowed fathers to spend time with older children and to pay them greater "attention" (Dean, F6F):

There was always that thing where Rose has always had more of Jenny's attention I think than the other two really. The other two have had to put up with a bit more of my attention.

It's not a conscious negotiation. It's evolved really and some of it is about the children's preference and some of it's about what is practical. I think Rose has always had probably more of Jenny's attention, being the youngest and the baby and all that kind of thing.

(Dean, F6F)

Mothers' breastfeeding of infants, therefore, made space for fathers to interact with older children. John (F2F) noted that his daughter, Lily (F2D, 6 years), had felt particularly "excluded" since the birth of her youngest sibling, Adam (F2S, 1 year). Through this knowledge of Lily, John was able to increase his level of what he considered to be 'special' interaction with both her and her elder brother, Laserblast (F2S, 8 years), and to take responsibility for ensuring that their emotional needs were met:

John: *I think Lily found it a bit harder particularly. You know, things like the breastfeeding. It was, I thought she felt that was very intimate between you and Adam and she was a little bit excluded from that.*

Helen: *Yeah.*

John: *And she could play up a bit.*

VE: *So how did you manage that then? How were you able to?*

John: *I mean just by giving them attention and taking Lily away or doing, I'm sure we had more special time around about that time than normal. Taking her out, taking both children to the shops and things like that. They very much see Helen and I as a team.*

(John and Helen, F2F&M)

John also described the willingness of the older children to participate in this interaction and their understanding that both parents could provide 'special time' which fostered relational closeness. Brendan (F1F) recounted a similar experience and emphasised, like John, that he was enabled to interact with his older children:

When, when the other two were babies, he'd go out and do stuff with me, then as the middle one progressed and the other one was still a baby, we'd do stuff.

(Brendan, F1F)

A notable exception was Imran (F5F), who described having a 'good bond' with his son Solomon (F5S, 5 years) since his birth. Imran explained the significance, to him, of being the first person to

have held Solomon and affirmed his perception that this was a mutually beneficial experience in which they were both engaged and which, therefore, cemented a close connection between them:

> *That was very nice and Solomon was obviously just born and the first person he lies on is probably you and he was just fixating to me just looking at me. I don't know whether he could see me much, probably not very much at that age, but it was a very good bond and a very memorable thing.*

(Imran, F5F)

In summary, despite fathers being involved in the routine practices of parenting during children's infancy, parents perceived that mothers were biologically necessary to infants and that this offered mothers the opportunity to undertake parenting practices in ways which fathers could not. Fathers, for the most part, acquiesced to the perceived predominance of mothers in infants' and very young children's lives. Fathers found it difficult to interact with infants and very young children in ways which they did not find limiting. Consequently, fathers did not feel that they understood infants and very young children well or that they particularly enjoyed the interactions they had with them. In contrast, where fathers were able to replicate, to some degree, the maternal practices which created specialness in the mother-child relationship, close connections between fathers and infant and children were possible. Overwhelmingly, however, fathers felt limited in their potential to foster close connections with their children whilst they were very young.

Nevertheless, the birth of a younger sibling could facilitate interaction between fathers and older children. Through fathers' 'stepping in' and 'stepping up' to make up for a reduction in maternal attention in older children's lives when a new sibling arrived, the primacy of mothers in children's care was challenged and fathers were enabled to do things with children in new ways, and to develop close relationships.

The lack of relational closeness between fathers and children in very early childhood reaffirms the observation made in Chapter Six, that such experiences varied over the course of children's childhoods. In continuing to unpick these threads, the subsequent sections consider how fathers continued to negotiate their parenting role as children aged.

Constructing and communicating closeness between fathers and children through reading

Starting in infancy, fathers began to participate in children's bedtime routines. This typically involved dressing, changing and bathing infants and very young children. As children aged beyond infancy, however, the constituent practices of the bedtime routine, and fathers' contributions to this, then

expanded to include reading bedtime stories to children and putting children to bed. Both mothers and fathers reported reading to children each night but, for Dean (F6F), reading a bedtime story was a particular referent against which he drew a distinction between the practices of his father and his own fathering:

> *He wasn't that involved. I mean I don't ever remember him reading to us really, it was always my mum that would read to us.*

> (Dean, F6F)

Dean, therefore, marked reading as a significant practice of father involvement by distinguishing himself from his father who he felt was 'not like him'. For other fathers, it will be shown, it was the potential for reading to children to nurture relational closeness between fathers and children that lent significance to reading as a fathering practice.

Exactly how old children were when fathers began reading to them as part of the bedtime routine was not clear and may well have varied between families. As children aged, however, fathers reading children a bedtime story became less commonplace and eventually ceased to be mentioned in accounts of fathers with children attending secondary school. However, it is important to reiterate that only three children in the study were of secondary school age.

Sarah (F3M) noted the importance of maintaining communication channels between her eldest son Noah (F3S, 11 years) and his father, Bruce (F3F). Sarah highlighted the need for Bruce to continue to go into Noah's room to read to him despite Bruce's perception that Noah was already 'too old' to be read to:

> *At one point he said that he was going to stop reading to Noah because he felt that he was too old for a bedtime story. I said, "No, you still need to." Noah is at the top of the house and Bruce went through a habit of not going right up to his room, going into his room. I'd say to him, "You have to continue going into his room because once he's in teenage years we need to still have that communication channel open. If he's so used to you just going halfway up the stairs, he isn't going to want you to go into his room fully.*

> (Sarah, F3M)

Fathers reading to children, therefore, provided a springboard for communication between fathers and children. For fathers with children in the early stages of formal education, reading with children, or children reading to fathers, also communicated an understanding of children's educational development to fathers and mothers:

She's [Amy, F7D, 5 years] *starting to read to us now as well. She'll read a book. We get through quite a lot of books at the moment.*

(Paul, F7F)

…but when Reuben [F9S, 4 years] *has a reading book* [from school] *we read it altogether.*

(Emily, F9M)

Given that reading largely took place in the evening, the way time was experienced was also of consequence. Many parents reported that they wanted children to go to sleep by a specific time which influenced the amount of time fathers had to read to children. Further, Dean (F6F) noted that there were varied demands on his time each evening, arising from the different preferences and needs of his son and his daughters. When faced with these competing demands, he generally opted to go out and play with his eldest son (Rory, F6S, 8 years), rather than stay in and read to his two younger daughters (Isla and Rose, F6D&D, 5 and 3 years):

Yes. I mean to be honest it's all the time over different things and particularly when they get tired and things like that. I think it's in the evenings and this time of day when you're trying to get them to bed and stuff and Rory wants to go out and play. We play tennis in the street quite a lot and things like that or kick footballs around or whatever.

Sometimes that excludes any other interaction with anybody else. I don't read as much to the girls now as I have in the past or as much as I did to Rory so Jenny ends up doing a lot of that. It just sucks the time away from them really but then it's something that I think he really values. It's a difficult one really.

(Dean, F6F)

The reasons for this, however, were unclear with both children's age and gender being implicated. It is also possible, however, that this varied across the year; playing outside in the evening perhaps being less feasible and less enjoyable in the inclement and dark winter months. Dean was keen, however, to reassure me that he had not ceased to read to his daughters entirely, reinforcing the centrality of reading in his particular understanding of how fatherhood should be 'done':

I think the girls; I mean it's different. I read to them a lot and I still do read to them.

(Dean, F6F)

Similarly, Anja (F10D 11 years), recognised that her father Michael's paid work took priority over reading to the children in the evening and also placed the onus on herself and her siblings to not approach Michael to ask him to read. This was reflected in the paucity of time they subsequently spent reading together:

> He does say, "Don't think I'm working. Come and ask me to read you a story, or whatever."
>
> So it's not like we can't go to him, but sometimes he has to do preps or wedding preps, or whatever, with people. So it's usually Mum who's around in the evening, so we usually spend our evenings with Mum.
>
> (Anja, F10D, 11 years)

It was not, as Anja explained, that their father did not read to them at all. Rather he read to them in the mornings, as part of their family "Bible study." Unlike most fathers then, Michael did not read stories but a text with which he and his children engaged as part of their Christian faith. In contrast to other fathers who read to their younger children in the evening and within their bedrooms, Michael read to his children in the morning, within shared family spaces and into their teenage years:

> Then usually talk a little bit, and our dad does a bible study in the morning for us all. We all do that.
>
> (Annika, F10D, 14 years)

Competing demands on fathers' time in the evening, therefore, constrained fathers' reading to children for fathers. Rory and Isla (F6S&D, 8 and 5 years), however, described how children could also mould the time available for fathers to read to them each night. They highlighted how the time allocated by their father, Dean, to read to them could expire if they 'wasted' it:

> VE: Ok and does he read to Rory every night?
>
> Isla: Yep.
>
> Rory: Well nearly every night.
>
> Isla: Yeah because sometimes he [Rory] wastes all of his time.
>
> (Rory and Isla, F6S&D, 8 and 5 years)

In contrast, Reuben (F9S, 4 years) asserted that, since his attendance at school, his father no longer read to him. This was despite his father's protestations to the contrary as he was also present throughout the interview with Reuben. This suggests that children's increasing competence in reading enabled them to elect to either extend their reading with fathers by reading to or with them, or to constrain this practice by reading to themselves:

> VE: Ok. Do you have any help with any of those things or do you do it on your own?
>
> Reuben: I read my story on my own.
>
> VE: Oh ok. Does Sam read his own stories?
>
> Reuben: No.
>
> VE: Who reads to Sam then?
>
> Reuben: Mummy and Daddy.
>
> VE: Ok so they share that. So when did they stop reading for you? Or have they never read for you?
>
> Reuben: They stopped reading when I went to school.

(Reuben, F9S, 4 years)

Importantly, the relationship between children's age and their reading competence was muddied in accounts of fathers' reading to children. The notion that there was a particular 'cut off point' in fathers' reading to children when children could read themselves, or when they reached a certain age was repeatedly challenged. Where fathers did read to children each night, this provided a springboard for communication between them and their children.

Reciprocal enjoyment of reading between fathers and children was evident in numerous accounts. Over time, Bruce (F3F) had read a variety of books to his sons, Noah (F3S, 11 years) and Connor (F3S, 7 years), and Bruce's wife, Sarah, felt that such choices reflected both Noah's present interests and Bruce's own interests as a child:

> A lot of the books that Bruce has read as a child or as a teenager, I think Noah will be reading them. He's definitely into that fiction.

(Sarah, F3M)

Noah (F3S, 11 years) also indicated that he, his father and his brother all had to agree on the choice of book for it to be an inclusive and mutually enjoyable bedtime story:

> VE: And who chooses those books, is it you or Connor or…?

> Noah: Well, we all agree.

> (Noah, F3S, 11 years)

For Sarah (F3M), this sense of specialness in the relationship between Bruce (F3F) and his sons was created through the connection of Noah (F3S, 11 years) and Connor (F3S, 7 years) to the shared interests of Bruce and his wider family. Through reading, a shared family tradition, Connor and Noah became embedded in their family, nurturing wider relational connections beyond the father-child relationship:

> They're all into 'The Hobbit'. I don't know what fiction that comes under but, do you know what I mean, like mystical stuff. All the family are into that so they have that as a common bond. They'll sit for hours.

> (Sarah, F3M)

For Rory (F6S, 8years), but not Isla (F6D, 5 years), however, reading was something which set their father apart from other fathers, making his involvement in their lives unique and special; though, as has been articulated, Dean (F6F) read more frequently to Rory than he did to Isla:

> VE: But do all daddies read to their children or cook their dinner for them?

> Isla: Yes.

> Rory: No.

> VE: What do you think then Rory?

> Rory: Well no-one's Dad that I know reads them a story at bedtime.

> (Isla and Rory, F6D&S, 5 and 8 years)

In summary, for reading to be significant for relational closeness between fathers and children, communication and mutual enjoyment were key. It was also important that the experience of reading between fathers and children lent a perception of 'specialness' to the father-child relationship. The timing and location of fathers' reading to children were implicated in this sense of 'specialness'. How communication was experienced was influenced by the interweaving of children's

age and level of reading competence. Through reading fathers were able both to know their children better and gain insight into their lives beyond the home. Fathers' reading to children was also important for embedding *family* values and traditions, while also nurturing a sense of closeness within wider family relationships. Nevertheless, the location of reading within the bedtime routine and competing demands on fathers' time could constrain fathers' ability to read to children each night. Children also shaped the time and ability of fathers to read to them.

One father, Dean, indicated that he and his son, Rory, increasingly preferred to go outside and play sport together, rather than stay inside and read since Rory was now old enough to stay up later. The following section therefore considers, in greater detail, fathers' interactions with their children through physical activity.

Relational closeness constructed through physical activities

The importance of fathers providing a male role model to male children was perceived to amplify as children aged:

> *I am their primary kind of example and teacher. I am doing lots of that with Luke now, but I think as he, maybe it will be different, but I foresee that you will be picking up a bit more with Luke. Not that you don't a lot with the girls, you do, but that you will have a bigger impact on Luke when he is older. That's just that's the way.*

> (Stephanie, F10M)

Changes in father-child interaction as children aged were influenced by two factors. First, fathers felt themselves to be, and were seen to be by others, more competent as parents. Second, children, boys especially, were perceived to be more open to interaction and in need of particular types of interactions with their fathers at this time:

> *I don't know if it's nature or nurture, but I feel more competent as a parent of teenagers and of older children than I do, than I did do as a parent to younger children. I find it much more satisfying, more rewarding, more engaging.*

> (Brendan, F1F)

Brendan (F1F) asserted the need for boys to be involved in "adventurous types of activities" and added that "I think that my wife would recognise that the boys need to do that, but she wouldn't necessarily want to see them doing it." Whilst Imran (F5F) explained that "the more he [Solomon, F5S, 5 years] grows up he probably wants to be more with me." Similarly, Jenny (F6M) described her

eldest child, Rory (F6S, 8 years) as being progressively orientated toward spending time with his father:

> I think it's really clear to me, from the time Rory was about six he began to… it wasn't that he wanted his dad more, he wanted me less. He went from very, very clingy to more normal, I think, in a lot of ways. There is more space for his dad to come in and fill, I think.
>
> (Jenny, F6M)

For the most part, interactions between fathers and older sons were described as physically active, away from the domestic environment and, mostly, outdoors. Such physical activities took place on evenings, weekends and during holidays and included camping, playing sports, going on hikes, cycling, swimming and camping:

> I think I'll be putting myself more forward to spend more time with him doing things together. I will do things maybe going camping for example with other friends, when he starts growing up a bit more, and doing fishing. More outdoor cycling activities.
>
> (Imran, F5F)

> VE: Things you do with Dad, okay. So what's… What sort of things do you do at home with your, with your dad then?
>
> Noah: Well, on weekends we usually go on bike rides or go to the park.
>
> (Noah, F3S, 11 years)

Annika, however, described how she and her younger sisters would go cycling, or out to eat with their father, demonstrating the range of activities which fathers undertook with all their children, male or female:

> One of us would take it in turns to go somewhere with dad. That might be cycling or going to a restaurant or going to see a film together, or something like that.
>
> (Annika, F10D, 14 years)

Despite the range of activities which fathers engaged in with all their children, there was an increasing distinction between the activities which fathers did with their daughters and sons as they aged; this distinction arising both within and between families:

> We do that sometimes, I might take Lily [F2D, 6 years] to the shops and have a cup of tea with her, or go for a bike ride with Laserblast [F2S, 8 years].

(John, F2F)

Isla [F6D, 5 years] *recently has asked to spend more time with me, maybe just the two of us to go to a café or something like that. I think some of that is her articulating different needs and things but also her developing and wanting to do something different as well. It's developed. I mean to begin with it's just going to the park or things like that.*

(Dean, F6F)

For Noah (F3S, 11 years), getting older implied that he would extend the range of shared physical activities with his father to include going on "runs together a lot more" as well as going cycling, which they currently did together regularly. Anja, however, spoke about the increasing frequency of going out to eat or drink with their father as she and her sisters had grown older:

Yes, I think we used to probably go to the cinema more with him, but now we go out for meals more often, or for a drink or something. I think that's probably changed since we've got older. Annika [elder sister – 14 years] *and us, I think.*

(Anja, F10D, 11 years)

Such a distinction, although apparently gendered, arose from a desire to ensure that both fathers and children were enabled to enjoy their shared leisure time interactions:

I feel as if I'm treating them differently because they've got different interests and different things that get them going.

(Andrew, F4F)

For the most part, therefore, fathers tended to do more outdoor physical activities with their older sons than they did with their daughters because it was felt that boys had a specific need for physically active behaviours outdoors and that fathers and sons had a greater dispensation toward the enjoyment of such activities.

Mothers were less inclined to participate in such activities with children, although they would join in if such activities were part of a whole family activity. Mothers enjoyed these whole family activities to varying extents. Sarah (F3M) noted that she could not participate in such activities she had a knee injury and was "just physically not able to do it now." Joanne (F1M), however, explained that "I don't really, I do it [camping], but I don't like it as much as they [Brendan and her sons] do." Their youngest son, Billy (F1S, 11 years), recounted an anecdote which reflected both Joanne's (F1M) and

Brendan's (F1F) accounts. He described his mother's participation in a family hike, up to the point when the activity became too risky and she had withdrawn:

> Billy: And then, one time, there was a mountain and when we got to the top of the mountain, there was this big spiral going to the top and it was all rock so you had to climb it and my Mum was like, I'll just stay down here, you don't have to do it if you don't want to and all of us did it and Mum just sat there. 'That's very dangerous.'
>
> VE: Did your Dad not think it was dangerous?
>
> Billy: No. I thought it was fun.
>
> (Billy, F1S, 11 years)

In contrast, Jenny (F6M) described how "before the children what Dean [F6F] and I did for enjoyment and free time was long bike rides, long walks, weekends away hiking." As such, Jenny looked forward to the children being of an age where they could all do this together, rather than just Dean and their eldest child, Rory (F6S, 8 years) as was presently the case:

> So yes, I'd really hope so. I think having three quite spread out makes it seem like a terribly long process. It's something that obviously Dean is working towards when he takes Rory away and then they can do those kind of things, going cycling and walking
>
> (Jenny, F6M)

Mothers did, however, take their children outside to play and to exercise, as Ruth (F4M) noted, and aspired to get out and be physically active with them in the future, as Jenny explained (F6M). For the most part, however, parents' physical activity with children became gendered as a fathering practice within participants' imaginaries:

> Cos like, if you have two fathers like in my point of view it would be two guys teaching you how to ride a bike and I'd just be quite interested to see how that would pan out.
>
> (Ben, F1S, 17 years)

Fathers' claim over physical activity as a parenting practice and the predominance of physical activity in accounts of fathers and older sons rather than mothers and sons, it will be argued, was due to its perceived significance for the father-son relationship.

Sarah (F3M) did not see her exclusion from physical activities with Bruce (F3F) and their sons as problematic. Rather it was important for her children to have the opportunity to 'bond' with their

father without her being there. Similarly, Jenny (F6M) noted that camping and physical activities outdoors were "boy bonding stuff:"

> *I don't feel excluded by it. I think that is lovely that they have this, that they can bond with on a wider level so it's nice.*

> (Sarah, F3M)

Fathers also asserted the importance of fathers and older sons spending time outdoors being physically active. Fathers made time for such interactions on a day to day basis and in advance for special events. Through this, the perceived specialness and significance of such time was indicated:

> *I think it's really important for me to have that time, you know, just me and the boys and so I do like to have that time two or three times a year when we get out and we just go camping.*

> (Bruce, F3F)

In contrast, Annika suggested that interactions which were significant for relational closeness between fathers and older daughters were, for the most part, associated with non-physical activities away from the home. In her account, such interactions included going out to eat and/or to the cinema. Annika noted that these 'daddy dates' ensured that she and her sisters were able to promote relational closeness with their father as well as their mother:

> *Or maybe just because we're all girls, we have the connection with mum. I think maybe 'daddy dates' were enforced to ensure that we did have that connection with dad as well.*

> (Annika, F10D, 14 years)

Annika also reported that she and her father found it easy to communicate away from the home and, indeed, did so when they went out to eat together:

> *We'd usually go to a restaurant or something. Here there's a kind of breakfast bar where you eat as much breakfast as you want, so we used to go there. We'd just talk while we ate and that kind of stuff.*

> (Annika, F10D, 14 years)

Further, Anja and Freya (F10D&D, 11 and 10 years) talked about their preference for going to eat and to watch films with their father; seeing this as a source of enjoyment through their shared interaction:

> VE: So, right, what do you think, then, is your favourite thing to do with your dad right now?

> Anja: Probably going out for something to eat or drink.

> Freya: Yes, or go and watch a film or something, because we don't really watch so much TV. It'll be quite special.

> Anja: I like going out for meals. I think when you go out for a meal or for a drink or whatever, you can probably talk more, and talk about things.

> (F10, D&D, 11 and 10 years)

The time fathers spent interacting with children outside of the home, therefore, became, more or less, gendered as children aged, as did the significance of physical activity outdoors for father and older-child relationships.

Brendan (F1F) described how hiking with his eldest son, Ben (F1S, 17 years) in the mountains allowed him both to communicate with Ben and to understand him better, both as an individual and in relation to his brothers:

> He's been hiking with me up in the mountains and done, really quite, extremely long challenging walks. I'm very proud of that. And I think I still really enjoy spending time with him doing those sorts of things and learn. I suppose I learn best how to better understand and motivate him. As a result of being in those sorts of environments. My middle son, again, is a kind of entirely, it's taken a while to learn what triggers, what works for him. And so where my elder son it's all about the great challenge for its own sake and bragging rights and being able to go to his mates. With my middle son it's much more about teamwork and competition, so I could say to him do you fancy doing, there's this thirty-mile hike and he'll not be interested.

> (Brendan, F1F)

As children grew older, fathers felt that boys, in particular, were increasingly enabled and motivated to interact with fathers through physical activity. Dean (F6F) asserted that the ways that he and his son, Rory (F6S, 8 years), were able to play sports together had become increasingly sophisticated over time:

> *I've always played quite a lot with Rory* [F6S, 8 years]*, just sporty type things, throwing a football, kicking a ball around. It's got a bit more sophisticated.*

> (Dean, F6F)

Sons also reported engaging in and enjoying outdoor physical activities with their fathers more as they aged:

> *VE: Do you think the things that you do with your dad will change as you get older.*

> *Noah: Probably.*

> *VE: How do you think they might change?*

> *Noah: Well I'll probably start going for runs because I don't really like them now.*

> (Noah, F3S, 11 years)

Younger children, in contrast to older ones, were often described as being largely excluded from physical activity with their fathers. William (F8F) spoke about his decision not to take his youngest daughter, Millie (F8D, 3 years) swimming with him and his older son (Joseph, F8S, 6 years); this being informed by the constraints Millie was felt to place on swimming as a shared and *physical* activity:

> *I have thought about taking her swimming as well, because she is three at the moment, but it does mean that I go and stand in a pool or sit in the pool.*

> (William, F8F)

Jenny (F6M) described how her younger children's lack of physical stamina resulted in her carrying them on family walks and, consequently, she tended to remain at home with their two daughters, whilst Dean (F6F) continued to go out hiking with their older child, Rory (F6S, 8 years):

> *Dean likes to try and get everybody to go out, probably don't support that as much as I could because I see it ending in whinging children that didn't want to walk up a hill. But you can't really take a whingey five-year-old and three-year-old who still just look at a hill, stand in front of you, hold up their arms and say, carry me.*

> (Jenny, F6M)

Fathers, therefore, wanted children to engage with them in physical activities which they enjoyed themselves, often rationalising this with claims that they knew children would 'enjoy it once they were there'. Children, however, did not always enjoy the same activities as their fathers or lacked the physical competence to participate in such activities in ways that fathers would like:

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Billy: Well I can ride a bike and I'm really terrible, so normally my Dad might help me ride my bike but he'll always like try and convince me but it, sort of like, never works.

I: No? You mean you can't be convinced? You don't want to do it?

Billy: I just don't like bikes.

I: Why do you think he wants you to ride a bike then?

Billy: Because, well he's like a bike-ist, even though he runs a lot so like, it just doesn't make sense to me.

(Billy, F1S, 11 years)

Just as children's preferred activities were not always aligned with their fathers', children's developing physical competence was not consistent across all physical activities. Consequently, both children's preferences and their physical competence shaped their enjoyment of different physical activities with their fathers:

Noah: We usually climb mountains.

VE: Oh wow. And do you enjoy that?

Noah: Sometimes.

VE: Sometimes, when don't you enjoy it?

Noah: When I'm tired and my legs hurt.

VE: Okay, and what does Daddy say then?

Noah: He tells me carry on and try and get to the top and then it'll be easier to get down.

(Noah, F3S, 11 years)

Nevertheless, some activities were mutually enjoyable for fathers and sons:

Noah: And he likes going for bike rides with us.

VE: What do you like doing best of all with your dad?

Noah: Going out on bike rides.

(Noah, F3S, 11 years)

Fathers' interactions with their older sons through physical activity, therefore, were negotiated between fathers and each of their individual sons and, consequently, fathers and sons felt that they knew each other better through such negotiations and activities. Further, it was indicated that the reciprocal enjoyment of fathers and sons could be attained where children were felt to be competent to participate and where there was a mutual preference for participating in specific activities between fathers and sons.

Despite the gendered divide in father-child interaction, fathers did take a lead role in teaching all children, boys and girls, physical skills which children were perceived to require; riding bikes was a specific example which came up repeatedly within participants' accounts, this being seen as a "big thing" which children needed to do "proficiently" (Bruce, F3F). Although Bruce espoused parental gender equality in relation to teaching his children how to ride bikes, in reality it became a fathering practice:

> VE: So do you both take responsibility for teaching him then? Or is it mainly you that's involved in the actual teaching him how to ride a bike?
>
> Bruce: Again I think that's pretty equal too I think, I think we probably argue about who's actually going to get to do it. We did that with Noah as well.
>
> VE: And who did it?
>
> Bruce: Well it was me obviously!
>
> (Bruce, F3F)

Indeed, this was the case throughout the data. Such was the perceived importance of this skill that fathers reported teaching both their sons and their daughters to ride a bike. It was only where there was mutual enjoyment of this activity that it became significant for father-child relationships, however. As Ben noted, the mutual endeavour of learning to ride a bike was a fond memory which he and his father, Brendan (F1F), now shared and a source of reciprocal enjoyment and achievement:

> VE: Do you think your Dad shares those kind of memories as being important? Would he give the same ones if I asked him?
>
> Ben: Think his would be more like when he taught me to ride a bike. Because I think that was a big achievement for him cos I was terrible at first but also, I think that kind of thing, when he taught me a skill.

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(Ben, F1S, 17 years)

In summary, fathers engaged in a range of activities with all their children over the course of children's lives. The perceived dispensation of boys and fathers toward physical activity outdoors, resulted in a particular significance being accorded to shared physical activity as a means for developing relational closeness between fathers and older boys. Similarly, fathers and sons felt able to communicate in ways that allowed them to gain insight into each other's' individualities through physical activity. Nevertheless, mutual enjoyment was only possible where fathers' and sons' enjoyment of specific physical activities coincided and where sons were competent enough to participate in such activities as fathers would like. Girls, however, were reported to enjoy and to express a preference for spending time with fathers though activities such as eating out, or going to watch a film away from the home as they grew older. It was through such activities that older girls reported communicating with their fathers.

In addition to demonstrating that children's gender was interwoven with father-child interaction and relational closeness between fathers and children as children aged, this chapter has reiterated the central tenets asserted in the previous chapter regarding how father-child interactions were constructed and experienced as significant for 'closeness' within father-child relationships. It has, however, also shown temporal fluidity in relational closeness between fathers and children over the course of children's childhoods and that such fluidity was shaped by, first, the assumed biological and the social primacy of mothers which was, for the most part, an impediment to the types of father-child interaction which held significance for relational closeness. Second, temporal fluidity also shaped the perceived competencies of children, and children and fathers' preferences. Such fluidity was closely associated with children's age. A spatial intersection was also highlighted; fathers' interactions with children which were significant for their relationships took place in different spaces and were 'done' in varied ways between spaces.

Chapter Eight: Relational fathering displays

This chapter brings together and builds upon the themes presented in the preceding findings chapters. It first provides a recap of the research aims and context. The following section evaluates the strengths and limitations of this project. The third section summarises the key points arising from the findings. Subsequently, the discussion situates these key findings within current thinking and debate about fatherhood, considering how the findings answer the research questions and fulfil the research aim posed in Chapter Two. Last, some future research directions are postulated.

Research aim and questions

The research aim and questions detailed in Chapter Two were as follows:

Research Aim: To explore how fathers, mothers and children construct fatherhood in normative family circumstances and how they experience and negotiate fathering as a relational phenomenon.

Research Questions:

- How is fatherhood constructed in normative family contexts by fathers, mothers and children?
- Do experiences and perceptions of fathering influence each other and do they vary over time, or in relation to gender, or generation for fathers, mothers or children within normative family contexts?

Research approach

This study generated data through a series of ten family case studies which sought to explore 'normative fatherhood' from the perspectives of children, mothers and fathers. The study was carried out in the context of an increasingly prolific quantitative and qualitative research literature on fathers which has focused on both mothers' and fathers' perspectives. While this corpus of work spans numerous disciplines and has taken various approaches, key themes in such explorations include:

- The extent to which fathers are variably involved in family life and paid work relative to mothers.
- How fathers affect children's lives and how close relationships with children may be enabled.
- How 'good fatherhood' is constituted in cultural, political, legal and individual contexts.

Case study research involves an exploration of 'the particular'. In this instance, contexts of what I had constructed as 'the normative family' and in which I had argued that culturally idealised fathering is thought to take place. A qualitative, case study approach provided a means to interrogate and problematise 'normative fatherhood' through the relational exploration of everyday 'normative fathering', a topic about which little was known. In analysing the detail of phenomena for which there is a paucity of knowledge, case study research aims to capture both the uniqueness of a single case and commonality between cases. In depth understanding, therefore, is the central goal (Stake, 1995, 2000).

In taking a relational approach to the study, it was not feasible to explore in depth all the issues which fatherhood could be asserted to 'relate to'. It has been contended, however, that it is an awareness of the complexity of the data which is paramount in synthesising from data analysis (Mason, 2002). As such, the foci discussed in this chapter are a purposive selection of those elements considered most prominent in the findings.

Strengths and Limitations

Exploring the strengths and limitations of the study forms part of the reflexive process of research, in addition to permitting an evaluation of the conceptual transferability of findings drawn from the study.

Strengths

The key strength of this study lay in its multi-perspective approach. Work on families and fathers has, to date, been dominated by adult voices and conducted, overwhelmingly, from the perspectives of either mothers or fathers. Where children's perspectives have been sought on fathers and fathering, this has, typically, been in 'problematised' contexts and in relation to a perceived *unproblematic* norm.

The relational approach taken, therefore, demonstrates the variable and the common ways in which children, mothers and fathers experience fathering and make sense of fatherhood within everyday 'normative' family life. This study has drawn upon the work of family and childhood theorists who highlight the ways in which family is intersected by and negotiated in relation to both gender and generation to inform this approach. It has also responded to critiques of research approaches which privilege the perspectives of one family member over another, or which divorce research from the context it seeks to problematise. In this case, fathering in everyday family life. It is through this multi-perspective, *relational* focus that this study has furthered understanding of fathers, fathering and fatherhood.

The study was also small scale which allowed for in-depth exploration from a range of 'normative' family members' perspectives. The collection of detailed data from specific contexts is aligned with the central aim of case study research (Stake, 1995). It is argued, therefore, that there has been scope to explore 'normative fatherhood' in corresponding detail and that this thesis constitutes an in-depth account of 'normative fathers' and of everyday 'normative fathering'.

I noted in Chapter Three that I struggled to undertake within case analysis prior to cross-case comparison, yet exploration of common and divergent perspectives and experiences within families *is* present. There is a stronger focus on comparing fathers' and children's, and fathers' and mothers' perspectives within such analyses than there is comparison of mothers and children, however. Both within *and* cross case analysis were therefore undertaken, but not in the order originally intended. Such analyses, revealed that fathers, mothers and children are individuals engaged in a series of family relationships with other individuals. While each family relationship is, therefore, unique, experiences of fathers and fathering also demonstrate commonalities between families and family members. The combination of within-case and cross-case analysis, therefore, has afforded me a detailed understanding of the dataset as a whole and allowed me to demonstrate a nuanced "explanation" of the data (Mason 2002:7).

Limitations

A key limitation which requires comment relates to social class. I acknowledged in Chapter Three that the boundaries of social class were vague and malleable. In deciding that social class could be defined by occupation alone, however, I implicitly reduced middle class status to a concept actualised solely through occupational status rather than being comprised by a series of social, cultural and personal meanings and experiences (Ryan and Maxwell, 2016). Further, I made an implicit assumption that participants would concur with this contention. In contrast, Savage *et al* (2013:223) argue for the consideration of economic, social *and* cultural capital in the construction of social class boundaries, postulating that social class is concerned with "forms of social reproduction and cultural distinction" as well as with economic measures, such as income and occupational status. Social and cultural capital, they assert, are respectively concerned with "the ability to appreciate and engage with cultural goods and credentials institutionalised through educational success" and "contacts and connections which allow people to draw upon their social connections" (Savage et al. 2013:223). Many families in my study described engaging in practices of what Savage *et al* (2013) define as 'emerging cultural capital', including playing sport, going to gigs and spending time with friends. They supplemented these activities with practices of 'highbrow cultural capital', such as going to museums. Additionally, families often talked of 'like-minded' families with whom

they would socialise, or who lived locally – emphasising the importance of such networks in their affirmation of themselves as 'doing fathering well'. I largely interpreted such practices as being significant for relational closeness between fathers and children, rather than as a matter of social class, however. This coheres with Gillies (2005) discussion of contemporary parenting and social class in which she argues that parental privilege in relation to such 'capitals' is often written off as individualized choices to 'do parenting' in accordance with social norms of 'good parenting'. My reductive approach to the conceptualisation of social class has, therefore, constrained the extent to which I have been able to explore wider elements of social class and how these were interwoven with displays and experiences of everyday normative fathering or the construction of 'good fatherhood' in participants' imaginaries.

Measurements of social class have, nevertheless, often relied on household income levels, or the classification of adult employment type into a particular classed category (Ryan and Maxwell, 2016). Arising from the predominance of men within the labour market, the classification of social class has, overwhelmingly, focussed on how men are employed and what men earn (Morgan, 1996). Measuring social class in this way also presumes familial class homogeneity. Consequently, it ignores the different occupations which parents may have and the individual understandings and experiences of class of mothers, fathers and children (Crompton, 1976; Morgan, 1996). Nevertheless, in my study, income and occupational status were entwined in participants' understanding and accounts of their classed identity and practices. While at least one parent in each family in this study self-identified as 'professional', families experienced a range of affluence levels, some describing significant financial constraints and others relative financial privilege. Some parents directly linked their income to fathering practices in their accounts, while for other parents and also children, the relationship between income, class and fatherhood was implied. For example, one father noted that his part-time working was only possible because of his family's financially privileged situation, while another father alluded to the location of their home and the 'types' of families who lived around them, suggesting that this led them to 'do' fathering in particular ways. Similarly, children talked about particular 'fathering practices', such as going the cinema or riding bikes without acknowledging the financial costs of these activities. Given the contentious and often contradictory debates regarding how family income (Dermott and Pomati, 2016) and social class (Plantin, 2007; Harrington, 2014) intersect fathering practices, the conceptualisation of classed identity deployed in the study did little to unpick such complexity or to recognise the shifting and individual boundaries and characteristics of social class. I did, however, permit either mothers or fathers to determine the classed status of their family through identifying themselves as in a 'professional occupation'. In doing so, I offered some potential redress to the predominance of

fathers in constructions of class. I also perceived that parents experienced discomfort in explicitly acknowledging themselves as 'middle class'. Crompton (1976) has argued, however, that ambivalence toward middle class status without identifying as working class is common amongst the middle classes. This was reflected in my study, wherein I perceived there to be a shared understanding between myself and parents that they were not working class, but neither were they prepared to explicitly acknowledge themselves as middle class. The particular construction of middle class status used in this study, therefore, was sufficient to reveal some of the complex ways in which classed identity and practices are made sense of in relation to fathering and also highlighted the potential for significant variation in the construction and experience of middle class status. Ultimately, the sample was more diverse than I had originally anticipated in planning the research.

As noted in the methods chapter, recruitment of participants was a slow process. This prevented me from returning to share the initial findings from the study with each family group. While I was able to fulfil my obligation to provide some feedback to participants via email in the form of a feedback sheet, the opportunity to reflect on my initial interpretations of the data with family members was lost. Feedback interviews with family members would not, however, have produced a more objective analysis. Rather, the limitation which arises is that I was unable to explore the credibility of my initial analysis with participants in any depth and to further deepen my analysis through this.

A further limitation was that children were not asked about how parents negotiated paid and unpaid work; a decision that was justified in Chapter Three. It is not the case, however, that children could not have contributed to these findings chapters. Harden *et al* (2012), for example, have demonstrated that the negotiation of parents' paid work might actually be conceived as a 'family-work project' in which all family members are active participants, but within which children's decision making power is reduced relative to their parents'. It would, therefore, have been interesting to elicit children's perspectives on these matters in order to deepen understanding of relationality within families.

The distribution of ages and genders of children between families recruited was also worthy of note. In unpicking the relationship between gender, age and competence and how these intersected father-child interactions it is important to highlight that only one family had female children over the age of six years. Similarly, only two families had sons aged eleven or over. As the analysis of the findings developed, it became evident that both children's age and their gender were relevant to the experience and understanding of fathering practices, but it was extremely difficult to disentangle this further because of the limitations of the dataset. Inferences made about how children's age and

gender shaped father-child interactions are, consequently, limited. This issue is picked up later in this chapter in the implications for future research.

With such limitations in mind, the following discussion provides an interpretation of the study findings which offers what Mason (2002) has described as conceptual transferability. That is, whilst there is no scope to generalise the findings as there might have been in a positivist study, the use of multiple cases and the in depth analysis of the data is sufficient to theorise generalities which may be relevant to wider contexts.

Key findings

The key findings which are central to this discussion are as follows:

1. Fathers, mothers and children portrayed fathers and fathering practices in ways which reflected their understandings of 'good fatherhood'.
2. Parents had a clear sense of contemporary fathers' 'difference' from men in the grandparental generation. The gendering of the division of labour was a key process through which this difference was understood and explicated.
3. Time was the resource through which the 'everydayness' of fathering was revealed.
4. Fathering practices which gave rise to relational closeness were highly valued by fathers, mothers and children.

Fathering displays

Through their interviews, participants communicated particular values and experiences, and described ongoing negotiations in relation to fathering. This allowed them to *display* their understandings of 'good fatherhood' and to 'live with' compromised 'good fathers', when ideals could not be realised through the exigencies of family life. Family display is, at its simplest, a family practice (Finch, 2007). The concept is rooted in the idea that families are constituted through 'doing', rather than simply 'being' (Morgan, 1996). Finch (2007:66) theorises that "in order for family to be 'done', the meaning of one's actions has to be both conveyed to and understood by relevant others if those actions are to be effective at constituting family practices." That is, family has to be 'displayed as well as done'. Audiences for family display may be both family members and 'relevant others' (Finch, 2007). In this case, I was a 'relevant other' and my relevance was invoked through the research process.

Fathering displays: the interview contexts

That fathering displays were "summoned through the interview process" (James & Curtis 2010:1177) was significant. As Dermott and Seymour (Dermott & Seymour 2011:13) have asserted "external

others may play a part in affirming the display" of fathering. The research context, therefore, elicited particular, contextualized representations of family life which might be regarded as "heightened forms of display" (James & Curtis 2010:1177). Such intensity was heightened by the cultural potency of notions of 'good fatherhood' and the desire of family members to display the fathers which they lived with as 'good fathers'. This perhaps supports the notion that participating families were middle class, for whom 'doing' fatherhood in accordance with cultural prescriptions of what is 'good' and what is 'bad' has been noted to be a particular concern (Gillies, 2005). Parents were highly conversant with such ideals and this cultural competence was implied in parents', frequently contradictory and inconsistent efforts to mask, or justify, elements of their everyday lives which did not readily cohere with their perceptions of how 'good fathers' are culturally imagined and represented.

Such displays were more prominent in parents' accounts than in children's. This is perhaps unsurprising given the salience of cultural ideals of parenthood to mothers and fathers as parents and the direct comparisons which they were able to make between their own parenting and their experiences of being parented. Nevertheless, and as noted in Chapter Three, it is possible that situating the research within the home environment and my presence as an 'alien researcher' within the home could have shaped children's display practices. The influence of intergenerational power relations over individual children's displays as invoked through home-based research contexts is not easily ascertainable, nor is it entirely possible to redress. Rather, it is hoped that children were enabled to display fathers in accordance with their own unique perceptions as a result of the efforts made to facilitate their participation in designing and 'doing' the research (James, 2007). There were numerous occasions when parents' discomfort describing practices of family life was evident. I now interpret this as indicative of parents' desire for their frank accounts not to be taken as a display of the acceptability of such practices to them. This was particularly true of interviews with parental pairs, corroborating Harden *et al's* (2010) finding (also noted in Chapter Three) that group interviews encourage consensus in display. It also indicated parents' intention to convey particular understandings to one another as well as to myself. Congruently, Doucet (2011:89) has observed a desire amongst couples being interviewed together to display their family as a "happy family", which she notes as a particular representation of a 'good' family by parents.

Fathering displays: notions of 'good fatherhood'

Participants' understandings of 'good fatherhood' were invoked through the practices of their everyday lives and throughout their accounts of fathering. These understandings constituted ideals which were both culturally and historically located, a finding which aligns with Brannen's (2015)

work exploring multiple generations of fathers and migration and Inhorn *et al's* (2015) edited work considering 'Globalized fatherhood'. In my study, such ideals conveyed the understandings that fatherhood is changing between generations of fathers, and that contemporary, western fathers should be closely connected to their children through particular manifestations of 'father involvement'. This reaffirms a plethora of research – as noted in Chapter Two - which has argued that "there has been an ideological shift in men's orientation towards fatherhood" (Dermott 2008:16) and that contemporary, western ideals of 'good fatherhood' are characterised by the notion that fathers should be closely connected to their children and this should be achieved by spending time involved in children's everyday lives. They were further characterised by the belief that 'good' fathers engage, on an equal basis to mothers, in both paid and unpaid labour (Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2010, 2011a; Miller and Dermott, 2015). The themes of intergenerational change between fathers, the gendered division of labour, time and father-child intimacy therefore frame this discussion of fathering. The concept of family display is threaded throughout each section as a means of illuminating how fathering practices were connected to notions of 'good fatherhood'.

Social change and generational identity

The idea that fatherhood is changing was prominent in parents' accounts and was equated with wider notions of social change. Parents asserted that contemporary fathers were 'involved', while men in the grandfather generation were 'traditional'. No particular historical location after which fathers ceased to be 'traditional' was asserted by parents in the study, but all participating parents were likely to have been born in the 1970's or late 1960's. Around this time, the beginning of a shift in attitudes toward fatherhood has been postulated (Griswold, 1993; Finn and Henwood, 2009). This was primarily due to economic changes which saw an increasing number of women enter paid work and a rise in dual earner households at this time (Griswold, 1993; Gillis, 2000). Contemporaneously, both mothers' and fathers' also began to increase the amount of time spent in childcare (Sullivan, 2013). The moment defined by fatherhood scholars after which fatherhood 'changed', therefore, aligns with participants' own assertions of intergenerational 'difference'.

Notably, fathers reported considering their own fathers' fathering only when they became fathers themselves. The transition to fatherhood, therefore, constituted what Finn and Henwood (2009) describe as a personal reference point of fatherhood: the biographical point at which fathers' self-reflexive processes took on particular resonance. Mothers, like fathers, often made the assertion that their own fathers were 'traditional'. Mothers only occasionally drew similarities between their partner and their father-in-law, however. Drawing on the work of Giddens (1991:32),

who has contended that contemporary notions of self have "to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change," Williams (2008) has argued that such reflexivity is indicative of increasingly individualized fatherhood. He contends that contemporary fathers are less constrained by social mores than they have been historically. They are, therefore, free to self-define fatherhood in accordance with their individualized interpretations of their own biographies. Yet Smart (2007:42) posits that biographies are not disembedded, *or individualized*, from personal, relational contexts, they are negotiated and situated *within* intra-familial relationships. Throughout my study, parents and children reported that contemporary fathering behaviours were not merely individualistically 'chosen', they were also enabled or constrained by contextual elements and negotiated with reference to ideals of fatherhood (this is discussed in greater detail in later sections). Biographies are, therefore, of both individual, familial and cultural relevance. Indeed, "people in families weave threads or webs" (Smart 2007:82) to make sense of family and family life in ways which are connected to the past and to notions of the future, but which continue to be a social and current endeavour. Changing notions of 'good fatherhood' were not solely constructed in relation to socio-historical events as Griswold and others might suggest, nor were they understood only in individualized terms as Williams contends, rather there was interplay and interdependence between the structuring effects of the social and the agency of individuals exercised in and through family relationships over time. Generational forms of fatherhood were, therefore, relationally constituted within and external to the family, in ways which reflected both social change, social mores, personal experiences and how these were perceived. This coheres with Alanen's (2001:20) conceptualisation of 'generationing' as "a complex set of social processes through which people become" - in this study - 'traditional', or 'involved', fathers. Generationing practices, in my study, involved constructing and displaying contemporary fathers as involved, men in the grandfather generation as traditional, and demonstrating how the two categories related to one another. Within participants' accounts, the 'generationing' of fathers was achieved with reference to fathering practices. Such practices included the intergenerational division of labour between parents and the ways in which it was felt that fathers related to children through their engagement in children's everyday lives.

Contemporary fatherhood: continuities and discontinuities between practices and displays

Ideals of 'good fatherhood' were variably reflected in everyday fathering practices. This has been described as a paradox of "culture and conduct" for contemporary fathers (Dermott 2008:16; Larossa 1988:451) and has been widely debated and researched. There were striking consistencies between families, however, in which particular fathering practices were forefronted in accounts of

contemporary fathering. These included family meals, reading to children and undertaking leisure activities with children away from the home. Where fathering practices did not cohere with displayed ideals of fatherhood, then this was also justified in markedly similar ways between families and family members. There was, therefore, a purposive effort by participants to '*do*' and '*display*' fathering in accordance with particular elements of their ideals of 'good fatherhood'.

Gendered division of labour

There were striking similarities in the division of paid and unpaid labour between the grandparental generation and contemporary parents. Despite this, the gendered division of labour became a focal point for the display of intergenerational difference, and of contemporary fathers as 'involved' and, therefore, 'good' fathers. Three facets of father involvement were explicated in parents' accounts: fathers' engagement in paid work, in domestic labour and in childcare. Both contemporary fathers and men in the grandparental generation were employed full time and undertook less childcare and domestic labour than mothers. Parents problematised the gender normative work practices of the grandparental generation as 'traditional', but *justified* their own, similar experiences in order to present contemporary fathers as 'involved'. They achieved this through purposively reframing the meanings which underpinned fathers' participation in paid work, domestic labour and childcare and through laying claim to gender equal values. This enabled their representations of contemporary fathers as 'different' to men in the grandfather generation to go uncontested in their own imaginaries.

Men in the grandparental generation were asserted to prioritise their paid work over time spent with the family. Their full-time paid work was clearly stated as part of their gender normative, masculine identity. Contemporary fathers also worked full time and there was also an entanglement of some contemporary fathers' financial provisioning with their masculine identity and some parents saw fathers' paid work as a key part of their 'role' in family life. Similarly, Christiansen and Palkowitz (2001) have argued that being 'good' providers is a tenacious part of fathering identity which contemporary fathers, like their own fathers, continue to experience. For Miller (2011b:1095), there is a "patriarchal habit" which men have to consciously overcome in order to avoid the reproduction of gender normative practices. This is not just a personal issue, however, as there is also a continued emphasis on fathers' financial provisioning which is evident in UK policy and law (see Chapter Two). Parents were not explicit in their assertions that contemporary fathers' paid work was part of their masculine identity, however. Further, some openly refuted the idea that the two were entwined because of the gender normative connotations that this carried. Consequently, many parents ameliorated the continuity in intergenerational patterns of fathers' paid work by emphasising the

potential of contemporary fathers' paid work to provide 'opportunity' for their children and 'security' to their families. Aligned with this, Schmidt (2017) has postulated that contemporary fathers see their paid work as 'taking care' of family and, therefore, as an indirect form of involvement. Dermott (2006; 2005; 2008), however, has theorised that contemporary fathers' paid work is commensurate with childcare in contemporary fathers' understandings of their involvement. In contrast, and aligned with my own findings, Gattrell *et al* (2015) noted that the value which fathers placed on financial provisioning as an expression of masculine identity is highly variable between individual fathers.

Through underscoring the positive aspects of the opportunities and securities which fathers' paid work provided, parents implicitly conveyed the idea that the fathers they lived with were 'doing fathering well' through their financial provisioning. While explicit references to social status achieved through fathers' paid work were not made in this study, one Finnish study found that children asserted that 'good' fathers should have a "well-paid and respected job" (Hietanen et al. 2013:1838)*,* thus indicating the importance of fathers' financial provisioning in achieving social status as 'good fathers'. Both children and parents also described children being taken to, or participating in, various leisure activities with their fathers. These included sporting activities, eating out, going to the cinema, holidays, and music lessons. For children especially, such purposive use of leisure time was presented unproblematically as 'what fathers do', rather than as interwoven with the financial privileges obtained, for the most part, through their fathers' paid work. It has been argued that "middle-class parents are able to give their children advantages mainly through mobilising their material and cultural resources for education and purposive leisure" but that such activities are less affordable for working class families (Harrington 2014:475). Classed identity, constructed in relation to fathers' paid work, was, therefore, implicitly underscored as significant in participants' experiences and accounts of contemporary 'good fatherhood'. In this way, family members alluded to the status of the fathers they lived with as 'good fathers'. Such changing and interwoven meanings in accounts of fathers' paid work, however, align with Warren's (2007) postulation that 'providing' can be afforded multiple meanings.

All mothers within this project reported being in full time employment prior to the birth of children, after which their participation in paid work reduced and remained reduced following the birth of subsequent children. Congruently, the birth of a first child has been noted to have a greater impact on the division of both paid work and unpaid work between parents than other life events, including the birth of subsequent children (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008; Schober, 2013). Following the transition to fatherhood, however, most fathers continued to work full time. Fathers with flexible

working patterns were in the minority. Studies which have explored the number of full time hours which UK fathers work following the birth of children are similarly mixed, with some showing an increase in fathers working hours (Connolly *et al.*, 2013) and some no change (Dermott, 2006).

Gatrell *et al* (2014) state that the gender dissonance in flexible or part-time working reflects, for the most part, the perceived institutionalisation of fathers as economic providers and mothers as carers. That is, parents believe that employers constrain fathers' ability to work flexibly, but not mothers'. In this study, some fathers suggested that their job was not the 'sort' which would permit flexible working, indicating, as others have commented, that employers' expectations of fatherhood are more aligned with a 'man as paid worker' rather than a 'man as caring parent' (Burnett *et al.*, 2010; Miller, 2011b). Other parents in this study intimated that it would not have occurred to fathers to do anything other than continue to work full time as they always had done. This aligns with the contention that men do not expect, or wish, to work flexibly following the transition to fatherhood (Gatrell *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, some studies have found that men do experience conflict in negotiating work-family tensions, but do not readily articulate these (Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2012; Elliott *et al.*, 2017). As in the other literature (Burnett *et al.*, 2010; Miller, 2011b; Coltrane *et al.*, 2013; Gatrell *et al.*, 2014), however, the prevailing presumption amongst most participants in my study was that mothers would find it easier to access part time, or flexible, working than fathers would. Notably, fathers in this study who had sought more flexible working patterns had obtained these. This echoes Gatrell *et al's* (2014:473) comment that inequity in the availability of flexible working between mothers and fathers by employers "appeared to be less significant than fathers supposed."

Another key reason why parents felt it would be easier for mothers to access flexible, part time work was the hyper-valuation of fathers' paid work. This was associated with parents' perceptions and experiences of parental leave. Parents accepted that mothers took protracted leave periods after the birth of children and fathers did not. It was often asserted that it was a mother's right to do so. For many parents, this may have reflected the gendered leave patterns available to parents at the time their children were born which, being enshrined in law, may not have been perceived as open to problematisation. In the European context, however, the UK has been slow to implement shared parental leave schemes and a long history of mother-centred leave has hindered changes to gendered social attitudes about parental leave and to policy itself (see also Chapter Two) (Miller, 2011b, 2013; Kaufman, 2017).

The reduction in family income which arose through mothers' protracted leave periods and their subsequent return to part time rather than full time paid work, led to the reification of income from

fathers' employment. Kaufman (2017) has asserted that family finances are fundamental in making decisions about the arrangement of paid working patterns between parents, a finding which strongly resonates with the findings of this study. Furthermore, mothers' paid work patterns after the transition to parenthood cohere with the finding that professional mothers continue to "augment family incomes through either working flexibly or part time" (Burnett et al. 2010:535) and reflects the difficulty that contemporary two parent households experience when trying to manage on a single, or reduced, household wage as Featherstone (2009) observes. Kaufman (2017) has also noted the importance of well paid leave in incentivising fathers to take parental leave – such as in the Nordic countries where leave is much longer than in the UK, is better remunerated and uptake is much higher (Miller, 2013). Similarly, parents' negotiations of parental leave and paid work after the birth of children in my study were motivated by gendered, socio-political and economic understandings and experiences.

Mothers were reported to undertake the bulk of domestic labour and childcare. Mothers noted that they undertook a wide range of domestic labour and childcare tasks in addition to their paid work which fathers were not aware of each day. Fathers, however, undertook a narrower range of domestic labour and childcare tasks. Parents asserted that contemporary fathers chose to prioritise time spent interacting with children when they were at home, thus justifying their limited participation in domestic labour. In accounts of grandparental generation, however, parents in my study commented that men did not participate in domestic labour or childcare because they did not see it as their role to do so, rather they adhered to 'traditional gender roles'. Both mothers and fathers described debating whether paid work or domestic labour was most stressful or strenuous, with unpaid labour typically felt to be less impressive than paid work. Wider research has consistently shown that the increase in women's paid employment hours since the 1970's has not been equalled by men's increased participation in childcare and domestic labour (van Hooff, 2011) resulting in a 'stalled revolution' (Hochschild, 1989), despite contemporary espousal of gender equal ideals. Further, the predominance of time-use surveys in extant explorations of the division of labour has been argued to obscure the emotion work and time management endeavours that are required to facilitate unpaid labour. This is because such surveys have tended to pre-define a set of tasks which are assumed to be self-evident examples of unpaid work (Sullivan, 2000). As was the case in this study, it is typically women who report taking on responsibility for such hidden work, often alongside paid work, resulting in the assertion that women undertake a 'second shift' (Hochschild, 1989) or a 'double burden' (Jamieson, 1998) relative to men. Through the reification of fathers' paid work, parents have been found to simultaneously recognise the gendered division of labour in their everyday lives as unequal and to assert such inequity as largely 'fair' or inevitable in spite of their

gender equal ideals (van Hooff, 2011; Ives, 2015). These findings also resonate strongly with my own.

Where contemporary fathers did participate in domestic labour, this was typically 'blokey' labour such as DIY, or occasional cooking. As in the wider literature, such gendered division of domestic labour was often explained in terms of parental preferences, or perceptions of gendered aptitudes for particular domestic tasks. Rationalisation of gender inequality in this way (van Hooff, 2011), alongside fathers' avoidance of 'ancillary tasks' has been described in the wider literature (Burnett *et al.*, 2010). Ancillary tasks are those tasks which cannot be seen to be direct involvement in childcare but which are 'core' domestic labour (Bianchi, Robinson and Milkie, 2006), including ironing, cooking and cleaning. Yet, many fathers in my study portrayed their occasional participation in cooking as both childcare and domestic labour. In deploying this particular construction of cooking, fathers optimised the use of their limited time at home to portray themselves both as participants in domestic labour and as caring fathers.

Fathers in this study also made reference to specific practices which they 'did' but which their own fathers 'did not', underscoring these practices as key indicators of fatherly involvement. These included reading to children, participating in their bedtime routines and sharing in leisure activities together. Fathering practices were shaped by the temporal schema of everyday life, but also reflected changes in the amount of time which parents felt that contemporary fathers spent with children relative to men in the grandfather generation. It has been noted that both men and women have increased the amount of time they spend in childcare (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Sullivan, 2013). Between 1975 and 2003, highly educated UK fathers in dual earner households (such as most, but not all, of those who participated in this project) were noted to increase the time they spent in childcare by 600%, while highly educated mothers increased their participation in childcare by some 700% (Sullivan, 2013). This has been postulated as a contemporary trend toward 'intensive parenthood' (Shirani, Henwood and Coltart, 2012) within which there is a specific and growing emphasis on caring masculinity (Dermott, 2008).

In summary, participants revealed a tenacious inequity in the intergenerational division of labour and a gap between the 'families we live with' and the 'families we live by' (Gillis, 1996). This provided the impetus for participants' fathering displays as parents sought to underscore the continuities between asserted ideals of contemporary fathering and their everyday experiences while, simultaneously, obscuring the dissonances and contradictions. Similarly, Jamieson (1998) has remarked that, within families, effort is exerted to mask inequality, rather than redress it, while van Hooff (2011) has described the 'excuses' made for the maintenance of gender inequality between

parents. Through their interviews, parents also underscored the significance of mothers and mothering as referents of father involvement. While it was clear that parents espoused gender equal ideals, the findings showed a clear refutation of the notion that gender is now a 'zombie category' (Beck, 2002) which has limited relevance in the negotiation of contemporary adult relationships (Giddens, 1992) and the everyday division of labour. Family finances and family policies were also significant in shaping everyday practices of labour division.

Through their displays of the division of labour parents in this study identified the key element of their construction of 'good fatherhood' and sought to lay claim to status as 'good fathers'. The particular emphasis placed on contemporary fathers' engagement in childcare tasks and the time that they spent with children was overtly contrasted with the practices of men in the grandfather generation. This conveyed a particular orientation toward caring masculinity and idealisation of men as carers, which has been reported elsewhere (Dermott, 2008; Gregory and Milner, 2011; Miller, 2011a; Humberd, Ladge and Harrington, 2015). In my findings, this display was reinforced by parents' reframing of contemporary fathers' participation in *particular* tasks of domestic labour and of their paid work, relative to men in the grandfather generation, to reflect such orientations. Utilising display as a tool to understand accounts of the division of labour in this study has revealed, as Gattrell *et al* (2015) have argued, that a sole focus on the continuity of practices between generations of fathers can obscure the increased *desire* to engage in childcare which contemporary fathers may have relative to their own fathers.

Temporalities of fathering

Accounts of the division of paid and unpaid work also revealed the everyday time constraints which parents felt they experienced. This has been nominalised as a 'time squeeze' (Hochschild, 1997; Southerton, 2006) on working families. While it has been asserted that women endure the worst of the "time crunch" (Mcfarlane et al. 2000:62), time constraints on fathers have also been shown (Dermott, 2008; Elliott *et al.*, 2017) and both phenomena were similarly evident in my study. Further, Elliott *et al* (2017) has found that nearly one third of fathers consistently reported having 'not enough' time with their children when they were aged between 3 and 7 years. Because of the time squeeze experienced by parents, fathers in my study prioritised the time they spent with their children when they were at home, in preference to spending time in domestic labour.

The temporal framing of fathers' participation in children's lives gave rise to strikingly common accounts across families and between family members. For example, fathers frequently engaged in children's bedtime routines, but rarely in getting children ready for school each morning. Time, therefore, provides an analytical lens through which the everydayness of fathering can be explored.

Time was not just an everyday resource which either enabled or constrained father-child interaction; time also had relational importance.

Time as an everyday resource

Time was a finite family resource. Opportunities for interactions between children and fathers were variably enabled or constrained across the course of the week. Mornings were perceived to be most temporally constrained, evenings less so, while weekends were least constrained. Fathers, mothers and children all had individual, but intersecting, daily and weekly routines which were negotiable to varying extents. Non-negotiable time constraints were externally imposed by work and school which had fixed start times and, consequently, shaped family routines, giving rise to 'stress'. Fathers' employment hours tended to reflect the conventional 'working week' of Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Mothers' paid working hours, however, were fewer and more varied than fathers'. Mothers were, nevertheless, normally the first parent home each day. Children's school start times tended to coincide roughly with mothers' work and fathers' paid work start times, but school finished earlier than fathers' paid work. Children also, therefore, typically returned home before fathers each weekday. Brannen *et al* (2012) found that some fathers did not see their children at all in the evening because they returned home from work too late to do so. The 'working day' which most fathers adhered to in my study, however, permitted fathers to see and to interact with all of their children on most weekday evenings. The structure of fathers' working days in my project may also have been an indication of their middle class status as shift and weekend work has been found to be more closely associated with low-income, unskilled work (Hook, 2012).

The times of stress, which weekday mornings exemplified in my study, were times during which fathers and children were, typically, unable to coordinate their activities to enable their interaction. Such times have variably been described as 'hot spots' (Southerton, 2003) or 'flashpoints' (Elliott *et al.*, 2017) in everyday family life. 'Hot spots' in my study also tended to be characterised by gender normative practices with mothers taking on the majority of care work, despite often having their own paid work to get to each morning. Where time was stressed, there was a reversion to, or compounding of, gender normativity in the division of labour between parents: fathers' need to 'get out to work' was prioritised above mothers'. Aligned with this, Seymour (1992) has argued that the hyper-valuation of father's paid work is reflected in the hyper-valuation of men's time. Indeed, my findings showed that, even where fathers worked flexibly and had time to interact with children on weekday mornings, this did not wholly insure against mothers undertaking the majority of childcare tasks during such times of temporal stress. Similarly, where fathers undertook childcare tasks in the evening, this often resulted in mothers being 'freed up' to do domestic labour, rather than to claim

leisure time. Some fathers, however, were reported to engage in independent leisure activities on weekday evenings, indicating that their leisure time also carried greater value than mothers'. This underscores the aforementioned hyper-valuation of men's time and highlights the ability of fathers to exert choice over the use of their time relative to mothers (Seymour, 1992; Brannen, 2005), which Such (2006:185) has described as gendered "hierarchies of time." Seymour (1992:189), however, has offered a useful summary which particularly resonates with my findings: "the inclusion of one or more members of a couple in paid work would appear to complicate existing gender-based time frameworks rather than create new ones."

Weekday mornings, therefore, were commonly not a focus of father involvement in participants' accounts because they were not seen to allow for father-child interaction. Further, the stress which characterised weekday mornings gave rise to gender normative practices which, as has already been noted, parents sought to obscure within their accounts. Evenings were less stressed than mornings, though the porous boundaries between work, school and home life meant that time during weekday evenings was not available solely for the purpose of father-child interaction once fathers returned home. Such permeability between home and work life has, however, mostly been explored from adult perspectives (Maher, 2009) with a tendency to examine how "working parenthood impacts on children's lives" (Harden et al. 2012:209). Fathers often brought work home with them in the evening and children of all ages frequently had school homework to complete. Older children and fathers also participated in domestic labour. When fathers' paid work spilled over into home life, time spent doing paid work was prioritised over, or combined with, their active participation in childcare tasks, such as helping children with homework or taking children to extra-curricular activities. Where fathers did support children directly with homework, they tended to do this with younger children. As children aged, fathers continued to shape how children used their time. For example, encouraging or enforcing their children's independent undertaking of school homework. Although children were, therefore, considered increasingly competent to undertake school homework independently, they were only able to *influence* how their time at home was used. The control of sons' computer game usage by fathers which Brannen *et al* (2012) have reported suggests a similar relationship between children's choice over the use of time and generational power.

Children also had various extra-curricular activities which they participated in during the week. Children's independent sociability, therefore, also shaped time available for father-child interaction. The manifestations of such sociability were shaped by children's age. For example, younger children were reported go to 'parties' at weekends, while older children described spending weekends with friends away from the family home and without the supervision of parents. Fathers were,

nevertheless, often involved in taking children to and from such activities. The interweaving of paid work, domestic labour and education, and extra-curricular activities with home life indicates the contribution of fathers, mothers and children to the 'time squeeze' experienced by family members (Harden *et al.*, 2012).This study, therefore, has recognised that both children and parents are active in the negotiation of the 'family-work project' (Millar and Ridge, 2008) and how this may be shaped by generational power. It therefore contributes to a small, but growing, literature on children's participation in, and perspectives on, the family-work project. As noted in Chapter Three, however, inferences made regarding children's contribution to the family-work project in this study are influenced by virtue of not evoking data with children relevant to the first two findings chapters.

Weekends were described as least harried in participants' accounts. The relative absence of stress which resulted permitted much increased levels of father-child interaction relative to other points in the week. Fathers noted, however, that they did not get much time to themselves at weekends because of their desire to promote father-child interaction, or family time more generally. Fathers also asserted a need to balance their active participation in children's lives with their own relaxation. They therefore combined their personal preferences for leisure activities with father-child and whole-family interaction at weekends. Such activities included hiking, cycling and being outdoors. The time which fathers and children spent together in direct interaction at weekends increased as children aged. This time was usually spent outside of the home and was focussed, with sons in particular, on physical activity. Fathers, therefore, demonstrated the conflation of childcare with leisure in their experiences of direct father-child interaction and shared 'family time' at weekends. Shaw (1992) suggests that mothers are more likely to experience whole family time as 'work', while fathers experience this as leisure time. Congruent with my own findings however, Such (2006:193) found that fathers' leisure time was curtailed by parenthood and that, simultaneously, fathers' leisure time was negotiated so that "time spent with children…resembled leisure." Also aligned with the findings from my study, Shaw and Dawson (2001) established that both mothers and fathers value the opportunity for fathers to 'bond' with children through father-child leisure interaction and shared family leisure time.

The routine ordering of the day and week, coupled with limited intersections of children's and fathers' 'free time', however, presented particular opportunities for fathers to engage with children at defined times. Consequently, there was much commonality in accounts of the temporal configuration of fathering and fathering practices became, more or less, temporally located within families. This echoes Gillis' (1996:88) argument that "the less time families had together, the more certain times came to matter to them – that is, as real time grew scarce, symbolic time loomed ever

larger." While particular interactions at particular times became symbolic of 'good fathering' in participants' accounts, family routines in my study evolved and were not static. For example, younger children went to bed much earlier than their parents and fathers often helped to bathe or read to them each night, while older children went to bed later and got themselves ready for bed without the participation of a parent. Although ostensibly a family practice, the evening family meal took on significance as a fathering practice through such temporal ordering and evolution. Parents universally valued shared family meals in my study, though Brannen *et al* (2013) have suggested that mothers are more predisposed to emphasising the value of shared family meals. Through the conventionality of most fathers' 9-5 working days, family meals became dependent on fathers' return home from work. When children were younger and went to bed earlier, they tended to eat their evening meal without either parent, as mothers waited to eat with fathers once they returned home. In these ways, fathers made evening meals into 'family meals'. Family meals have been implicated in the construction of both home and family (DeVault, 1991) with family meals being a "key indicator of a proper family" (Metcalfe et al. 2009:95). This reflects an asserted western cultural preoccupation with the supposed 'decline' of the family meal, with which is entangled wider, moral concerns about healthy eating, women's paid work and the demise of family (Brannen, O'Connell and Mooney, 2013). In my study, however, evening family meals were also a key indicator of 'good fatherhood', an ideal which family members sought to lay claim to through the practices of their everyday lives. Family meals, like shared family leisure time more generally, therefore, were forefronted in participants' accounts of fathering because they aligned with participants' notions of 'good fatherhood' and of 'good families'. The time which fathers spent with children, therefore, had a plurality of meanings as well as being a family resource negotiated between fathers, mothers and children.

Experiences of relational time

Times which were significant for father-child relationships were underscored within participants' accounts. Indeed, "a good parent is moreover widely understood in terms of the quality of their relationships as well as the time spent with children." (Brannen et al. 2012:27). Impediments to relational time were stress and tiredness as well as non-negotiable time constraints. Consequently, evenings and weekends were characterised by greater opportunity for relational time than mornings, echoing Dermott's (2008) explanation of how everyday fathering routines are characterised by changing experiences of time for fathers. Furthering Dermott's work, this study shows that mothers and children also describe such changing experiences of time and relate these to fathering and father-child relationships. Because of the varied demands which were made on fathers, mothers and children's time, family members had to 'make time' or 'times' for father-child

interaction which were significant for relational closeness. Fathers articulated that the more time they had with children, the closer their connections to them would be. Similarly, Dermott (2008) has argued that, in itself, the act of 'making time' asserts a commitment to investing in father-child relationships as valuable. She also notes, however, that "the heightened desire of fathers to develop an involved relationship with their children should correlate with a greater time commitment" (Dermott 2008:61) in children's everyday lives. Given the limited opportunity to negotiate more time for father-child interactions which fathers, mothers and children described, however, the notion of 'being there' also came to be given significance as relational time. Participants asserted that fathers needed to 'be there' in order to have close relationships with their children. 'Being there' was not clearly defined in my study, but is described by Dermott (2008:56) as "a physical presence or an emotional relationship, with the latter not necessarily being dependent on the existence of the former". For parents and children in my project, 'being there' proffered consistency and security in father-child relationships and served to obscure the significance of constrained time for father-child relationships.

Time with particular interactional characteristics was also portrayed as nurturing of close father-child relationships. Such 'quality time', it has been argued, nurtures close father-child relationships. Consequently, contemporary parents feel increasing pressure to facilitate 'quality time' with their children because of its association with relational closeness (Brannen, 2005; Hook, 2012). Others have argued, however, that *children's* narratives of quality time with their parents are more nuanced. Children, teenagers in particular, want to spent time with their friends or alone and feel it important to exert control over how their free time is used (Christensen, 2002; Lewis, Noden and Sarre, 2008; Brannen, Wigfall and Mooney, 2012). Aligned with my own findings, Christensen (2002) established that children valued various 'qualities of time', such as being able to go out with their friends at weekends, as well as the time they spent nurturing relational closeness with their fathers. 'Quality time' between fathers and children was, however, especially forefronted in all participants' accounts of fathers because of its potential to nurture relational closeness. Quality, relational time, therefore, drew upon western cultural ideals of 'good fatherhood' which were reflected in participants' displays of the fathers they lived with. Children's age and competence intersected 'quality' relational time. Parents and children reported fathers engaging in greater amounts of 'quality time' with older children and especially with boys. The ways in which quality time was 'done' also changed over the course of children's lives, being largely dependent on the perceived competence of children to engage in particular types of interactions with their fathers (discussed in greater detail in the 'intimate fathering' section).

In summary, fathers, mothers and children actively negotiated and independently experienced fathering temporalities. Time which resulted in relational closeness was highly valued relative to the absolute amount of time which fathers invested in childcare, though this was also important. A temporal lens on fathering underscores the importance of father-child relationships within ideals of 'good fatherhood' as well as demonstrating how everyday fathering relates to such ideals. Further revealed are the changing ways in which relational time was invoked through fathering practices over the course of children's childhoods and the importance of a lifecourse perspective.

Intimate Fathering

Close father-child relationships were nurtured through particular fathering practices. Various fathering practices were constituted as significant for relational closeness between fathers and children. Such practices took place in different spaces, at different times, in different ways with different children, and at different points in children's lives. These practices were negotiated between fathers, mothers and children.

Practices which were significant for relational closeness were especially prominent in participants' accounts of contemporary fathers. Through parents' accounts of these practices, fathers' increased involvement in children's lives relative to men in the grandfather generation was conveyed. Dermott (2008) has argued that this reflects the western cultural ideal of 'intimate fatherhood', which is a particular construction of 'involved' or 'good' fatherhood. In essence, contemporary fathers are involved if they can create 'intimate' relationships with their children. Fathers that engage with intimate fathering practices are reified within individual and cultural imaginaries (Dermott, 2008).

Through accounts of fathering practices and exploration of the meanings which are entangled with them, my findings have shown both the tenacity and fluidity of the father-child relationship over time. Giddens' conceptualisation of contemporary intimacy centres on the notion of a 'pure relationship.' Post-modern, western intimate relationships, Giddens argues, are characterised by equality, democracy and disclosure. Particular social conditions have made such relational qualities desirable. Specifically, Giddens (1992) asserts that we are more individualized, we are not constrained by social mores, but free to reflexively self-define our own lives and, therefore, personal relationships are freely open to negotiation and dissolution, only being sustained insofar as they are felt to offer benefit to the participants. Philip (2013a), however, has suggested that Giddens work is more about relational trends than an analysis of the concept of intimacy and how this might manifest in everyday life. Nevertheless, intimacy as a concept has been a particular source of interest for relational research in addition to a normative ideal of 'what matters' about contemporary western relationships (Jamieson, 1998; Dermott, 2008). Gabb (2008) and Jamieson

(1998) have postulated intimate practices as helpful in constructing a substantive understanding of intimacy and how it might be used to explore family relationships. The findings which arise from my focus on fathering practices, therefore, provide an account of how father-child intimacy was constructed and experienced within the normative family contexts of this study.

The permanence of the father-child relationship was evoked through the notion of fathers' always 'being there' and of the commitment of fathers to make time for children. Fathers felt obligated to provide for their families, especially following the birth of children, and saw this as part of their fatherly responsibilities which could not simply be disregarded. This obligation was bound up with family finances and with normative understandings of gender, despite parents' espousal of gender equality. Consequently, parents' assertions of intergenerational change in fathering practices were thrown into question. As Dermott (2008:131) has noted, however, "much of the 'thinking' about fatherhood results in the adoption of familiar patterns of action rather than radical change." The negotiation of the division of labour between parents both enabled and constrained fathers' participation in children's lives and, while the resultant routines of everyday life leant a temporal certitude to father-child interaction, intimate fathering practices and the time available for these, practices were also configured in, and reconfigured over, time. Children's age and perceptions of their competence shaped the changing configurations of fathering practices which fostered close father-child relationships. Consequently, father-child relationships had similarly iterative and shifting properties, rooted in the everyday (Morgan, 1996). Intimate father-child relationships, therefore, were not simply 'chosen' by individuals as an individualized, self-reflexive project, as Giddens (1992) asserts, they were negotiated between fathers, mothers and children and contextualised by social class, gender and generation over time. Intimate fathering, therefore, had to be worked at over time. Giddens' (1992) notion of intimacy also suggests that the father-child relationship could be 'cast-off' at will. Beck-Gernsheim (2001; 2002), however, has argued that post-modern, western parent-child relationships retain a permanence which intimate adult relationships do not. Indeed, children have become the reason *for* family, because of the fragility of adult relationships. Others have argued that the father-child relationship offers security and permanence in contemporary life because of its irrevocable association with legal responsibilities and perceptions of obligation (see Chapter Two) which are starkly gendered (Finch and Mason, 1993; Jamieson, 1998). Aligned with my own findings, Dermott (2008) has argued that gendered obligation is a significant intersection of family life and in relation to fathering. Father-child relationships are "less precarious" than Giddens' (1992) conceptualisation of the 'pure relationship' because fathers are expected "not to abdicate" from their role as fathers, but *intimate* fathering "does still have frailties" (Dermott 2008:139).

Fathers felt less able to develop close relationships with infants than with older children. Central to the experience of father-infant relationships was the biological and social primacy of mothers in infant children's lives which fathers felt limited in their potential to redress. The specialness of mother-infant relationships was seen in relation to father-infant intimacy at this time in children's lives. As children aged, mothers would consciously abdicate from father-child interactions in order that fathers and children could foster intimacy through their direct engagement with each other. Furthermore, children, boys in particular, were increasingly willing to interact with their fathers as they grew older because their leisure interests increasingly mirrored those of their fathers and their 'need' for mothers decreased. Although Giddens (1992) postulated a reduction in the structuring power of gender within adult intimate dyads, relational and institutionalised gender inequality has been a key criticism of Giddens' notion of the 'pure relationship' (Jamieson, 1999). Many feminist authors have highlighted gendered inequality in the division of labour as well as women's continued subsumption within the home (Jamieson, 1998). Conversely, a 'crisis of masculinity' (Gillis, 2000) has been asserted to result from the deconstruction of the determining power of gender in modernity. The idealised view of post-modern intimacy within adult dyads which Giddens presents is, therefore, problematised (Jamieson, 1998). Where fathers were enabled to spend greater amounts of time in childcare relative to their own fathers, this had to be consciously worked at within parental dyads. Therefore, and as Jamieson (1999) has explained, equality is obtained not just through 'disclosure', as Giddens (1992) contends, but through purposive navigation of embedded, but shifting, inequalities negotiated between fathers, mothers and children. Fathers in my project also felt that they were involved in and able to foster close relationships between themselves and older children despite their reduced involvement in childcare relative to mothers. Inequality within parental dyads, therefore, can be experienced as 'fair' (Jamieson, 1999; Ives, 2015). Furthermore, my study has established that father-child intimacy is not dependent on equality within parental dyads.

My findings have also demonstrated that children were afforded less influence over father-child interactions than their parents. For example, fathers were happy to enforce children's participation, particularly in physical activities, if they felt that children would enjoy such activities once they were there. Nevertheless, children were variably afforded some control or 'say' in how they used their time, occasionally being able to decline or set the terms of their participation in shared interactions with their fathers. Again, Alanen's work is helpful in explicating this. Participants' accounts of father-child interactions constituted displays of fatherly power over children and of unequal intergenerational power relations (Alanen, 2001). They also demonstrated the stress which fathers placed on their intimate interactions with children relative to their assertions of authority over them (Giddens, 1992). Yet, "in terms of parent-child relations, the assertion of equality seems particularly

unsustainable" (Dermott 2008:133). My findings have demonstrated, however, that children were variably able to participate in the decisions made about father-child interaction and the use of their time as they aged. This phenomenon has been described as a democratisation of post-modern parent-child relationships which arises from a "putative equality" between them (Giddens 1992:191). In contrast, Dermott (2008:134) explains that "ultimately…decision making rests with the adult in parent-child relationships" and that the portrayal of democratisation within father-child relationships serves only to mask generational inequality (Jamieson, 1998; Dermott, 2008; Gabb, 2008). Aligned with my own findings again, Alanen (2001:21) asserts that children experience shifting 'powers' "to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds." Similarly, in a study of communication between parents and teenagers, Solomon *et al* (2002), noted the dyadic ways in which both fathers and children enable and constrain communication between them as a means of asserting control and identity.

Through participants' displays, fathers were affirmed as 'good', intimate fathers despite gendered and generational inequalities in negotiating father-child interaction. The notion that intimate family relationships have been transformed toward equality, democracy and that such relationships are individualized has, therefore, been refuted in this study, as in Dermott's (2008) earlier work. Rather, Intimate fathering practices are engaged in by individual father-child pairs within the context of broader familial relationships and historically and culturally located understandings of 'good' and 'involved' fatherhood. The common characteristics of intimate fathering practices in my project included direct communication between fathers and children, and their mutual enjoyment. These interactions went above and beyond fathers' mere participation in practical childcare tasks, though fathers' participation in routine childcare was also noted. Practical tasks of childcare, such as those associated with children's bedtime routines, were interwoven with practices of intimacy, such as reading. Fathers found it difficult to foster intimate relationships with infant children and emphasised their participation in practical caring tasks, such as changing nappies, at this time in children's lives. Intimate fathering practices invoked a sense of knowing each other well between fathers and children and a sense of specialness in father-child relationships. While Giddens' (1992:130) conceptualisation of intimacy hinged on mutual self-disclosure as a form of 'emotional communication' between intimates in order to foster intimacy, the substantive definition of how intimacy was constituted through fathering practices in my project coheres better with Jamieson's (Jamieson 1998:8-9) somewhat broader understanding. She outlines close association, knowing and understanding, and love as key aspects of intimacy. How love is expressed, she argues, may take on different forms across people's lives and relationships. This last point aligns well with the shifting fathering practices and father-child relationships which have been illustrated in this thesis.

Practices of both intimacy and care ran throughout accounts of fathers. Fathers' financial provisioning, and their 'being there' were representations of fathers' care for children and these manifestations of father involvement ran alongside accounts of intimate fathering practices. The efforts which fathers exert in making time to spend with children, such as through the negotiation of the division of labour, have also been contended as acts of care with affective dimensions (Philip, 2013a). Philip (2013a) has, therefore, argued that 'care' and intimacy overlap, but remain distinct; she further contends that a focus on intimacy alone obscures the importance of caring. Jamieson (1998), however, posits that intimacy need not involve caring, but that caring can be part of intimacy. For example, love can be expressed through acts of care. The practical acts of care which fathers undertook, such as changing nappies, were emphasised in accounts of fathering infants because of the aforementioned difficulty which fathers experienced in fostering intimacy with children at this time in children's lives. Jamieson (1998), however, has explained that it is difficult to be involved in the lives of very young children without undertaking a number of practical caring tasks on their behalf. As children aged, however, fathers' participation in care and intimacy continued to be conflated. For example, reading to children formed part of fathers' wider engagement in helping children to get ready for bed at night. Additionally, children being taught to ride a bike was both an important skill that all children should learn from their fathers, but shared bike rides were seen to hold intimate potential for father-son interaction. Fatherly care was, therefore, shown, to be an important facet in the construction of 'good fatherhood' (Philip, 2013a) and which, as my study has shown, was displayed as both distinct from and interdependent with intimacy by fathers, mothers and children in their accounts of fathering.

Communication between fathers and children needed to mutually foster greater understanding of the 'other' in order for it to be enjoyed by fathers and children and, therefore, to nurture intimacy. Children, mothers and fathers valued such communication because of the sense of specialness it lent to father-child relationships. In contrast, Dermott (2008:139) postulates that "highly valued" openness in father-child communication was reported by fathers to be "almost entirely one way, from child to parent." The extent to which such communication was possible was intersected by children's age and their competence to engage with fathers in ways which fathers determined and preferred. For example, fathers felt unable to engage with infants in ways which they did not find limiting. Further, once sons reached the age of around seven years, their direct engagement with fathers through physical activities was asserted to be part of their needs as well as a key way in which fathers and sons could foster intimate communication between them. This study has, therefore, shown that children can be considered to be positioned within families as *intimates in the making'.* This echoes Qvortrup *et al's* (1994) theorisation of children's social positioning, wherein

children are described as 'human becomings'. The course of children's development was conflated with fathers', mothers' and children's perceptions of children's competence to engage in particular forms of communication with fathers. Children's age was a significant social marker in the construction of family members' perceptions of children's competence. This firmly situates the perception of children's competence by family members and changes in the intimate interactions between fathers and children in my study within the paradigm of developmental psychology. Within this paradigm "developmental progression is viewed as unfolding from within but also in need of appropriate nurturing" (Ribbens McCarthy & Edwards 2011:22). This aligns with the purposive ways in which fathers engaged with children of particular ages in particular activities in my study. Notions of 'good fathering' to which participants ascribed therefore were, like notions of 'good mothering', heavily influenced by the predominance of developmental psychology within western understandings of child development (Jamieson, 1998).

Leisure activities between parents and older children were described by family members as, more or less, gendered. Masculine and feminine identities were, therefore, also interwoven with intimate fathering practices. Fathers, rather than mothers, typically undertook physical activities with children, both sons and daughters. As children aged, however fathers increasingly participated in physical activities with their male children outside and away from the home, but non-physical leisure activities with older daughters. Accounts of father-child intimacy were, consequently, increasingly gendered. The role of family finances in facilitating such interactions was not problematised by family members. Nor was the notion that such activities might be a reflection of cultural tastes and social status, rather than essential to father-child intimacy. There was a pivotal role of physical activity as a locus for father-son relationships as sons grew older in family members' accounts and mothers actively withdrew from such 'boy bonding' time. This was because it was felt that male children and fathers had a proclivity for the enjoyment of such outdoor activities, while daughters enjoyed other activities, such as eating out or going to the cinema. Intimate relationships were, therefore, seen to be nurtured through such shared gender differentiated interactions. Consequently, physical activity was not forefronted in accounts of intimacy between fathers and daughters. This coheres with what Kay (2007) has argued: 'fathering through sport' is both an established mechanism through which children and fathers interact and a key way in which fathers may fulfil their obligations toward 'new' notions of 'good fatherhood' which emphasise relational quality between fathers and children. This study has, therefore, shown that mutual enjoyment within father-child intimacy is nuanced in relation to gender. It further demonstrates that the leisure-based fathering practices which family members constructed as intimate are shaped by social class, but that this was unacknowledged within participants' accounts. This finding, therefore,

further complicates the contentious debate surrounding class, family finances and fathering practices (Dermott and Pomati, 2016), but coheres with Gillies' (2009:54) assertion that "middle-class fatherhood is often publicly visible, associated with activities outside of the home" and, through this, middle class fathers are able to fulfil "the expectations associated with…the involved father."

Thus, key to understanding what fathers, mothers and children living in normative contexts valued about contemporary fatherhood was the notion of intimacy. Family members felt that fathers and children constructed intimate relationships through relational closeness and this was reflected in their displays of fathering practices. Intimacy and care were interwoven in accounts of fathers and fathering. Communication and mutual enjoyment were necessary conditions for intimate fathering in this study. The experience and display of these was intersected by children's age and gender, and also by spatial location and time.

Summary

Fathering displays, are contextualised by the dual cultural ideals of contemporary fatherhood: man as worker and man as caring father, but are also personally experienced and negotiated in accordance with changing fathering practices and meanings over time. Fathers, mothers and children participate actively in the dual processes of 'doing' and displaying fathering, negotiating displays in relation to inter and intragenerational relationships and power relations over time.

It has been noted that "personal accounts and displays of family have to be contextualized by culture" (James & Curtis 2010:1177). That family displays only makes sense if they are seen to be embedded in wider cultural ideals that shape how we perceive family and family relationships. Family displays are agentic efforts to convey what 'my family is like', but they continue to reflect social conventions and values (Finch, 2011). The relational approach of the project shows the uniqueness of individual fathers and of their relationships with individual mothers and children, but also shows the common ways in which fathers were understood, experienced and displayed within and between families. This study, therefore, corroborates Heaphy's (2011) assertion that displays are neither self-determined nor given, they are a mixture of both.

Fathering practices and displays are, therefore, not wholly individualized, but are embedded in contexts. "To live a personal life is to have agency and to make choices, but the personhood implied in the concept [of personal life] requires the presence of others to respond to and to contextualise those actions and choices" (Smart 2007:28). Time, gender, class and generation are enmeshed with

everyday fathering and its display and these are negotiated between individual family members as independent actors in dynamic, but interdependent, ways. As Smart (2007) explains, individual accounts do not have to be consistent across family members – though they may be shared or comparable. Rather, displays are fundamentally social (Finch, 2007).

Through the displays of children and parents, therefore, intimate fathering practices are underscored as the most valued aspect of contemporary fatherhood because these interactions promote close father-child relationships. Intimate fatherhood is at the core of constructions of 'good fatherhood' for participants and what they feel should be portrayed as significant about the fathers they live with.

The changing configurations of the entangled meanings suffusing fathering displays demonstrates that father-child relationships had, like father-mother relationships, "a past and an anticipated future as well as a present" (Finch 2011:200). Consequently, displays are "continually renewed" (James & Curtis 2010:1177) in accordance with changes to family relationships as active, fluid and social processes (Morgan, 1996, 2011). As fathering practices and the meanings which underpinned them are reconfigured, displays also change over time (Smart, 2007; James and Curtis, 2010). Such competing and conflicting meanings are, therefore, not reconcilable into a single set of static values which family members lay claim to in their accounts. The concept of family display, as Morgan (2011) has stated, brings to light the overlap of multiple meanings in the construction and experience of contemporary fatherhood by fathers, mothers and children.

Conclusions and future research directions

In summary, this thesis asserts the following answers to the research questions and makes the following contributions to fatherhood scholarship:

- A relational approach to conceptualising fatherhood reveals the complex and entangled ways in which 'good fatherhood' is constructed and experienced, and the interplay between culture and everyday fathering in normative family contexts.
- Multiple concepts and meanings are entangled within fathering practices and displays. While individual family members and their relationships are unique, they are also contextualised.
- All family members are active in the construction, negotiation and experience of fatherhood, though individuals' agency may be variably enabled or constrained.
- Fathering practices provide an everyday basis for father-child intimacy and all fathering practices can be intimate fathering practices if their characteristics are appropriately configured.

- Through the display and experience of intimate fatherhood, fathers, mothers and children are able to affirm themselves and the fathers they live with as aligned with their conceptualisations of 'good fatherhood'. Family members shape the ways in which they display and experience displays of fathering in accordance with their audience, their social position, their sociality, and in fluid ways over time.

- A multi-perspective approach to understanding 'normative fatherhood' reveals and emphasises the ongoing and everyday negotiation of intimate fathering practices. These processes of negotiation occur dynamically between family members as independent, but interconnected, agents who are situated within particular socio-cultural contexts. Through this a nuanced understanding of father-child intimacy in normative contexts is demonstrated.

- While there is a clear change in normative fathers' orientations toward everyday fathering and what is important in the construction of 'good fatherhood' between generations of fathers, changes to fathering practices which reflect this are less pronounced or consistent. This disparity emphasises the interplay between structure and agency in the 'doing' of 'good fathering'. Family members, therefore, exert effort in justifying their experiences of contemporary fathers relative to their ideals of 'good fatherhood'. Nevertheless, contemporary ideals of 'good fatherhood' and the practices of everyday normative fathering are being continually negotiated and renewed, potentially bringing them into ever closer alignment.

As with any research study, questions as well as answers arise. There are a number of issues which arose from the data which could not be fully explored and warrant further investigation. Possible areas for future research, both within what I have constructed as 'normative families' and within more diverse family contexts and forms, which arise from this discussion are suggested as follows:

- Further exploration of the extent to which intimate fathering practices are shaped by children's age and gender and in relation to caring practices.
- Further exploration of the relationship between social class and intimate fathering practices.
- Further work which explores the dynamic experiences of time and the meanings associated with temporal elements of family life, with fathering and in relation to fatherhood.
- Additional investigation of the ways in which fathering practices are given meaning, 'done' and experienced within different spaces.

Although new insights have arisen from this study, family life remains a complex and dynamic subject which does not readily lend itself to fixed, unifying explanations. Knowledge of fathers, fathering and fatherhood is, however, increasingly nuanced and this thesis has contributed to the

current depth of understanding through its problematisation of the idealised 'norm' of contemporary fatherhood and exploration of 'normative' fathers and fathering contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Recruitment materials

Recruitment email circulated to potential participants:

Title: Participants required for a study on the experience of fathering in everyday life.

Summary: I am looking for volunteers to participate in this study, which aims to explore family members' thoughts on fathers and their experiences of being fathered through individual and family group interviews

Announcement:

Hello

I am a PhD student in the School of Nursing and Midwifery and I am currently recruiting participants for my research project exploring family members' thoughts on fathers and their experiences of being fathered.

I would like to recruit fifteen families for the study. Each member of the family (mother, father and one or more child) will be invited to take part in an individual interview and given the opportunity to undertake some optional task based activities on the topic of 'fathers and fathering'. Each family will also be invited to take part, together, in a second reflective interview approximately four months later to consider some of the research findings as they develop.

Participants are not limited to university staff or students. So, if you are father or mother in a professional occupation (for example, but not limited to; solicitor, healthcare professional, IT professional, teacher, academic), married and living together with a partner and your child or children and you are interested in taking part, then I am keen to hear from you. A further requirement of the study is that you at have at least one child of school age who you live with and think may also be interested in taking part.

If you are interested or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at

This project had been approved by the School of Nursing and Midwifery ethics committee. The study is supervised by Prof. Penny Curtis (School of Nursing and Midwifery p.a.curtis@sheffield.ac.uk) and Prof. Allison James (Department of Sociological Studies allison.james@sheffield.ac.uk) Thank you for your time and for considering this project.

Thank you

Victoria Earley

PGR Student, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Barber House. The University of Sheffield, 387 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2HQ

Recruitment poster, displayed in various locations:

Appendix Two: Information leaflets

Adults' information leaflet:

The

University

Of

Sheffield.

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Understanding Fathers and Fatherhood in Everyday Family Life.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this and considering the project.

What is the project's purpose?
The aim of the study is to explore fathers', mothers' and children's experiences of fathers and fathering. It also seeks to explore how this may differ between family members, or over time.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because you have expressed an interest in response to my request for help from fathers and their families, or because other participants have suggested you may be interested. There are a total of fifteen families taking part in the study.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason. If you decide to withdraw at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details below.

What will it involve?
Initially, I will need to find out if other members of your family are interested in taking part as I am interested in working with families as well as individuals. They will have to make this decision for themselves. Should you and other members of your family decide to take part, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. During this interview, which is expected to last about an hour, we will discuss your experiences and perceptions of fathers and of fathering. I will record our discussions using a digital audio recorder. If there are any questions which you would prefer not to answer, or you decide you wish to retract an answer, please feel free to let me know either during, or after the interview.

You will also be offered the opportunity to take part in a further interview with the rest of your family. Within the family interview, you and your family will be given the opportunity to reflect on some of the general findings arising from the project as a whole. This interview will take around an hour.

What will it involve for my child?
Your child (or children) will also be asked to participate in two interviews, an individual interview and the later, joint family interview. These are anticipated to last up to an hour, but normally bewtween

half an hour and forty five minutes. During your child's individual interview they may complete some drawings of what different types of fathers may look like, or they may be asked to reflect on their own experiences of being fathered by creating a chart detailing what they do in the time they spend with their father. If your child does not wish to undertake these tasks, they can still participate by expressing their thoughts verbally. Your child's interview will also be recorded using a digital audio recorder.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no anticipated disadvantages or risks of taking part. I will ensure that interview times are arranged to suit you and to cause you minimum inconvenience. It is, however, possible that the process of discussing intimate subjects, such as memories and experiences of family life may be difficult for some and you will be free to pause or stop the interview at any time should this occur.

In the unlikely event that you disclose anything that indicates a risk of harm within the family, then it is my responsibility to share this with my supervisory team and/or refer this to an appropriate agency.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to the understanding of fathers and the process of fathering, which is an under-researched area of family life.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?
All the information that I collect from you and your family members during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

The audio recordings of the interviews you participate in will be transcribed and, once checked for accuracy, deleted. No other use will be made of them and only I will be allowed access to the original recordings.

All transcripts and data will be anonymised and kept securely under my control. It will only be used for the purposes of research and not passed on to anyone else.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
This study will be written up as a PhD thesis. The results may be presented both nationally and internationally, with the aim of furthering our understanding of fathers and fathering. I hope that this will be of value to both practitioners and policy makers and that it will also inform future research directions. Participants will not be identifiable in any of this material.

Who is funding the research?
The research is funded by a scholarship from the University of Sheffield

Does the study have ethical approval?
The University's Research Ethics Committee has approved the research.

If you need further information my contact details are as follows:
E-mail: ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
Address: Victoria Earley, Barber House, School of Nursing and Midwifery, The University of Sheffield, 387 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2HQ
The project is supervised by Prof. Penny Curtis ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ **and Prof. Allison James** ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ **should you need to contact them.**

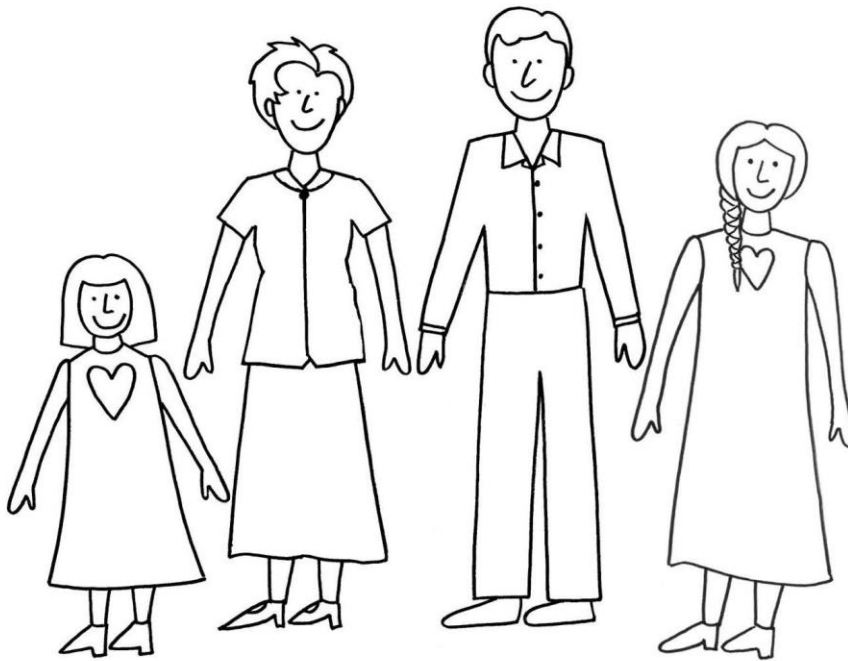**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO CONSIDER THIS RESEARCH PROJECT.**

Children's information leaflet:

The University Of Sheffield.

Fathers and Family Life. Your views.

Information Sheet

My name is Victoria Earley. I am a student at the University of Sheffield.
My research is about fathers, what they are like and what you and other members of your family think about fathers.

I will also be talking to other members of your family as well as several other families about the same topic.

Before you decide if you want to take part, you need to read and understand this information so that you know what the research is for and what it will involve. If you have any questions, just ask.

What is the research for?

I want to find out:

- what you think fathers are like

- what you do with your Dad

- how you think things might change in the future

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because your father or your parents have said they would like to take part and I would like to invite you to help me too.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. I will also ask you to sign a form to say you are happy to take part. You can change your mind and decide not to take part at any time. You don't have to give a reason and no-one will mind.

What do I have to do?
If you decide you want to help out with this project, I will talk to you on your own about fathers for about half an hour. If you prefer, I also have some activities to do to help us think about what fathers are like. We'll do this at your home, but away from other people in your family so that your answers are private.

You can also take part, at a later date, in another discussion with the rest of your family where we will talk about some of the general findings from lots of families who are helping with the project as a whole. This should also take about an hour.

Is there anything bad I should know?
I will try to make sure that what we talk about and the activities we do are fun and interesting. There are no right answers and you can choose not to answer any question if you wish. I just want to know what you think.

Will I get anything for taking part?
Although you won't get anything for taking part, I hope that with your help I can understand fathers and what they do a bit better. I also hope that the information

you may give will be helpful to other people who work with families and fathers or other researchers who may want to do research on a similar topic in the future.

Who will know what we talk about?
Because I won't be able to remember everything that you say, I will also record what we talk about on a tape recorder, but I won't share the recordings with anyone else. Once I have written up the recording, I will delete it. When I write down what we talk about and if I talk about the project to others in the future, I won't use your name so no-one will know it's you.

The only time I would tell someone about what we have talked about is if you told me that you or someone else was being harmed. If that happened, I would need to tell another adult, but I will always let you know first.

If you have any questions, please feel free talk to me. Or you can contact me by e-mail or by post:
E-mail:
Address: Victoria Earley, Barber House, School of Nursing and Midwifery, The University of Sheffield, 387 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2HQ

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO CONSIDER THIS RESEARCH PROJECT.

Appendix Three: Interview topic guides

Adults' pictorial interview schedule:

INDICATIVE TOPIC AREAS FOR DISCUSSION WITHIN INTERVIEW

This page is a representation of the key topic areas I'd like us to discuss during the interview process. We don't have to cover everything and there is no right or wrong order, this is just to help you get a feel for what we might discuss and to help guide the discussion.

Describing your own father.

- Important memories.
- Significant event and transitions.
- Your Dad's role.
- What you thought of your father as a child.

Becoming a father

- Contemplating impending parenthood.
- Anticipating the future.
- Changes to relationship with own father
- Subsequent children and the experience of 'becoming a father again'.

Being a father now

- Day to day life as a father.
- Negotiating parenting with your partner and your children.
- Changes to how you father and what you do over time.
- Important moments or transitions over time as a father.
- How children/partner see you as a father.

Being a father in the future

- Anticipating important events or transitions
- Concerns for the future
- Aspirations for the future
- Continued role as father.

Children's pictorial interview schedule:

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

This is a diagram of the key topic areas I'd like us to think about as we talk. We don't have to cover everything and there is no right or wrong order, this is just to help you get a feel for what we might discuss and to help guide the discussion.

Describing your Dad

- Your family and your Dad's role.
- What does Dad like/dislike doing?
- How siblings/Mum/Dad see your Dad as a father.
- Other families and how they compare.

What is Dad like now

- Day to day life with your Dad.
- Changes to what Dad does and what you do over time.
- Things you need Dad for.
- Things Dad does for you or with you compared to what Mum does or is done for your siblings.
- Rules in the family.
- Special times or memories.
- Things Dad is proud of.
- What would you do if you were Dad?

Dad in the future

- Anticipating important events in your future
- Does Dad have concerns for the future
- Does Dad have hopes for the future
- What your Dad's role will be in the future and what this will mean for you.
- What do other members of the family think?

Appendix Four: Participatory tasks

Drawing task:

Children were invited to draw their father and things that they associated with him on the image and around it

1

Appendix Six: Data analysis examples

Coding Tree example:

CODING TREE FOR PARENTS' DATA

DESCRIBING FAMILY

- Biographical reflections on own childhood/experiences of being an adult child (Family background?)
- Children
    - Behaviour and level of understanding (competence and ability).
    - Guiding children
    - Comparing siblings
    - Needs
    - Personalities, preferences, wants and interests
- Fathering at home
- Fathering in public
- Dad and Mum (describing self and other parent)
    - Adults' interests/needs and preferences
    - Biology/gender
    - Children's activities with either Mum or Dad
    - Personal understanding of what a father 'is'/does (incl: role models/masculinity)
    - Rewards and challenges of parenting
- Family Values (comparisons with other families, other people's perceptions of our family, what family would ideally be/should be like. Ideas about parenting and approaches to it Describing family and family practices).
    - Aspirations and anxieties for children
    - Goals and aims of parenting *(possible link with obligation toward children/in family life and aspirations/anxieties for children).*
    - What is good for children
- Home (as location of family life)
- Rules
    - Children's challenging behaviour
    - Discipline and boundaries
    - Obligations and expectations in family life (parents to children and vice versa)

EVENTS

- Children growing up

1

- - - Getting older/growing up generally

    - Leaving school/leaving home

    - Role as a parent to adult children

    - Starting school

- Holidays

- Transition to parenthood

    - Birth of additional children

    - Emotions and ideas about 'becoming'

    - Leave policies (? Cf. work/childcare)

EVERYDAY PRACTICES

- Activities

    - Achievements/exams (? Needed at all)

    - Lessons/Teams/Groups

    - Teaching children (? Cf. Guiding children)

    - Whole family

- Daily routines

    - Decision making and negotiation *(linked very closely with negotiation, children's needs/aspirations and anxieties for children and ideas about parenting).* Negotiation between family members and external factors

- Division of labour

    - Division of housework/perceptions of equality

    - Food

        - Meals

        - Preparation

    - Time

        - Time with and around children/with parents as adults

        - Formal childcare and childcare provisioning

    - Work

RELATIONSHIPS

- Relationships with grandparents and wider family

- Father/child relationship

- Relationships with other families

2

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- - Children's wider social networks
  - Social networks and support
- Resemblances
  - Comparing siblings
- Sibling relationships
- Talking/being open and close/providing emotional support/knowing each other (intimacy)
  - Adults with children
  - As a family and about our family with others /with wider family
  - Between parents
  - Between siblings

3

Excerpt from 'time and space' theme:

As analysis progressed, this theme developed into 'time', rather than 'time and space'.

Time and space thematic matrix

Can Dads be 'Dad' in the same way consistently across time and space? Does this vary in the perceptions of family members? What influences these understandings?

Family		Dads	Mums	Children
		Stability and Change		
1.	Family One	Not interfering in their children's adult lives. Yeah, you said that there were some things that you do more of? Well, what kinds of things are they? Father One: I think I do more, particularly as they are growing, I think I do more of those kind of activity stuff with them. So I take them to Scouts, I do work with Scouts and I'll take them camping. Adventurous type of activities and I think that. I think that my wife would recognise that the boys need to do that, but she wouldn't necessarily want to see them doing it. (R1) Biology ==Practices of fathering change as boys grow.== Dad also uses time spent waiting for the boys at swimming to do work- shaped around facilitating their activities in the first instance. More important to be there, this is what is stable and takes precedence, even though he has to change his working practices to accommodate it. ==Dad talks about holidays as being increasingly important – compare this to Billy's account.== The other sense of that being in transition, we go on holidays together and those become progressively	Joanne and Ben make reference to a cousin who was still at home beyond an age which was acceptable). "Cos I think it is harder for modern men, not modern men, but men that are more engaged with their family because, yeah, to work and to do family stuff is hard. But then you get a lot back from it, because you've got both your work and your career and what you get from that and you've got, well your children have both of you a bit more I think" R2 (Biology) ==There is reciprocity in intimacy- the efforts, reap reward which embed the idea that 'being engaged' is a fruitful endeavour worthy of paternal effort. So the impetus for the evolution of the intimate relationship between father and child is this positive feedback mechanism.== This is characterised as the experience of modern men, rather than previous generations. Despite the disparity between generations in Joanne's characterisation, she is still able to construct her experience of her father who was 'worked' first and foremost as a positive one. It seems, evident that the pegs upon which the constructions of 'good fatherhood' have a generational dimension. But my Dad worked, yeah, worked. So he'd be like, Dad's coming home at six. We'd have tea. And	Perception that dad would not want to be a burden. But there is a very simple notion for him that he would 'just help him' as was needed, regardless (Josh). Josh talks about "If I ask him, he'll always be there to help me. And this one cos I think he won't have other things to do that are more important than helping me. Joanne and Ben make reference to a cousin who was still at home beyond an age which was acceptable- limitations on the intimate relationship in its acceptable longevity). Josh, believes that as he gets older that he will do less with his family (pertains to the activities he will do with Dad), yet for Ben, this togetherness is what sets his family apart. However, he reinforces the notion that 'ideas' and talking can be cohesive and permit closeness (see A2, Ben). Billy describes moving into his room as changing the activities that Dad does with him – he no longer reads to him since this happened. Is this a private space which Dad can't just access for
		more and more important although there is a point as well where you over invest in holidays because its become so important. I don't mean, I mean emotionally. You want it to be so perfect, it can be actually quite tense, just trying to live up to it. We go away for weekends fairly regularly. The five of us. And, but, yeah, you're right. A sort of typical week, the amount of time we spend together can be quite sparse. (R13 Family Values) ==As an unintended consequence of the emphasis placed on holidays as potentiating closeness as a whole family, this translates into a state of expectation and obligation for things to be happy and enjoyable. Intimacy then is something which cannot be forced, but exists as a separate but intangible entity which even presumptions regarding practices which will potentiate intimacy may not be experienced as such.== Something about qualities of time here- this time with 'all five of them' is somehow more important than if it were just father and son. Father One: Ok, so I've got three children. I've been with my partner for about twenty five, twenty six years. Been married for twenty and my oldest child is seventeen. Next is thirteen and the youngest is coming up eleven. So we've had....aside from the eldest, we've lived in the same house, and in the same neighbourhood for fifteen years so, very stable, very dull. (laughing). The...we've also over that time I guess sort of faced various transitions, you know, birth	we'd all sit at the table and have tea together, so it was very, sort of, traditional family I suppose. I: Ok, so quite rigid, sort of, family times then? Mother One: Yeah, yeah. Yeah it was tea, Dad's home, yeah. (R1 Family Values) ==It is not until Dad comes home that they can engage in this activity of a family meal that fathers are required to participate in. Perhaps it is this normative referent in modern culture that allows mum to characterise her childhood as happy and her father so positively.== Anything, so the sort of, the typical blokey type stuff Dad would do, is quite traditional. And then Mum would do the cooking in the week, but then Dad did the cooking on the weekends, so that was probably, maybe, quite unusual in those days. He used to do cooked breakfasts every Sunday morning, so I'd get up and help him with that and then we'd go shopping, Dad would do some of the shopping as well, some of the food shopping. Mum was always shopping though. (R1 Family Values) ==Traditional here and stability as alluding to a more negative, gender unequal, place that binds Mum and Dad to particular roles. Nonetheless, Dad still makes efforts to work outside of this and, because of his work throughout the week, he still acts as a domestic partner to Mum, albeit just at weekends. There is inconsistency here in how traditional is constructed between generations. Because this traditional in historical context is more maligned, it relationally shapes Dad's potential for engagement. In present context, their family is traditional, but this is benign and speaks of their stability and dependability as parents and, as such, does not potentiate the same structuring influence==	those shared activities in the same way as was previously the case? Being tired –Josh (everyone is tired). Ben talks about being tired on father/son trip to Mont Blanc and 'falling out' as a result. Things being 'hectic' – preventing spending time together and as a potential barrier to 'intimacy', but also about 'knowing each other' and understanding limitations on another's availability. Used for personal advantage by Ben in particular – because he 'knows' his parents' lives are hectic he can choose to forget the chores he has to do and they are unlikely to challenge him on this. 'it depends what mood mum and dad are in' as to whether or not Josh can make certain choices about how he spends his time at home or being involved in decisions like what is for tea (intimacy here as an equal relationships where one seeks and values the input of the other and seeks for them to disclose these opinions) So on the days when it's busy and it's chaotic, what goes on in those days? Billy: Normally I just sit and watch TV for the rest of the day, but... I: Do you mean after school? Billy: Yeah (R1 Family Values) ==The state of being busy and chaotic means that Billy is left to passively watch tele without the need to be engaged in some other activity. He observes the chaos and is disengaged from it, rather than participating in it.==

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of a second child, birth of a third child, transitions through toddlerhood, into school and various stages of schooling and now looking at one exiting the school system and going out . Kind of a sense of, challenge never decreasing, just changing over time. (R1 Family Values)

I think, so certainly with my eldest child and starting to become the case with the younger child, that, you perhaps start to engage in more grown up activities with them. So the sorts of things, I've been taking them out to see concerts. Or, very occasionally, (laughing) they're not old enough, but yeah, you'd go to the pub afterwards or. You start to perhaps allow them greater levels of freedom. So to go to town on their own and then the, the constraint is that they have to carry a phone, or whatever. So you're progressively allowing greater freedom, but also building in some sort of security within that. (R4 Family Values).

Father One: I think as they get to a certain age, they're more responsive to reason. And so again I'd see this as more of a transition from parenting children to parenting teenagers that with small, smaller children reasoning is just too time consuming and they'll just get frustrated with it. Whereas teenagers are more responsive to reason and less responsive to fairly didactic rules. (R5 Family Values).

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over the practices of fathering and domestic partnership. Yeah, cos I was thinking that my Dad was very traditional, in terms of, he was out working all the time, but the constancy is probably quite similar to Brendan and how the kids, I'd expect feel about him. But that he does more with them than my Dad did. But then I'm a girl, so maybe that had something to do with it as well. So yeah. Good. (R9 Biology). Intersection with Dad as a natural parent- this is tied to the meaning of Dad, rather than the practices that he undertakes.

Brendan still does a lot of running and maybe he'll go to Wales and he'll say to the boys, oh do you want to come with me? And they might not, or they might do. (R8 Biology). Children's preferences for participation shaping the potential for Dad and child to engage in activities which solidify and further their emotional engagement.
I: What sort of things do you do on holiday as a family?
Mother One: We will, maybe go to the pictures together, walking, going up and down mountains, they love all of them buying little model men and aeroplanes to paint, Air-fix type stuff. And cafes and meals out, they love their food. Josh especially loves his food. Cinema, yeah so it's quite a range really. But a lot of it is quite active. They love camping. Billy doesn't like the bugs or insects, which is a bit of a bother for him when we camp, but, and I, I don't really, I do it, but I don't like it as much as they do.

I: So why do you do it then if you don't like it?

Billy: Err, my Mum doesn't work on Friday, my Dad doesn't work on Thursday or Tuesday. Not too sure to be honest. All I know is that my Mum doesn't work on Friday.
I: Ok, so those days when Mum or Dad don't work. Are they slightly different then when you come home?
Billy: No
I: No?
Billy: Perfectly same. (R2 Family Values) Despite the changes in working patterns over the week, the evening is always consistent for Billy once he is actually within the home; irrespective of whether Dad/Mum might be home later on different nights.

Billy describes Dad (F1) using the space of his hockey training in order to go and run whilst he plays- the obligation to take children to and from certain activities being moulded into an opportunity to pursue an individual interest that doesn't necessitate further impingement on 'family time' or time at home. It is more important to provide those opportunities for Billy to be active and social, only then can Dad pursue his own interest.

I: Ok, how is the weekend different?
Billy: Well we, we normally just do what we want to do.
I: And do you do things with your Dad at the weekend?
Billy: Well sometimes we play football and on Sundays I have, I do my hockey. (R3 Family Values) it is because the weekend is more

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Father One: They're individuals and they're (laughing). Certainly, one of the things I've learned from having three is that different things come at different times and they're remarkably different. (R5 Family Values).

So, so with your eldest, as you've said, sort of coming up to leaving home, going to university, whatever it is that he will be doing. What do you think your role will be on a, kind of, day to day basis?
Father One: (laughing) Paying for everything! (R8 family Values)

Father One: But. So this is what I was saying, right. The times that you go away become so precious. That you kind of emotionally invested in making them as perfect as possible and actually it can just be too much and sometimes the easiest ones are the ones where you just go and switch off for a few days and sort of get on holiday after you've switched off from work. And I've started, last couple of years I've taken additional leave so I can spend more time on holiday with the kids, which works out really well, actually. (R15 Family Values) For Dad the answer to his understanding that holidays are increasingly important and that this, simultaneously, places so much pressure on the holiday that it becomes tense and difficult to experience the closeness and connectedness that it was designed to be restorative of, is to increase the his scope for going on holiday with the children. As such, he normalises then and

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Mother One: Just because they are…ooooh we'll all go away for the week…cos our friends have boys as well and they like camping and things. So it's just a boy thing isn't it?

I: Mmmm, does Brendan like camping?
Mother One: Oh god yeah, he loves it. Yeah loves it. Wild camping, you know, no hot water, the better really.

I: Eeeek, sound like my idea of a nightmare!

Mother One: Yeah, yeah! It's like a holiday for me, I was talking to one friend and in the week and she's going half board to Tunisia and I was, like, oh my god that sounds like bliss! So you don't have to do any cooking? All holiday? Cos for a Mum I think it's just always your job, it's just something that, to do. So that's why it's nice to be away from home on holiday cos at least then it's a change isn't it and a change is as good as a rest, so. Even though you are still washing their clothes and sorting out and worrying about them, cos I don't think you ever stop worrying about them. It, it, it's a change and a different environment. Yeah. (R8 Biology) This is important compared to how Brendan talks about holidays- as the counter to the emphasis that he places on holidays as being especially and increasingly meaningful in maintaining the closely engaged relationship with his children and as a whole family.

Engagement (being an engaged father) as 'hard work' requiring sustained effort over time. It would be easier for Brendan if he didn't do this (R2 Biology).

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relaxed that the children have greater autonomy to do what they want to do

I: Can you tell me about some of your family holidays? What they were like?

Billy: Well once we went to France, then, then Switzerland, and Italy and he had to like, it was really hard for him and my Mum and brothers, cos I'm like terrified of bugs. Which is like my biggest problem. Cos it's like the worst fear to have. Or one of the worst fears. So, like, they had to, like, check the tent all the time, just in case there's any bugs. I'm mostly scared of spiders…and wasps and bees. I'm scared of a lot of bugs. (R8 Family holidays) Dad talks about holidays being increasingly important…Josh has a similarly negative account of holidays, although each family member recalls the specific bug story slightly differently. I think Dad's construction of family holidays is a nod to his sense of the finiteness of childhood and his changing role in the children's lives/a desire to make childhood happy. Josh refusing to recall the specifics of a holiday- we just stayed there-resignation to the holiday that he wasn't enthusiastic about. The only mention are the things that Dad does relating to the maintenance of the house, which I think is what Josh is implying is the real reason for the trip without actually speaking in negative terms about his Dad.

makes them a time when they can just 'switch off'. There is an allusion here to an idea that intimacy is not hard work, that it requires them to switch off to achieve it, yet this exists alongside the notion that it has taking lots of fine tuning/a different venue away from the home/the children's willingness etc etc in order to potentiate intimacy in a way that will create 'strong memories' that Dad has characterised as being 'really good' (R14 Family Values).

He's, because he's quite a bit older, I suppose, I have done more stuff with him progressively than his younger brothers just because of the nature of the stuff dads do and the stuff sons do. Does that make sense? When, when the other two were babies, he'd go out and do stuff with me, then as the middle one progressed and the other one was still a baby, we'd do stuff. And I'd imagine he's, as he starts to move away more, and I can see it happening, that I'm doing more and more stuff with the middle and younger son. So I suppose that the nature of it is that I've got more experience of doing big stuff, sort of, epic challenges if you like, with him (R16 Family Values) The reference in here to 'does that make sense'- is there something here about checking I understand those referents as a woman?

As soon as you figure out what you're doing, it changes again and so that, that's been a challenge. Personally, I think it's something

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I: So we talked a bit about how the days in the week run, how does it compare then with the weekends?

Mother One: So Friday night is just, they'll have their mates round, so our house is just full of boys, yet again. Pizza, you know, Ben had his mates round this Friday, they'll have sleepovers. So that's Friday night for them, that's if we're not going out, then just a load of kids here. And then on Saturdays and they used to have swimming lessons on Saturday mornings, whereas now they don't, so it's a bit easier, we don't have to get up so early. And then we go into town, Sotckport, Manchester, they'll usually want to go and buy some books, they're into their manga ad Japanese stuff. So, can we go to town, so we got to town. So yeah, we spend more of it together I suppose. Brendan still does a lot of running and maybe he'll go to Wales and he'll say to the boys, oh do you want to come with me? And they might not, or they might do. Maybe pictures together. Sundays, it's just generally sorting, and or I go for a run on Sunday morning, Brendan might a bit later or a bit earlier. So we sort of try and sort that out. Billy goes to hockey on a Sunday so one of us will do that and then he has his matches which take all day, but that's just through the winter period so that's finished which is quite easy in a way. But yeah, he wants to start hockey up again, so he goes on a Wednesday night, as well as swimming, as well as on a Sunday, so we'll have to see how that pans out! That might take up a bit too much time. And what does Josh do on a weekend? He's much more with his mates now, going to town or they'll just do

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Ok that makes sense. Is there anything then that you do for your Dad? We've talked a lot about what he does for you, but is there anything that you do for your Dad?

Billy: Like my, like I out stuff on his bed, he gave me some clothes to take up. And I ask him if there's any jobs.

I: Yeah?

Billy: Yeah I sometimes help him and sometimes don't.

I: Do you do those jobs because you want to or because you have to?

Billy: It's not, sometimes cos I want to and sometimes cos I have to. (R14 Family Values) Billy is beginning to assimilate the values being embedded in him by practices of family life. Though his oscillates in his positionality between compliance and non-compliance.

Can you think about, maybe then, what will happen when your dad is old?

Billy: I'd look after him.

I: You'd look after him. Do you think your brothers will as well?

Billy: Yeah.

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that I've grown into and got better at, but also I've noticed more reward as the children have gotten bigger. (R20 Family Values)

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their own thing and we're here, you know, just to let them in or not, answer the door really. Yeah and then Sunday night we just have tea together and then it's bath, bed, oh tele, not so much tele really. It's a bit rubbish. We don't have things like Netflix, or Lovefilm or Sky, so it's basic tele or, you know, whatever you can get through the digi-box. They love watching DVD's with us, so we'll all sit down and watch a DVD together.

I: And is that a whole family thing?

Mother One: Yeah, yeah, Billy really doesn't like it if Ben doesn't want to watch the DVD that we do, or Josh says, ugggh, I don't want to watch this, then, Billy says, oh no, I want to be together! Yeah, yeah. SO if it's like Iron Man or Thor then we'll all sit down and watch it, but you know, if I wanted to watch a girly film, it's like, the room just clears. But that is having boys, so, yeah.

I: Do you get much scope for time as a whole family together then?

Mother One: No, no, no, no really no. I mean it will be tea times and I think we're doing that much more actually now and then Sundays and if we all go on holidays. If we all got to Wales together at the weekend, cos Ben really wants to be with his girlfriend and do his thing. Josh wants to do more his thing with his mates and Billy will do more with us, just because he's at the age he is. But I can remember that, sort of, getting to twelve, thirteen, you know, I wanted to be with my friends rather than doing stuff with the rest of my family. (R8 Biology). Even the weekend where there is no work

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I: What sort of things do you think you might have to do to look after him?

Billy: I'll clean his rooms and help him with whatever he's got to do.

I: And, why would you do that?

Billy: Cos I love my Dad. (r16 Family Values) In the future billy perceives that the balance of obligation will tip towards him and his brothers as his Dad will need them to care for him. There is a permanence to the connection between them because of the love Billy feels for Dad. Intersection with Dad as a 'natural parent'.

Billy: This dad, well there's this dad right here. That's more.and this dad, cos, when I was younger he used to take me to work. (R17 Family Values) Dad hasn't always been able to shape work around family life, when Billy was younger, sometimes he had to shape family life around work.

| | | | to impinge upon the time available for being engaged with children is made up of a series of 'intimate intervals' within the wider day wherein individual interests and obligations are negotiated around the practices of intimacy within the home.

"I just remember my Dad working, all the time. Yeah, so he'd be out, we didn't see him much in the morning and then he'd be back gone six and then he did, yeah he was very much into his Masons" (R1 Biology) Dad was always back late. The intrinsic stability here is intimate knowing of Dad, he was reliable in his absences.

Yeah, cos I was thinking that my Dad was very traditional, in terms of, he was out working all the time, but the constancy is probably quite similar to Brendan and how the kids, I'd expect feel about him. But that he does more with them than my Dad did. But then I'm a girl, so maybe that had something to do with it as well. So yeah. Good. (R9 Biology). Stability is constructed as positive

"But if they are very upset and they've been hurt and they are not just angry with each other, or some kind of minor spat or whatever, then, fallen over and hurt their knee or somebody has been unkind to them at school, then yes they probably will come to me just because I'm likely to be there at the time. But I think they'd be equally happy to get comfort from daddy as well, actually, don't think there is a big difference between the two of us." (R15 Family Values) – children's decision making is influenced by the stability of presence. That is, because Mum is there more often they are | |

| | | | likely to go to her for comfort. The practice is routinized rather than naturalised towards Mum or Dad in Rita's perceptions | |

Appendix Seven: Ethics approval

Confirmation of Ethical Review Board approval from the University of Sheffield:
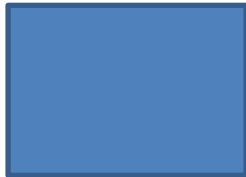
School of Nursing and Midwifery
Barber House Annexe
3a Clarkhouse Road
Sheffield
S10 2LA

7th March 2014

Dear Victoria

Re: ERP 135: Understanding Fathers and Fatherhood

The panel has approved the ethics application with the following suggested, optional amendments (i.e. it is left to the discretion of the applicant whether or not to accept the amendments and, if accepted, the ethics reviewers do not need to see the amendments):

This has the potential to be a very interesting intergenerational research study on fatherhood adding to the limited body of knowledge on normative fathering / fatherhood. The panel was impressed with the application but offer the following advice to assist in improving the way in which the study might develop:

1. That someone other than the researcher be also given as a contact point in case problems arise (e.g. supervisor).
2. That consideration be given to re-wording the introduction to the email recruiting participants. This currently begins with 'Dear Participants' when the person who is being addressed is not yet a participant.
3. That you consider what will happen if a parent refuses to allow their child to be interviewed alone.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Gray
Ethics Administrator
cc   Supervisors – Prof. Penny Curtis, Prof. A James

Appendix Eight: Consent forms

Adults' consent form:

Title of Research Project: **Understanding Fathers and Fatherhood in Everyday Family Life**

Name of Researcher: Victoria Earley

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline at any time.

3. I understand that the interviews I participate in will be recorded and then transcribed before they are deleted.

4. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Lead Researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

One copy of this form will be signed for the participant to retain and one for the researcher to take away.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the project or your consent to participate in it, please contact me in one of the following ways:
E-mail:
Address: Victoria Earley, Barber House, School of Nursing and Midwifery, The University of Sheffield, 387 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2HQ

Children's consent form:

The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The School Of
Nursing
And
Midwifery.

Project Title: **Fathers and Family Life. Your views.**

Name of Researcher: Victoria Earley

1. I have read and understood the information sheet explaining Victoria's project.
    I have had the chance to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that I can stop helping Victoria at any time without giving any
    reason. I also understand that I can choose not to answer any question or
    questions if I decide not to.

3. I understand that what I say will be kept private between me and Victoria. I give
    my permission for members of the research team to see what I say if my name
    is kept private. I understand that no-one will be able to tell who I am from
    anything that Victoria writes or says about the research to others.

4. In understand that the interviews I participate in will be recorded
    and then written up before they are deleted.

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
 Lead Researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

One copy of this form will be signed for you to keep and one for the researcher (Victoria) to keep.

If you have any questions please feel free to ask me in person, or contact me using the below
details:
E-mail:
Address: Victoria Earley, Barber House, School of Nursing and Midwifery, The
                University of Sheffield, 387 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2HQ