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Doing fatherhood, doing family: contemporary paternal perspectives

Sharani Osborn

Doctor of Philosophy (Sociology)

University of Edinburgh

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Declaration

The work in this thesis has been composed by Sharani Osborn. The work is my own and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Abstract

Research in recent decades has identified a conception among fathers, and others, of a widespread qualitative change in the potential nature of fatherhood for men. This widely circulated ideal of contemporary, participatory fatherhood is characterised as new, intimate, involved and productive of new practices of 'masculinity' (Henwood and Procter, 2003). A belief that fathers play a major part in family life and family a major part in fathers' lives may, first, change the nature of the life course transition entailed in becoming a father. Second, 'new' fatherhood is new in that it is distinguished from a model of authoritarian distance associated with 'traditional' fatherhood. What is new is that the primary focus of fatherhood is intimate relationships with children. Third, intimate relationships are generated through fathers' involvement in family life alongside mothers in a more equitable sharing of the responsibilities of parenting. Finally, as distinctions between maternal and paternal are blurred, some of the lines between 'masculine' and 'not-masculine' are redrawn. These aspects which the ideal of 'new' fatherhood constructs as arenas of change correspond to the domains in relation to which diversity among contemporary fathers are explored in this thesis.

Accounts of becoming and being fathers were generated in semi-structured qualitative interviews with a diverse sample of 31 fathers. The first dimension of fatherhood analysed is the place of visions of family and fatherhood in the process of becoming a father. Participants' situated their orientation to fatherhood in the life course and in the partner relationship. In examining how participants construct family's needs and parents' responsibilities, I argue that imagined and lived family relationships are significant for men's orientations to fatherhood, for their attitude to having further children and for evaluating the resources, material and otherwise, for doing so. The second dimension considered is intergenerational legacies. Participants with different experiences of the father-child relationship engage with their parenting heritage and characterise the legacy they would like to pass on. Connections and breaks with the previous generation of fathers are understood in

terms of parent-child relationships, biographical narratives and the relational and discursive resources and constraints of the present. The relation of fatherhood to motherhood is the third dimension explored, through analysis of the different ways in which participants in couples construct, first, the relation between their own practice and their partner's in the parenting partnership and, second, the relation between caregiving, provision, paid work and career in their own practice. I argue that fathers' practice is worked through in the lived relationship with their partner, in terms of the division of labour and responsibilities and in the negotiation of similarity and difference, equality and authority, and with reference to a range of discursive resources. Many fathers seek to balance their commitments to the different dimensions of fatherhood in relation to paid work, but in other dimensions of personal life. The fourth aspect of the analysis examines accounts where fathers speak of co-existing contradictory orientations, to freedom and commitment, for example, and moments of ambivalence in relation to the normative articulations of 'masculinity' and fatherhood.

On the basis of this four-fold analysis of diversity in contemporary multi-dimensional fatherhood, I argue for a plural focus on the practices of doing family, doing fatherhood and un/doing gender makes conceptual space for engaging critically with the diverse practices through which fathers sustain the relationships and fulfil the responsibilities of multi-dimensional fatherhood.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores multi-dimensional fatherhood with a sample of 31 fathers in different family types and with different ways of organising paid work and family work. It considers four dimensions in turn: where fatherhood fits in the life course for different men, and the process of becoming a father; the way fathers understand their heritage from their parents, and how they think about the heritage they will pass on to their child(ren); how fathers talk about motherhood and fatherhood in describing the parenting partnership, and how the different elements of fatherhood, such as caregiving, and provision, are combined in their own way of doing fatherhood; and ways in which being in a family has affected fathers' personal life, and how fatherhood and understandings of masculinity are aligned or diverge in different situations at different times. Finally, the thesis argues that how fathers understand family is very significant for how they understand fatherhood and how fatherhood fits into their life, and that gender relations between men and women are important to both. It also argues that thinking about family, fatherhood and gender offers a way of thinking about the variation in levels of involvement and caring among fathers, one which is also able to recognise and engage with diverse forms of commitment to relationship and feelings of responsibility, to children and partners, expressed by contemporary fathers in different life situations.

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Introduction to the Thesis

Work from a range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology and social policy, and perspectives, including feminist, masculinity studies and post-structuralism, has addressed social conditions and constructions of fatherhood and the embodied experience of fathers (Featherstone, 2009). Such research takes place within the ongoing contemporary critique of the normative assumption of the hetero-sexual, nuclear family which has underpinned much theory and research about fathers since family structures were firmly established as an object of study by the structural functionalists of the 1950s (Morgan, 1996, Smart, 2007). The enlarging of the domain 'family' and, to a more limited extent, 'fatherhood', to include social fatherhood, for example, is in part a response to diversity in family formation and family forms encountered in everyday life and measured in large-scale demographic surveys (Featherstone, 2009, pp.19-26). For example, in the UK, both the proportion of births to unmarried parents and the number of dependent children living in cohabiting couple households has increased in recent decades, although most still live in married couple households. The number of children in lone parent families has been relatively stable over the last decade, but the proportion of men among lone parents has increased to 9% and of men among people looking after children/home to 10% (ONS, 2014).

Furthermore, social and economic change affects the organisation of households, and the relation between fathers' involvement in paid work and family work. Such changes include the increase in women's participation in education and the labour market, the restructuring of Western economies away from manufacturing and towards service industries, with the associated decline in traditional avenues of employment for working-class men and the increase in white collar employment, on the one hand, and low-skill, low-pay, insecure work in sectors such as retail and hospitality on the other. In both of the latter women are strongly represented. Deregulation of the labour and financial markets has led to increasing demands on

employees to be flexible and specialised within the on-going restructuring of the global economy with consequences for class inequality as well as gender relations. In a 2010 review of work and family research in the US between 2000-2010, Bianchi and Milkie cited time use research which demonstrated that, while fathers still spent more time in paid work than mothers and mothers more time in childcare than fathers, the gap in respect of each had narrowed. Similarly, in most European countries there is a long-term trend of women's increasing hours in paid work, partially offset by higher proportions of women than men in part-time work (Hølter, 2007, pp.427-8; ONS, 2013). The UK labour market is characterised by high levels of maternal part-time employment, long full-time working hours, and high levels of reported work-life conflict (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). The trends of gradual, limited convergence between mothers' and fathers' family labour, uneven change in men's investment in family life, and the intensification of the division between families more and less advantaged in the labour market have broadly continued through the last two decades (Coltrane, 1995; Bianchi and Milkie, 2010).

The implications of social and economic change (as well as the measurement of change) have been highly contested in public, political and academic debates about the consequences for personal biographies, inter-personal relationships and family or social cohesion. The enlarging of the domain 'family', is also a consequence of the theoretical attention to diversity and multiplicity in human experience and to varied and multiple relations of power, in the work within, for example, feminist scholarship (Jamieson, 1998; Smart and Neale, 1999), masculinity studies (Connell, 1995; Whitehead, 2002), and family research drawing on poststructuralist frameworks (Lawler, 2000; Wallbank, 2001). Failures to acknowledge diversity in families and among fathers were manifest in endorsements of what Silverstein and Auerbach (1999) termed the 'essential father' in works with titles such as *Life without fathers: Compelling new evidence that fatherhood and marriage are indispensable for the good of children and society* (Popenoe, 1996) and *Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem* (Blankenhorn 1996). That fathers need be present and that one caregiver need be a man is refuted by Silverstein and Auerbach's research with

families of different configurations and confirmed by research where the conflation of gender with other family structure variables was avoided, for example, by comparing heterosexual and lesbian two-parent families (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010). Yet, Silverstein and Auerbach's work, as does much other research, also affirms that fathers as well as mothers are able to provide the positive, consistent relationship with at least one caregiving parental figure which a child needs, and that the additional resources and support provided by a second caregiver may also contribute to children's lives.

Attention to diversity is attention to diversification in forms of relationship rather than to the disintegration of social ties. In the context of engaging with proclamations of crisis and with the individualisation thesis, family and relationship research has emphasised people's capacity to relate to others, and others' choices, on the basis of 'a contextualised morality' (Brannen *et al*, 2004, p.114) as 'energetic moral actors, embedded in the webs of values of personal relationships, working to sustain the commitments that matter to them' (Williams, 2004, p.41). Discussions of the decline of relevance of 'the family', on the one hand, and whether fatherhood is 'in crisis' and/or 'new', on the other, have both been concerned with the relation of present to past forms in the context of wider legal, social and discursive changes. From the perspective which sees the family as in decline and social ties as increasingly uncertain, fathers in the past have been cast as more responsible on the basis that a higher proportion of childbearing occurred within marriage, fewer families were affected by divorce, and men's commitment to breadwinning was reinforced by strong cultural norms. From the perspective which endorses the involvement of fathers in multiple dimensions of family life, the 'breadwinner model', only ever realised by a small proportion of families with sufficient means, offered too narrow criteria for paternal responsibility.

Research in recent decades has identified a widespread perception among fathers, and others, of a qualitative change in the potential nature of fatherhood for men. Longitudinal research with men in the process of becoming fathers, interviewed

before and after the birth of their first child, found that contemporary fathers drew on a discourse of a 'new' model of the father's expanded place in family life and of a newly expanded place for children in fathers' lives. Henwood and Procter (2003) remark on the striking consistency with which the men in their heterogeneous UK-based sample were able to, in pre-birth interviews, identify a set of characteristics of what it meant to be a good father in qualitatively 'new' ways. Good fathers are expected

> to be present in the home and involved in their children's lives, to keep contact with and be sensitive to their child's needs (including being able to put the child's needs before their own), to value family time (e.g. above work and leisure) and generally be part of family life. [...] Good fathers are described as being involved in the routine care or nurturing of their child, and as being understanding, approachable and supportive. [...] Good fathers are also depicted as actively participating in domestic life, as having shared responsibilities and roles, and generally cooperating with their partner in the home. (Henwood and Procter, 2003, p. 343)

Furthermore, involved fatherhood is both an alternative to stereotypical macho masculinity and a means of realising a more emotionally open and relationally connected masculinity (2003, pp.343-344).

A unitary portrayal of contemporary fathering practice is not possible, and even more so across diverse social and ethnic groups, but the extent to which diverse practice is characterised by fathers in shared language which draws on the ideals of contemporary fatherhood is notable. One concern of recent research has been an evaluation of the match between ideals or representations of contemporary fatherhood and the practice of fathers and a critique of the extent to which assumptions or claims of change in fathers' practice ignore continuities in gendered inequalities and some men's oppressive or violent relationships with women. It is in the valuing of relationship that the greatest consistency among fathers has been found. Researchers have found greater diversity in the interpretation and application of what it means to share responsibilities, and the related re-configuration of gender relations in family households. The co-existence of change

and continuity in constraints and opportunities around partnership, fatherhood, motherhood and paid work might be expected to drive a diversification in the aspirations of fathers and mothers and in ways of doing family and doing fatherhood. The dimensions of fatherhood which are constructed as arenas of change in discourses of new, intimate, involved fatherhood suggest different domains in which some of the diversity in understandings and practice of fatherhood among contemporary fathers might be explored.

My research aimed to explore fathers' perspectives on the meaning and practice of fatherhood, both in terms of family relationships and responsibilities and, also, in terms of the place given to family and fatherhood in accounts of the life course and the relation between life dimensions. The purposes of the research evolved during the research process. The early focus on the link between orientations of family formation and the experience of fatherhood incorporated concerns with the life course, fathers' understandings of the meaning of family and fatherhood, intergenerationality, and the importance of the partner relationship and gender relations, themes which remain the core of the thesis. However, as engagement with the literature continued, and as the analysis developed, men's family formation came to be framed in terms of family practices, and integrated within a broader analysis of participants' accounts of becoming fathers and of fatherhood in terms of doing family and doing fatherhood. The link between fertility and fatherhood was best understood through the link with family practices and men's understandings of the interconnected relationships and responsibilities of family life. Thus, this thesis aims to explore the interconnection of relationships and responsibilities in the understandings and practice of fatherhood across aspects of different dimensions of fatherhood - becoming a father and family formation, the parent-child relationship, the parenting partnership and men's position in relation to constructions of fatherhood and masculinity - with fathers in different situations in respect of the organisation of labour, family type and socio-economic status. In this way, two aspects of diversity, orientations and situation, are explored in relation to paternal perspectives on contemporary fatherhood.

To the extent that there are diverse ways of organising family households and an expanded repertoire for doing fatherhood notionally available in Western societies, reflecting on their situation and practice involved fathers in working through the implications of change and continuity in family practices. Reflections on the relationships and responsibilities of fatherhood, participants' 'working through' is dynamic and relational and engages with a set of relevant reference points, including elements of the contemporary ideals of 'new', 'intimate', 'involved' fatherhood. This widely circulated ideal of contemporary fatherhood is characterised as new, intimate (Dermott, 2008), involved and productive of new practices of 'masculinity' (Henwood and Procter, 2003). A belief that fathers are more salient in family life and family in father's lives may change the nature of the life course transition entailed in becoming a father. *New* fatherhood is new in that it is distinguished from a traditional model of fatherhood associated with previous generations. What is new is that the primary focus of fatherhood is *intimate* relationships with children. Intimate relationships are generated through fathers' *involvement* in family life alongside mothers in a more equitable sharing of responsibilities of parenting. Finally, as distinctions between maternal and paternal are blurred, some of the lines between 'masculine' and 'not-masculine' are redrawn. Fatherhood, then, can be conceived of as multi-dimensional. Fathers' lives are also multi-dimensional and not completely co-extensive with their practice or self-identity as fathers.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis examines the relationship between these dimensions, including points of tension between them, and between fathers' and mothers' practice, in fathers' accounts of becoming and being fathers. Accounts were generated with participants in semi-structured qualitative interviews with a sample of 31 fathers resident in a city in Scotland. The sample was diverse in age, socio-economic status, family structure and household organisation. In an iterative process of moving between making sense of fathers' individual accounts, exploring the scope of and diversity in the data as a whole and engaging with substantive literature and theoretical writing,

an analysis developed which was structured on the one hand by consideration of different dimensions, and particularly the different forms of relationality, of fatherhood and on the other by the exploration of the diversity within dimensions. The dimensions of fatherhood structure the thesis. The analysis chapters explore: first, understandings of family and fatherhood in the process of becoming a father; second, the parent-child relationship across generations; third, the relation of fatherhood and motherhood in fathers' construction of the parenting partnership and the configuration of paid work and family work in their practice of fatherhood; and, fourth, ambivalence and balance in relation to fatherhood and 'masculinity'.

Chapter 1, the Literature Review, in accordance with the conceptualisation of fatherhood as multi-dimensional, draws on studies from extensive fields of research, and on quantitative and qualitative analyses, selected on the basis of the ways in which they contribute to understandings of or debates around the dimensions of fatherhood under consideration in this thesis. In addition to research with fathers, and studies of the practice of fathers as parents within the division of family labour, I consider the intersections of a concern with fathers with research in the field of fertility and family formation, including debates in respect of the place of the individualisation thesis or more contextual approaches to understanding demographic change, and men's contribution to fertility processes. I also discuss different aspects of research with a focus on intergenerationality, in terms of how the relation between fatherhood in different generations is constructed and the transmission of family and parenting practices, but also processes of reproduction of social categories such as class and gender in families. Research examining the constitution of fatherhood and the relation to motherhood, and thus the constitution of gender, through practices such as the division of paid and unpaid labour and roles in relation to children, is reviewed. The research reviewed is in the areas of the transition to parenthood, predominant and alternative arrangements of paid and unpaid work between couples, as well as research with lone and non-resident fathers in relation to the dimensions of fatherhood and the construction of a different relation between motherhood and fatherhood.

Chapter 2, Methodology: researching with fathers, sets out how the qualitative aims of the research, appropriate to the concern with fathers understandings of fatherhood and family and accounts of family formation and fatherhood in the life course, were pursued through in depth, semi-structured, face to face interviews with a diverse sample of 31 fathers.   A range of recruitment strategies led to a sample diverse in terms of age, socio-economic status, relation to the labour market, family structure and household organisation. A multi-stage interview design was developed to allow for the build-up of data about current context and life course before moving to more systematically thematic question. This design also allowed the interview to address the research questions in a range of ways and from different angles at different stages. Following transcription, the analysis incorporated steps to explore the chronological, narrative and thematic elements of each account in turn and then to facilitate a context-rich thematic comparison across participants' accounts. The chapter concludes with reflections on the implications for the research of methods used and of my social location, biography and intellectual interests for the research process.

In Chapter 3, Relationship/responsibility: visions and investments in accounts of becoming a father, I explore the place of expectations of fatherhood and beliefs about, and visions of what family life should be, in participants' accounts of the life course and the process of becoming a father. I will consider how participants situate fatherhood in re-constructing intentions and events, both its salience, the salience of their partner's orientations to having children, and how fatherhood related to other life dimensions, such as employment and partnership, through the life course. I will also consider how participants' represented desirable and acceptable conditions for having children, in relation to first and further children, and how these might represent understandings of a family's needs and parents' responsibilities. Further to this end, I will consider the nature of participants' visions of family life, including the place of parent-child relationships and parental responsibilities, and family size. I will argue that imagined and lived relationships, for participants and their partners, are significant for orientations to fatherhood, for

their attitude to having further children and for evaluating the resources, material and otherwise, for doing so.

Chapter 4, Parent/child: a doubled perspective on the legacy of parenting, analyses how participants' position their understanding of fatherhood and family life in relation to their own experience as a child. When men become fathers they come to occupy a dual position in the parent-child relation, as child of their parents and parent to their child. I explore in this chapter how fathers construct the relation between the past of their childhood and their parenting, parenting focused both on the present and on the connection between the present and their children's future. I consider how participants' with different experiences of the father-child relationship engage with the parenting heritage passed on to them, and how they characterise the legacy they would like to pass on to their children. I argue that the significance of connections and breaks with the previous generation of fathers should be understood in terms of parent-child relationships, biographical narratives and the relational and discursive resources and constraints of the present. Furthermore, fathers' understanding of the nature of their responsibility to the child's future self is informed by their own negotiated, evolving construction of the relationship between the present moment of their parenting and their own past as a child.

In Chapter 5, Similarity/difference: constructing the relation of fatherhood to motherhood, I consider fathers' part in family life, and the part of family in fathers' lives, recurrent concerns in different forms in research with fathers. In the first of two sections I analyse how participants in couples construct the relation between motherhood and fatherhood and between their own practice and their partner's in the parenting partnership. The analysis attends to references to alignment, and how it is achieved, but also to references to tension or to a discrepancy between desired and realised roles. In relation to the latter I will consider how these might articulate with roles and responsibilities valued in 'traditional' and 'new' models of fatherhood, but also how the relation between desired and realised practice is worked out within lived interpersonal relationships. Second, in relation to a sample

with diverse household organisations and including fathers employed full-time, part-time, unemployed and engaged in full-time caregiving, I examine how participants' construct the relation between caregiving, provision, paid work and career in their practice. I also consider the implications for paid work and career, through adaptation or deferral, for example, of participants' concerns for intimate relationship with children and sharing care and parenting responsibilities with mothers. Again, I will note the different points of reconciliation and tension in the accounts of participants, in considering the remit, rewards and risks of different ways of doing fatherhood.

Chapter 6, Balance/ambivalence: plural positions in relation to fatherhood and masculinity, considers the significance of ambivalence in relation to fatherhood and masculinity. Fathers' subjectivity is conceptualised as capable of plural identifications, and at the intersection of multiple discursively constituted meanings. Many fathers seek to balance their commitments to the different dimensions of fatherhood and the different dimensions of their lives. I will suggest that where it is difficult to achieve a balance between commitments, co-existing competing desires may intensify the experience of ambivalence in men's relation to the responsibilities of fatherhood and family. Correspondingly, the chapter argues that fathers whose practice of fatherhood crosses 'traditional' gender distinctions may experience moments of disorientation in their relation to normative articulations of 'masculinity' and fatherhood, such as the model of provider fatherhood, which construct fatherhood as distinct from motherhood. In respect of understanding this relation to norms of masculinity, I engage with debate over the account of plural masculinities in the work of Connell (1995) and colleagues.

The discussion and conclusion, Chapter 7, brings together this four-fold analysis of diversity in contemporary multi-dimensional fatherhood. It explores how an understanding of fatherhood might recognise the ways fathers' paternal perspectives construct and move recurrently and easily between a focus on the part they play in family life and a focus on fatherhood and the part family plays in their

life. Thus, a father's responsibility to foster a personal relationship with their child, privileged in participants' accounts, sits within a broad conceptualisation of paternal responsibility within families. Engaging in more detail with the conceptualisations of family practices, personal life and doing gender, the chapter argues that thinking about fathers as doing family as well as fatherhood makes conceptual space for engaging critically with the diverse means by which fathers meet their multiple commitments in collaboration with the mothers of their children, families and/or the state. An approach which recognises that men might meet responsibilities to children and partners in diverse ways must, of course, critically engage with theorisations of gender and with the forms of inequity and risk faced by women in different forms of partnership. It must also recognise the risks to men, single fathers, caregiving fathers or part-time employees, as well as women, of reduced or suspended participation in the labour market. The links between practices and gender may be loosened or undone, and an element in the relation between men and women re-gendered in reciprocal or hierarchical ways.

The substantive literature relevant to the study of diversity in the practice of multi-dimensional fatherhood is reviewed in the next chapter.

Chapter 1   Literature Review

Introduction

The focus of the research is fathers' perspectives on the meaning and experience of fatherhood, and reflections on their practice across multiple dimensions of fatherhood. As noted in the Introduction, the thesis aims to do so through an exploration of dimensions of fatherhood which are positioned as arenas of change in contemporary ideals of fatherhood. This is because fathers' practice in these dimensions, as well as the configuration of fathers' practice, are a source of diversity among fathers. From the wealth of recent social scientific research with fathers, I discuss in this chapter a selection of works which are relevant to the different dimensions, as set out below, but also draw on research in the areas of fertility and intergenerationality, and on broader research in the field of family and relationships.

Diversity among fathers is considered in this thesis, and in this review of relevant research literature, with regard to four aspects of fatherhood. First, understandings of the part to be played by fathers in family life inform how fathers envisage family life and the rewards, responsibilities and relationships of fatherhood, both before and in the process of becoming a father. In Section 1 of this review I will discuss theories of how people come to be parents and research examining fathers' role in family formation and having children. Second, new, intimate, involved fatherhood is 'new' in that it is distinguished from a traditional model of fatherhood associated with previous generations. What is understood to be new is the primary focus on intimate relationships with children. In Section 2 of the review a selection of research on how men understand change and continuity between generations in respect of fatherhood and parenting is discussed, as well as studies of different ways in which parents, and particularly fathers, pass on a legacy to children through the parent-child relationship. Third, intimate relationships between fathers and children are generated through another aspect of what is considered new,

father's involvement in family life alongside mothers in a more equitable sharing of the responsibilities of parenting. Continuity as well as change and diversity in the division of labour, and in the construction of the relation between motherhood and fatherhood, are themes of research reviewed in Section 3. That body of research examines conventionally gendered and alternative organisations of participation in and responsibility for caring and providing. Finally, as distinctions between maternal and paternal are blurred, some of the lines between 'masculine' and 'not-masculine' are redrawn for fathers. The links between different forms of practice and fathers' relation to constructions of masculinity are considered in Section 4.

Section 1   Fertility and becoming a father

In this section I engage with debates as to the value of understanding fertility behaviour and family change according to the terms of the individualisation thesis. I advocate an approach which extends theoretical understandings of the importance of relationality in social life, characteristic of much work in the field of family and relationships research, to behaviour related to fertility. I then go on to discuss population research and sociological analyses which examines men's contribution to fertility and family formation which, furthermore, supports this position.

Individualisation

The search for explanations of fertility behaviour in Europe has been undertaken in the context of widespread below-replacement fertility and increasing postponement, in comparison with the post-WWII period, of childbearing. In Scotland, for example, the number of births in 2002 was the lowest on record, although the significance for trends in completed family size was debated (MacInnes and Pérez Diaz, 2007) and the number of births has since increased each year to 2012. The significance of postponement for fertility levels, much studied, lies in the extent to which completed family sizes are reduced due to a contraction in the childbearing period. The factors in postponement, also much studied and summarised here by Mills *et al* (2011), include: the use of contraceptive technology (in Northern and Western Europe); time spent in higher education; women's labour force

participation; shifts in norms and values; discrepancies in gender equity at societal, household and individual levels; multiple, unstable and delayed partnership formation; and housing market conditions and economic uncertainty. These factors represent changes in conditions, opportunities and decisions, particularly for women, which have in turn raised the question of the place of individual choice and biography in fertility, as in family and relational life. Consideration of the significance of these changes has also extended the discussion to men's participation in fertility outcomes.

Irwin (2000) identified a convergence of some sociological and some population research scholarship on individualisation theory as an explanation of demographic change, and of its consequences for family and other relationships, on the one hand, and as explanation of decline in fertility and changes in family formation processes, on the other. The individualisation thesis is an account of the consequences for the individual's relation to the social of the social changes and life conditions generated in the transition from modernity to reflexive modernity. From the perspective of individualisation theory, greater individual freedom from traditional social mores and greater economic and employment inequality and insecurity are mutually reinforced in a dynamic which drives individuals to take responsibility for the construction of their biography, choice by (responsible, risk-averse) choice (Irwin, 2000).

There is a notable divergence in the vision of relationships in much of the work of Giddens and Beck, the two most prominent theorists of individualisation. The optimism of Giddens' vision, in *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), of rational, reflexive, autonomous individuals freely entering into pure relationships of confluent love to enjoy plastic sexuality for so long as is satisfying to both parties, seems somewhat incoherent given the barriers he identifies. Much of what he claims for the future is reliant on widespread change in the gender practices of men, about whose 'compulsive' sexuality, violence and emotional distance he is ultimately pessimistic (1992, p.3). Beck and Beck-Gersheim (1995, 2002) offer a more

pessimistic vision of interpersonal relationships and family life as increasingly fragile. Fragility is due to both the mix of uncertainty and opportunity inhabiting people's lives in late modern, 'risk' society and to people's strategies of self-protection deployed in the management of these risks in personal as well as public domains. Constraints on individualised biographies are located not in traditional hierarchies but in an individualised relation to the labour market and government institutions and in the necessity to make choices within the dense regulations of contemporary society and the norms of media, advertising and consumption. In discussing fertility as a planning project, for example, Beck-Gersheim describes the requirement in the contemporary concepts of 'family planning' and 'responsible parenthood' for the transition to parenthood to involve long-term consideration and calculation in relation to relationship stability, income, housing, career progression (2005, p.53). 'Individualisation expands the radius of people's lives, their leeway for action and choice, but certainly does not mean 'a logic of unrestricted juggling in almost free space' (Beck-Gersheim, 2005, p.43). Despite these qualifications, many researchers have rejected Beck and Beck-Gersheim's account, or at least what they see as its implications for relational life, as too sweeping, speculative and pessimistic (Charles *et al*, 2008; Williams, 2004).

Smart, in her discussion of researchers' engagement with the individualisation thesis as the 'big idea' to be embraced or resisted in the field of family life research for a time, quotes Geertz on new ideas.

> After we have become familiar with the new idea […] our expectations are brought more into balance with its actual uses […] thinkers settle down after a while to the problems the idea has really generated. They try to apply it and extend it where it applies and where it is capable of extension; and they desist where it does not apply or cannot be extended.' (2000, pp.3-4, cited in Smart, 2007, p. 17)

Smart goes on to discuss the extent to which qualitative researchers in the field of families, relationships, kinship and friendship networks have, for the large part, 'desisted' due to a 'lack of congruence' between individualisation theorists'

depictions of family life and those produced out of 'more closely specified' studies (2007, p.17). Qualitative research in the field of family and relationships which engages with the individualisation thesis has emphasised the continuity of relatedness and embeddedness in people's lives, but also the oppressive character of intimate relationships for many (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Charles *et al*, 2008; Jamieson, 1998; Smart and Neale, 1999; Williams, 2004), providing a counterweight to both the pessimism of Beck and Beck-Gersheim and the incoherent optimism of Giddens noted above. Family and relationship researchers have, however, noted the incorporation of elements of the 'do-it-yourself biography' in people's accounts, which attest to the prevalence of a discourse of individual responsibility and self-realisation which is dependent on a silence as to structural supports for, or constraints on, opportunities (Morgan, 1999; Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Hockey, 2009) and associated with neo-liberal political discourse (Stevenson et al, 2011).

By contrast, among some population researchers studying fertility patterns, there is still much 'application' and 'extension' of the idea of the individualised life course. Conceiving of the character of social change in terms of reflexive modernisation, with the corresponding conceptualisation of the subject in terms of individualisation, corresponds in turn with a model of fertility behaviour as decision-making about self-fulfilment (Billari *et al*, 2004, p.77). Van de Kaa, for example, characterises fertility outcomes in reflexive modern societies as primarily the result of 'self-interrogation' along the following lines: 'Will my life, and the relationship with my partner, be enriched if I interrupt contraception and use my basic right to have a child, or an additional child, now?' (van de Kaa in Billari *et al*, 2004, p.77). McDonald (2000, 2006) sees the consequences for fertility of reflexive modernity in women's increasing pursuit of autonomy, through opportunities becoming available in education and employment, alongside an increasing aversion to bearing the risks to autonomy entailed in motherhood. McDonald's focus on individual women's either/or choices motivated by risk aversion is the shadow to van de Kaa's more sunny focus on self-fulfilment, which erases the ambivalence and loss potentially arising from incompatible desires or goals. However, neither

approach facilitates a consideration of the interdependence and processes of negotiation through which not only decisions, but also relationships, are made.

Irwin (2000) argues for sociological attention to how the personal relationships which are the context for fertility are socially situated. She offers an alternative focus for analysis of demographic change: changing patterns of association and interdependence between men and women and between generations. She criticises the retrospective construction of history as unfolding towards greater gender equality and low fertility, as well as the loss, through aggregation of data, of the context in which behaviour is rational. However, some population research into fertility behaviours is attentive to the complex structuring of the contexts in which fertility and family formation choices are made and realised. Hobcraft (2006) conceptualises fertility not in terms of events but as a process, within the life course, of becoming parents. It is, therefore, related to the other dimensions of an individual's life and parents' life together which are lived out within the macro-level context. For Hobcraft, the rationality of judgements is bounded and choices are contextualised.

> The process of becoming and of being a parent is also bound up with a series of legacies of the past for both parents and is subject to the constraints of reproductive biology, personality and emotions, genes, the means of control over reproduction, ideas, and interpersonal and institutional contexts. (Hobcraft, 2006, p.161)

Hobcraft is one of a number of advocates of multi-disciplinarity in population research (2006, p.154, see also Lesthaeghe, 1998). It is worth noting, however, that where population research is committed to theories such as individual rational choice and purposive instrumental behaviour (for example, in the Generation and Gender Surveys' use of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (Vikat *et al*, 2007, pp.391,413-4) there are limits to the incorporation of extra-disciplinary insights. Such theoretical models do not easily incorporate the spectrum of planned-unplanned conception, or respond to the implications of sociological research as to the iterative constitution of the self and the social in interaction (Finch and Mason,

1991). They also marginalise, as inaccessible or unreliable, subjects' reconstructions of the reasoning central to rational theories of action.

In envisaging family life, and in decision-making about having children, men and women may pause on the threshold of the everyday regularities of family life with children. However, visions and decisions are likely to be embedded in relational contexts and material conditions, and relate to everyday family life beyond the 'moments' of decision or conception or birth. Decisions about the organisation of caregiving and paid work, for example, in anticipation of having a child, are also decisions about the practices through which family life will be constituted. The place of fatherhood in the life course before men become fathers, the focus of Chapter 3, has received limited attention from qualitative research in the field of families and relationships, as noted by exceptions, Irwin (2000) and Jamieson *et al* (2010). Men's envisioning of family relationships, and their expectations of the responsibilities of fatherhood, are significant for their orientations and decisions in respect of becoming and being fathers. This significance, and the reciprocal relevance of ideals and practices and of family formation and family life, provide a rationale for bringing men's fertility behaviour within the scope of family practices, and for bringing the perspective of family and relationship research to bear on men's contribution to fertility in the life course.

Men, fertility and fatherhood

Jamieson *et al*, emphasise the relational, discursive and material dimensions of fertility decisions for men as well as women.

> If having a child is an active male choice, it is obviously not an isolated individual one since a woman must be involved, but it also carries much more social baggage than this dyadic negotiation. Clearly, men's partnering and fertility behaviours, as well as women's, are framed by interaction with locally, nationally and globally circulating normative understandings of appropriate life trajectories as a man or woman as well as the material constraints of labour market, housing and employment conditions. (Jamieson *et al*, 2010, p.467)

To take the first element mentioned in this quote, research affirms the importance of partnership, and partners' influence, in whether, when, how and how often men become fathers. While men are more likely to live alone than women (Jamieson, *et al* 2009) they are also more likely to re-partner after separation (Lampard and Peggs, 1999), and re-partnering is associated with an increase in expected fertility for men (Iacovou and Patrício Tavares, 2011). Men's partners may influence the orientation to fatherhood and, even more, the timing of men's family formation. Hockey (2009) identifies a tension, among some couples without children, between the woman's consciousness of a biologically-framed window for childbearing and the man's reluctance to exchange freedoms associated with youth for the responsibilities of adulthood (Hockey, 2009, p.231). Hockey identifies a pattern 'whereby young women find ways of drawing male partners into a shared, standardised and chronologised life course' (2009, p.238).

They may not always be successful in doing so. In research with voluntarily childfree couples in Australia, Carmichael and Whittaker (2007) found indications that male childlessness by choice played a prominent role in female childlessness by circumstance. In respect of the postponement identified as a factor in declining fertility rates, men have been found to contribute to later childbearing through their part in later partnering (Jamieson *et al*, 2010; Parr, 2010). Others have argued that gendered inequalities which benefit men act as a disincentive to women's childbearing (McDonald, 2000, 2006; Puur *et al*, 2008; Miettinen *et al*, 2011). Men may also influence couple intentions in relation to family size within partnerships. Iacovou and Patrício Tavares found that intended family size tended to converge in UK couples (2011, p.110). The force of the 'two-child norm' could be seen in that most change in intentions was towards having two children (2011, p.94) and least alignment of men with women's desire for another child was seen in situations where mothers of two wanted another child (Berrington, 2004, see also Graham, 2007). Nevertheless, it is the case that each partner, and partners together, are located within wider social networks. The degree to which these networks are

child-rich or child-free influences orientations to and decisions around having children for men (Jamieson *et al*, 2010) and couples (Keim, 2011).

In relation to material constraints on fertility intentions, both socio-historical and socio-economic context in general (Brannen *et al*, 2004), and working conditions and employment status in particular (Parr, 2010) are relevant for men. These factors influence variation in orientation to, and opportunities for, partnership and family formation at various stages of the life course. Analyses of intentions in respect of family size have also considered the interaction of socio-economic situation with the normative understandings of the appropriate place of family formation in the life course. Dey and Wasoff (2010) analysed the characteristics and fertility intentions of parents in Scotland. They found, assuming fertility intentions indicated in the survey were robust, that the timing to first birth is significant in people achieving or not achieving their ideal family size. They link the decline in average family size to the compression of the childbearing period (2010, p.982) and opportunity costs of having children (2010, p.935) among those men and women who pursue higher education and career establishment before having children. Those with good qualifications, jobs and incomes are better placed than others to cope with the costs of childbearing, but at a price of lower fertility (2010, p.936). Conversely, those who bear children early are penalised (2010, p.937) and likely to have had and continue to have more limited access to education, employment and housing security. The contrast in the benefits and risks of becoming parents 'too early' and 'too late' noted by Dey and Wasoff corresponds to the two areas of policy shaping research on men and fertility. The goal of increasing fertility levels for the population as a whole, on the one hand, and the goal of reducing unintended fertility among disadvantaged groups, on the other, are related to the economic consequences of 'too early' and 'too late' childbearing for the (welfare) state.

The 'risk' of early fatherhood is often subsumed in other risks associated with socio-economic conditions and related structural effects (see Berrington *et al*, 2005). In respect of unintended fertility, qualitative research which explores fertility processes

in the context of socio-economic disadvantage and fathers' perspective provides nuanced accounts of highly contextualised attitudes to 'family planning'. Ross *et al* (2010) report a range of approaches to family formation among young fathers in Scotland, including unexpected and planned conceptions as well as those where couples had 'not planned it but not prevented', but many were committed to sharing family responsibilities with the mother (Ross *et al*, 2010, p.46). Augustine *et al* (2009), writing in a US context, suggest that some disadvantaged fathers experience an unwillingness to actively prevent the fatherhood they desire but of which they cannot justify the active pursuit, due to their circumstances and according to societal and personal ideals. For more advantaged men in relatively stable couple relationships, fatherhood has been described as not a conscious, deliberated choice but 'an inevitable and logical step for them in their relationships and part of their own development as an adult man'; having children was said to be 'a normal thing to do' and 'a natural progression' (Lupton and Barclay, 1997, p.119). Marsiglio *et al* (2004), writing about 'envisioning fatherhood', explore men's 'procreative consciousness' with a socio-economically diverse sample in a US context where 'responsible' fatherhood includes contraception decisions,. They refer to the importance of partners and peers, and to the significance of experiential more than received knowledge, for men's 'procreative consciousness' and actions. They also emphasise the nuances in the planned/unplanned conception spectrum. To return to the issue of the representation of fertility decisions as an active choice, the research discussed above presents a spectrum of intentionality in relation to fertility, recognises the significance of desires, moral norms and the potential for tension between them, and re-casts understandings of choice as contextualised within relationships, the life course and socio-economic situation.

The work of Bernardi *et al* (2008) explores how culturally-mediated understandings of appropriate life trajectories, as well as of the significance of family in aspirations and in the life course, may inform evaluations of material resources and constraints. Their research compared two groups of childless men and women, aged around 30, one in western and one in eastern post-unification Germany. Bernardi *et al*

examined understandings of the conditions for action in comparing orientations to security in two regions with distinct political histories and economic environments. Whereas in western Germany, a plan to build up secure employment, housing and income prior to having children was the general orientation, in the uncertain and economically declining east, people were prepared to pursue their employment goals in tandem with their family goals, so that investments in one's job and private life are pursued in parallel (Bernardi *et al*, 2008, p.307). Furthermore the sequential orientation strongest in the west was associated with expectations of a more highly and traditionally gendered division of labour once children were born, while the orientation to parallel investments characteristic of eastern German participants tended to be combined with a more reciprocal, egalitarian approach to paid and unpaid work between partners.

Thus, Bernardi *et al* identified that a contrast in the possibility for security in domains of employment, housing and partnership and the need to live with uncertainty was associated with distinct understandings of the necessary or desirable conditions for having children. Their analysis of contrasting understandings of the place of parenthood in the life course offers a useful approach to comparing the place of family life in relation to other dimensions of life in men's accounts of becoming fathers, but also of having further children, which is the focus of the first section of Chapter 3. However, the application of the analysis of expected orientations by Bernardi *et al* to the retrospective reflections of men who do have children on the process of family formation required an adaptation and expansion of their categories, which I set out in detail in Chapter 3.

The research reviewed in this section confirms the importance of biographical, cultural and socio-economic contexts in men's contribution to fertility outcomes, but also the importance of partner relationships, on the one hand, and expectations of achieving security in employment and partner relationships, on the other, for men' orientations to becoming fathers. Approaches which position fertility decisions as cost-benefit evaluations within an individualised project of self-

fulfilment fail to take sufficient account of social context, shaped by class and gender relations, or of the different ways in which subjects are embedded within embodied biographies, interpersonal relationships, social networks and wide discursive complexes of meaning. A key aim of this thesis is to take account of these elements, and to bring together a focus on understandings of fatherhood and an attention to ideas about having a family, in exploring how fathers situate their orientation to fatherhood in accounts of the life course. Furthermore, Chapter 3 of this thesis offers an analysis of the place given to visions of family and understandings of fatherhood in narratives of becoming a father of first and subsequent children, including fathers' expectations of the relationships and responsibility involved in fatherhood and family life.

Section 2   Intergenerationality and the parent/child relationship

Contemporary ideals of fatherhood which value paternal involvement in family life, close and caring relationships with children, and more equal sharing of responsibility with partners are understood to be 'new' insofar as they are distinguished from the 'traditional' authoritarian, distant fatherhood associated with previous generations. That many contemporary fathers position themselves, or at least contemporary models of fatherhood, as distinct from their own fathers, or at least traditional fatherhood, is widely documented in the literature (Henwood and Procter, 2003, for example). Where fathers reject the model of their own father it is generally on the basis of their absence, either from the household altogether, or as a consequence of spending time at work to the exclusion of time with family (Daly, 1993), and sometimes excessive corporal punishment (Brownlie, 2006). Thus, the contrast is made between absence in some form and the presence and reliability suggested by the term 'being there' (Miller, 2010; Townsend, 2002), and between authoritarian distance and close relationship.

The intergenerational perspective of fathers is directed towards the future of their children as well as their past as a child. In this section I consider research which examines how fathers construct their relation to their father as a parent or to past

models of fatherhood, as well as research which examines aspects of intergenerational transmission from fathers or parents to children.

That there has been some generational change, and even greater diversification, in the meaning and practice of fatherhood is confirmed in a study of the connections and disconnections between generations of twelve four-generation families. Brannen *et al* (2004) found a reduction from generation to generation in sole earner breadwinning but also a division between work-focused fathers (including 'career men' in professional jobs and 'provider fathers' in low-skilled work) on the one hand and 'family men' or 'child-oriented fathers' on the other which held over three generations. Family men, though providers, emphasised their presence in the family. Child-oriented fathers particularly emphasised relationships with children. A third group consisted of four 'hands-on' fathers who provided high levels of childcare, on a par with their partner. All were of the younger generation born in the 1970s/80s and were unemployed or, in one case, in low-skilled full-time work. Child-oriented and 'hands-on' fathers were clustered in the younger generation. The uneven impact of structural and cultural change relevant to fatherhood, including perhaps the intensification of inequality in educational and employment resources, can be seen in the comparative difficulty accessing material resources through the labour market among the youngest generation of fathers in the research. However, the 'hands-on' fathers had access, in three cases, to a basic level of financial support from the state. All accessed discursive resources in relation to caring fatherhood and gender equality which valorised their time with and care of their children and, thus, the 'personal resources' (Smart 2007, p.107) to which they did have access.

Brannen *et al*'s work is also of relevance to this research in that it explored the nature of intergenerational transmission. They found, with variations, a gendered transferral of resources. Employment opportunities or financial support were transferred primarily between men. Time and care were transferred primarily between women. Some of the variation was shaped by geographical and

occupational mobility. They note that the provision of one resource, such as education or childcare, may lead to a change in another resource, such as altered class position or increased family income. The latter changes may have implications for how one generation positions itself in relation to another. Brannen *et* al (2004) identified four types of intergenerational relation broadly applicable to research with fathers in respect of parenting as discussed below: solidarity between generations, the incorporation of difference into a continuity of practice, differentiation from the previous generation and reparation in respect of what was lacking in the family of origin.

The emphasis on continuity in the first two types of relation, solidarity and incorporation, can be seen in a group of fathers interviewed by Townsend who consistently commented that they had become like their father, finding that they adopted similar positions, in similar words, in respect of chores or music preferences, for example. This 'gave these men a sense of identification with their fathers and with their motivations, and a sense that as they were good fathers, their fathers had been good enough fathers too' (2002, pp.173-4). The emphasis on differentiation and change in the latter two types of relation corresponds to another group who sought to parent differently from their fathers. Nevertheless, these fathers gained understanding of their fathers' behaviour and the challenges he faced from coming to share the structural position of father (2002, pp.175-6).

Relations of differentiation, and of reparation, the effort to undo or transform what has been passed on from the previous generation, identified by Brannen *et al*, demonstrate clearly the 'creative tension between change and continuity, and between processes of reproduction and innovation' (2004, p.178) connected with issues of independence from family and freedom to make one's own life (2004, p.164). Brannen *et al* note some continuity is the product of what Bourdieu termed *habitus*, common-sense behaviour passed on as something taken for granted. However, they also draw on the work of Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame (1997, p.93) who theorised the need of one consciously in receipt of an inheritance to 'act upon

it' in some way. Such a heritor must introduce 'a new element', to re-contextualise or transform what is passed on, in order to be able to take possession of it as 'subject', rather than have that which is passed on position them as the object of an inheritance (Brannen *et al*, 2004, p.179). In acting on an inheritance, fathers both shape and are shaped by narratives in reconstructing the relation of self to others and the present to the past. Writing about interviews with parents where one aspect discussed was parents' memories of being disciplined by their own parents, Brownlie pointed to the intricate layering of relationships between past and present, embodiment and embeddedness,'social time' as well as biographical time in the reconstruction of memories (2006, 5.8).

Subsequent relationships also mediate the significance of memories and fathers' relation to their childhood experience. Quantitative analyses in research examining the intergenerational transmission of parenting found greater discontinuity than continuity between generations of parents. Studies have found a significant but modest effect, accounting for around 15% of variance in parenting (Belsky *et al*, 2009), robust across studies and not confounded by social location, the effect of which was independent (Conger *et al*, 2009). Marital satisfaction and educational attainment mediate the transmission of parenting (Chen *et al*, 2008), refuting the view that parenting behaviours are simply learned. Moderating factors include positive relations with friends and relatives, which supported intergenerational continuity of positive parenting, and close and supportive relationships, with a spouse or a therapist for example, which broke the link between parental mistreatment experienced as a child and parents' mistreatment of children (Belsky *et al*, 2009). In addition to experience of positive relationships and 'generative' ways of relating, Cabrera *et al*'s review cited research identifying that beliefs supporting gender equality, fathers' capacities to relate emotionally and to play a significant role with children, were factors associated with involved parenting among fathers (2000, p.131).

Even where contemporary fathers are appreciative of their fathers, the contemporary norms of authoritative parenting (Maccoby, 1992) and of caring, participative fatherhood may prompt them to seek further models from peer fathers (Masciadrelli *et al*, 2006) or expert knowledge alongside learning through doing in the context of active involvement in their children's lives (Daly *et al*, 2009). Daly (1993) found that, rather than identifying a primary role model for fatherhood, fathers most often spoke of their fathers as a point of reference against which they defined their own parenting values, within an awareness of changed conditions between generations. They referred to drawing on examples of particular behaviours, from mothers, partners and others, to construct what Daly termed 'fragmented models'. They emphasised their own intention to provide a positive model to their own children constructed 'from the values of the present' (1993, p.525). Daly noted that uncertainty and contradiction marked fathers' accounts as they rejected the style of their fathers' parenting but desired its results, such as children's respect for parents. However, men's 'disparate reference points' at least offer the possibility 'to creatively forge new rules for themselves', even if they are not the first generation of fathers to feel they are making fatherhood anew (1993, p.527). Given that the reconstruction of past experience is always dynamic, and bearing in mind Brannen *et al*'s discussion of how fathers might relate to their inheritance by making it their own in some way, the characterisation of fathers' models as fragmented rather than as constructed may connote the loss of something once stable to a greater extent than generally warranted. I engage with these accounts of the process by which fathers relate to their parenting heritage, and accounts of how they construct a parenting practice from the resources of their past and present relationships, in Chapter 4.

Fathers and their children: passing on class, gender and culture

Daly noted men's intention to be a positive model to their children. Some of the research on intergenerational transmission has focused on the parental role in the (re)production of good/bad citizens (Lawler, 2000), class dis/advantage (Lareau, 2000, 2003, Vincent and Ball, 2004) and gender non/conformity (Davies, 2003; Kane,

2006). Such research critically engages with both the social and political injunctions on parents, often mothers in particular, in these domains as well as with the projects of parents themselves, often middle class parents. Classed differences are an important element in diversity. The potential of fathers to support positive and prevent negative outcomes has been one driver of the extensive research on the nature, levels and benefits of father involvement. Although the premises of this project and the significance of father involvement are contested, well-designed studies have demonstrated an association between positive paternal engagement with children and positive outcomes for children (Sarkadi *et al*, 2008). However, research with two-parent lesbian families suggest that the benefits found are largely derived from the presence and resources of a second parent figure. Financial contributions remain a key resource for children (Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004) and fathers' contribution must be situated within reciprocal relationships and the direct and indirect influence of family members on each other (Feinberg, 2003; Stocker *et al*, 2003).

Class divisions in approaches to parenting are shaped by resources available and expectations of children's future opportunities (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). More intensive approaches of the advantaged middle class have been characterised as 'concerted cultivation' in contrast to the 'accomplishment of natural growth' characteristic of less advantaged working class parents (Lareau, 2000, 2003). Class group distinctions in approaches to education and 'cultivation' of cultural capital is confirmed in British research (Vincent and Ball, 2007, p.1070; Irwin and Elley, 2011). Mothers are constructed as primarily responsible for intensive parenting (Wall, 2004); fathers' contribution to development through activities may often be primarily financial (Townsend, 2002). To the extent that middle class men do participate in 'cultivation' parenting, characterised by confident relations with schools and facilitating participation in enrichment activities, for example, their practice is privileged over the less visible, family-oriented involvement of working class men (Gillies, 2009).

Fathers may feel comparable responsibility for their sons and daughters' development in many respects, but some fathers of sons feel a particular responsibility for and pleasure in their achievement of gender (Leaper, 2002; Townsend, 2002). To a greater or lesser extent, according to their understanding of gender and commitments to transmission or transformation of societal norms, mothers and fathers may model different activities, react differentially to behaviour, instruct children in gender labelling and appropriateness and convey a sense of gender-differentiated capabilities. In general, gender differentiation is stronger from fathers and more rigidly enforced for boys (Bussey, 2011). In qualitative research into parents' motivation and intentionality of such gendering processes, Kane (2006) found that parents feel more accountable for the gender competence of their sons than daughters. Mothers promoted conformity with societal norms more for their child's sake and fathers more because their own achievement of masculinity was implicated. For mothers and fathers seeking to transform the gender heritage of their children, the mechanisms identified above are mobilised to question and undo dominant norms (Bussey, 2011). However, they do so within the context of societal gender relations and of the gendered production of subjectivity. Children learn to take up their maleness or femaleness as they learn the discursive practices which position all subjects as male or female within 'the incorrigibility of the male-female binary' (Davies, 2003, p.167). Davies argues, as does Hollway (2006, p.88), that children can be supported through adults around them sustaining the availability of a range of discourses, meanings and speaking positions to facilitate children positioning themselves beyond a mutually exclusive, hierarchical binary (Davies, 2003, p.*xiii*). In Chapter 4, I consider briefly the implications of fathers' perception of the force of norms of masculine behaviour for boys for tensions between the intergenerational transmission of gender competence and intimate father-child relationships in relation to sons.

Smart's (2007) analysis of the transmission of culture through narrative describes both the active appropriation and re-contextualisation of a heritage, a conceptual linking of parents' past and children's future, and an awareness of making available

to children a range of discursive resources and speaking positions. In interviews with a group of parents who had partnered 'across some kind of cultural 'boundary', any or all of 'race', religion or nationality (Smart, 2007, p.87), Smart explored how these parents spoke about passing on their cultural heritage to their children through narratives. These narratives made connections between the parents' and others' lives and the children's present and future lives. Passing on heritage involved

> …the laying down of memories, the processes of creating bonds and bridges across generations, and the enfolding of new generations into webs of relationships that become part of the thoroughfare of emotions and values in everyday family life. (Smart, 2007, p.105)

It is of relevance to my own exploration of how participants make connections between their past and their children's future, that Smart notes that those she interviewed depicted children 'as rooted, yet fluid; bonded yet self-determining' (2007, p.106). Thus parents had a sense of the significance and limitations of their own stories in meaning-making by their children. At the same time, in qualification of the notion that late modern biographies are self-made, Smart notes the socio-economic scaffolding in addition to the biographical and cultural resources which parents are, or are not, able to put in place to support children's choices (2007, p.106).

The research reviewed in this section suggests that fathers consider both their childhood and the model of parenting they experienced as a child to have the potential to be legacies, something they received as a child and pass on as a parent. If fathers often find the elements of their inheritance from their parents, or father, fragmented or inadequate to the conception of fatherhood in their own generation, a more detailed account is needed of the ways in which fathers understand the processes of taking possession as 'subject' of their inheritance (Brannen *et al*, 2004, p.179). In Chapter 4 I aim to contribute to the understanding of these processes by exploring how participants from more advantaged and less advantaged class positions, and with more positive and less positive experiences of a father's

parenting, construct the relation between their childhood past and their child's future in the present moment of the parent-child relationship. In line with the insights of the research reviewed here, and with conceptualisations of temporality developed in the work of Mead and Schutz, I will consider the relational and discursive resources on which participants draw in constituting their parenting practice as the bearer of a positive legacy for their children.

Section 3   Parenthood and the constitution of fatherhood and motherhood

The contemporary ideal of involved fatherhood addresses fathers' responsibilities to their partners as co-parents and the possibilities for a more mutual relationship with their partners as parents. In the terms of this ideal, involvement is understood to benefit fathers, partners and children (Henwood and Procter, 2003). Although it posits a reciprocal, (more) egalitarian relation between motherhood and fatherhood, there is, of course, considerable latitude on the spectrum between shared and equally shared responsibility. Research reviewed below suggests that, in practice, co-operative co-parenting within couples is generally a negotiation in relation to paternal readiness and maternal prerogative which takes place in a discursive context where gendered moral dimensions to provision and care persist (Duncan et al 2003; Doucet, 2006). However, a mother's or father's capacity to care cannot be taken as given, nor equality in the power dynamics of the relationship between a mother and father assumed.

In this section, I consider recent research with fathers which examines how the relation between motherhood and fatherhood is constituted by couples in the transition to parenthood and in conventionally-gendered and alternative organisations of paid and unpaid work. The research discussed analyses how fathers' practice constructs the responsibilities to and relationships with children and partners, and how alternative organisations of labour may reproduce or reconfigure aspects of gender relations between mothers and fathers. Research showing the positive and oppressive potential of the continuation of the co-

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parenting relationship after separation also examines the shifting understandings of motherhood and fatherhood which inform fathers' orientations to the co-parenting project.

Establishing a father's part in family: the transition to parenthood

The transition to parenthood is a key period for studies of the constitution through practice of fatherhood and motherhood and, in particular, the establishment of conventionally-gendered distributions of investments, responsibilities and labour. The longitudinal research of Lupton and Barclay (1997), Henwood and Procter (2003) and Miller (2010) charts some of the challenges faced by fathers of infants in fulfilling the role of father as they had envisaged it. Fathers participating in two of the studies were all employed; Henwood and Procter's research included some in casual work or unemployment. The significance given to differences in embodiment, and the implications of differences in time spent caregiving, are both important for understanding how mothers, overwhelmingly, assume primary responsibility for caring for a baby. The conditions for mothers doing so are shaped by policy context (maternity/paternity leave, for example), employment conditions and men's and women's relation to cultural assumptions about caregiving and financial provision. The research discussed here suggests that, 'the model of the caring, participative father […] enabled [fathers] to validate the desires they perceived in themselves for intimacy and emotional connection with others' (Henwood and Procter, 2003, p.350).   It also suggests that intimacy and emotional connection with a child in the first stages of fatherhood is not fully given but is forged over time and through care. More, or less, gendered understandings and practices in the division of primary responsibilities shape when and how it is forged.

Doucet argues that the 'early phase of parenting is one where the biological and social differences between women and men are magnified' (2009, p.93). The physical connection between mothers and babies through pregnancy, birth and, for many, breastfeeding is one which fathers generally recognise and accept. The time

demands of breastfeeding may call for an adjustment in fathers' expectations of the nature of their relationships with child and partner in the period following birth (Lupton and Barclay, 1997; Miller, 2010). Fathers, as is often the case with mothers (Miller, 2010), acknowledged they were unprepared for the demands of life with a newborn, or for the impact on their partner and their relationship with her (Lupton and Barclay, 1999, p.125; Henwood and Procter, 2003). The physical, emotional and psychological challenges faced by mothers finding their way with the responsibility and care for a newborn are intense. The needs of particular children and the circumstances in which particular couples parent may further intensify these challenges. The responsibility for knowing how to care was understood to be primarily the mother's by mothers, their partners and health professionals (Miller, 2010, p.77). Thus, any consideration of mothers' facilitation of fathers' role in caring, where fathers would be willing to care, must first recognise a mother's needs in context, and the conditions necessary to her achievement of caring (as some of the fathers interviewed by Lupton and Barclay and Miller did).

Fathers' expectations of relationship with the baby, as described in these studies, varied in the emphasis on care and/or interaction but appeared to significantly shape fathers' understanding of and satisfaction in their experience. These studies confirm the interaction of partner relationship dynamics with fathers' involvement with children and in family work. Fathers' involvement with infants is shaped by the capacity and commitment of fathers to develop competence in ways which enhance a sense of partnership, and by the capacity and commitment of mothers to support them in developing competence in ways which enhance a sense of partnership (recognising that certain ways of relating are already established in partnerships). The involvement of others, such as mothers' own mothers, for example, may also shape fathers' involvement in the early period of parenthood.

Miller noted that the divergence in men's and women's experience where fathers return to full-time paid work tended to entrench mothers as primary carers and experts and position fathers in a secondary role (2010, p.95), the scope of which

varied with fathers' commitment to the different dimensions of involvement (paid work, domestic labour and direct care) and mothers' commitment to a distinct role (2010, pp.96-7). Sharing the labour of family life with their partner and establishing a relationship with their child may or may not be combined in men's perception of their part in new family life. Lupton and Barclay noted considerable conflict arose from divergent understandings of each partner's role in working together to do what was needed. In contrast, in cases where fathers understood housework, the labour supporting caregiving and direct care to all be forms of involvement, both the partner relationship and the father-child relationship benefited. Some fathers interviewed by Lupton and Barclay who were not very involved in caring for the baby spoke of disappointment with their lack of a defined role, the time given over to breastfeeding and the lack of responsiveness of their baby to them in the early stages. These men had a sense that the beginning of relationship with their child was deferred; some withdrew to a degree from engagement with and responsibility for the baby and the baby-related tasks. Although close father-child relationships might subsequently develop as the child developed capacities for recognition and responsiveness, the degree of recuperation could be affected if a father's part in family life was not established in a form which facilitated engagement (Lupton and Barclay, 1997, pp.125-40; see also Miller, 2010, Chapter 4).

There is, these studies suggest, potential to establish an interlinking of care and connection in fathers' relating to their infant children if they are willing and able to be more involved in the early indirect care. Daly *et al*, in a similar vein to Doucet, 2009, argues for recognition of the need for fathers to have the time and opportunity for relationship-building interactions with their child in order to discover 'who they are' as fathers (Daly *et al*, 2009, p.66). However, as noted, the father's relationship with his child is bound up with the partner relationship, itself affected by the division of labour between partners. There is a need to negotiate, in the sense of finding one's way and in the sense of agreeing together, ways of establishing the caring, relational dimension of being a mother and father out of different opportunities to bond with their child. This negotiation occurs in other forms of

partnership in caring for infants such as gay parents (Berkowitz and Marsiglio, 2007) or a young new mother and her mother (Kehily and Thomson, 2011).

Henwood and Procter discussed the relationship, for contemporary fathers, between the challenges of achieving equity in the division of labour, establishing a balance between the demands of family and work, and managing their need for independence and leisure (2003, p.345). Their sample was (with one exception) united in their commitment to the benefits of highly involved fathering but divided in the extent to which they felt they were able to realise those benefits. Where fathers emphasised intimacy rather than responsibility and were satisfied with being a 'helper' to the mother, they did not raise the issues of equality in childcare labour or authority. Others were dissatisfied with barriers to achieving equal involvement and responsibility, whether due to the mother's monopoly on care through feeding or to their time at work. Some who were obliged to work long hours away from home to provide financially 'felt they were missing out, vulnerable to and fearful of criticism for being a bad father, and engaged for long periods of time in activities that were not valued' (2003, pp.348-50). 'New fatherhood' was not equally available or sustainable.

Henwood and Procter also note the 'twists and turns in men's investments'; the 'shift from a more independent to a more relational identity' was sustained by many but subject, in some cases, to revision due to investments in other life domains. The investments by means of which men balanced the dimensions of their life (and sense of self) were made in different directions. The promise of close relationship with your child and of realising a caring, relational self is the premise of new fatherhood but the early stages of fatherhood offer challenges to both partners in realising that promise. The research reviewed above suggests that not only the degree of balance between time in and away from home, but men's understanding of the potential connections between housework, care and relationship and, relatedly, between relationship with partner and relationship with their baby, shape the relation between the desired and realised meaning and practice of fatherhood.

The focus on the extent to which commitments to intimate father-child relationships and egalitarian partnership are distinct or interwoven in the contemporary practice of (new) fatherhood is also a central concern of qualitative research with fathers beyond the transition to fatherhood, discussed in the next two subsections below.

Fathers' part in families: predominant ways of doing family

A portion of the diversity in fathers' practice is a product of whether and how dimensions of close relationship, active caring and more equal sharing of responsibilities with mothers are combined, or not, with the dimension of financial provision in fatherhood. While some research explores culturally and/or numerically predominant ways of doing family and fatherhood, other research focuses on alternative organisations of paid and unpaid work, or diverse family forms. Townsend wrote that the criteria for his sample of breadwinners was that they were '"typical" in that their lives and values represent dominant norms' (2002, p.21). In contrast, the research of Ranson (2010), Doucet (2006) and Dienhart (1998), for example, was with those who organised the division of paid and unpaid work differently, 'the small but growing minority who do not conform […] who might have the most to teach us about new ways of organising family life' (Ranson, 2010, p.4). Although not longitudinal, the range in ages of fathers and children in these studies allows researchers to hear fathers reflect on changes over a longer experience of fatherhood than in the transition literature.

Townsend's US-based research offers a detailed account of fathers' perspectives on the interconnections between the dimensions of fatherhood which expands on the predominant focus on the binary work/care; attention to the relation between dimensions of fatherhood is core to the analysis in this thesis. Furthermore, his analysis of the place of the father-child relationship in relation to the other dimensions of fatherhood offers an account of what is often simply referred to as a 'traditional model', in which financial provision supports family life but limits fathers' participation in it. His research also provides a point of reference, albeit from a specific geographical and cultural setting, for what is 'new' in the relation

between dimensions of fatherhood in the ideal of 'new' fatherhood. From his research with 39 men who graduated from the same US high school in the early 1970s, Townsend (2002) identified a set of aspirations which informed, consciously and unconsciously, the orientation to the life course of the men he interviewed. These aspirations constitute 'the package deal' of a steady job, marriage, home ownership and children. Townsend examines the interconnection between the parts and the whole 'package deal'. Marriage entails having children (if not, as one of several fathers expressed it, 'you'd have to love her a lot' (2002, p.85). Paid work is fundamental to supporting a wife who, even if employed, is primarily responsible for the care of children. Wives facilitate family formation and fathers' relationship with children. In some cases men worked two jobs so that their wife did not have to work (2002, p.133), fathers provided parental care and relationship through the mediation of their wife. Ideally, maternal care is provided in a home which is, ideally, in a location which also offers security and access to the benefits of a good neighbourhood and a good school, if sometimes at the cost of a long commute. Thus, wife and home and paid work are the means of realising the provision, protection and endowment, if not the close relationship, which Townsend identified as the four facets of fatherhood. Townsend's analysis sets out the central role of mothers in 'package deal' fatherhood and a broad conception of paternal responsibility.

> I would explain male behaviour in families not so much in terms of a conflict between commitment and selfishness but rather in terms of a unified desire to have a responsible family life that can, in men's eyes, be achieved only through the mediation of women (2002, p.116).

In a similar relation of alignment to dominant norms of fatherhood, Dermott's (2008) London-based sample of 25 employed fathers held professional/managerial positions and lived in co-resident heterosexual partnerships. Interviewed a decade or so after Townsend, and in a UK rather than a US context, Dermott's interviewees also spoke of a commitment to their paid work, but emphasised inherent interest rather than financial provision. They also valued emotional closeness to their child,

but with an emphasis on personally building a unique father-child relationship. For fathers who were interested by and secure in their careers, the financial element was not foregrounded in their talk about work; for those where work held no other meaning, earning money was foregrounded as a motivation. Dermott argues that while financial provision is one of the fundamental functions of work for most people, fathers may not define it as fundamental to the meaning of fatherhood (2008, p.38).

Dermott did not find competing demands on fathers' time to be a major theme in interviews. Her participants constructed both intensive quality time and availability, that is, 'being there for their children', as compatible with the quantities of time required to meet their demanding professional commitments. Closeness, as with the fathers Townsend interviewed, but also emotional openness and availability were key features of good fatherhood and considered by many of these fathers to distinguish them from their own fathers. The construction of dyadic parent-child relationships within the set of family relationships may be differentiated from the triadic dynamic analysed by Townsend where mothers mediated father-child relationships. However, the understanding that routine work of childcare and domestic labour is transferable is consistent across both groups of interviewees. A few fathers in Dermott's sample were in arrangements where they took on caring responsibilities to the extent that they 'had the experience of facing social assumptions about men's and women's responsibilities that did not resonate with their own organisation of family tasks' (2008, p.90).

However, overall, Dermott found that an investment in the father-child relationship did not necessarily lead to a commitment to childcare, but rather to a commitment to the principle of availability in response to need (2008, p.125). Dermott, drawing on Jamieson (1998), affirmed the importance of time for the intimacy so valued in fathers' discourse (p.62, see also Daly, 2009). The availability valued by Dermott's sample, demonstrated through taking leave for a specific purpose, such as sports days or school shows, may have been compatible with sustaining a strong

relationship between father and child but did not entail an equitable division of labour between parents (2008, p.112). Dermott points out that low levels of conflict, and contextualised understandings of time (Dermott, 2005), reflect a continuing reliance on co-residency and mothers' labour on the part of men who are thus able to combine career commitment with 'intimate fatherhood' (2008, p.126).

While the salience of provision in the meaning of paid work for Dermott's predominantly educated, professional sample varied, Shirani *et al* (2012) confirm that men often experience the responsibility to provide financially for the welfare and future security of partner and children as a source of pressure. An understanding of the anxieties in relation to providing, which Shirani *et al* argue reflect gendered risks of parenting, points to the need to be able to account for men's paid work as a manifestation of family commitment rather than a project of the self or an attempt to avoid the demanding work of hands-on care (2012, p.37). The gendered risk identified by Shirani *et al* is consistent with other research (Doucet, 2006, for example) describing the gendered allocation of 'moral' responsibilities for earning and caring. However, recognition of the moral investment of men in provision, for example, does not require a re-inscription of provision as paternal in a way which occludes women's financial contribution to households.

Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001), for example, argue for a conceptualisation of providing through employment as a form of paternal involvement. They argue that a characterisation of involvement as nurturant engagement with children positions fathers' employment as 'competing with involvement' (2001, p.86). The case for incorporating provision as an aspect of involvement which confers benefits for children's well-being has been made and accepted in research on father involvement (Pleck, 2007, p.197). Attention to the place of emotional responses to perceived judgements of fathers' practice, including the resentment and anger described by Christiansen and Palkovitz, is important in analysing and responding to fathers' experience and the context for fatherhood (see also Henwood and

Procter, 2003; Featherstone *et al*, 2007). They argue for work to 'free men from the defensiveness of perceived male bashing when they receive messages that they do not measure up to the new ideology of fatherhood and that provision is not enough' (Christiansen and Palkovitz, 2001, p.99). However, such efforts need to be situated within an ongoing dialogue with feminist-inspired gender-egalitarian critiques of the economic, institutional, social and familial conditions under which what is or is not 'enough' is constructed and by whom. What is missing in Christiansen and Palkowitz's anxious concern about the 'replaceability' of fathers is any acknowledgment of alternative paternal practice, of what a father's role as provider means for others' participation in family life and beyond it, of providing as a maternal responsibility, or of families who must and do raise children without paternal provision (Silverstein and Auerbach, 1999; Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Carlson, 2006). The next section discusses research examining arrangements in which mothers' financial contribution and participation in paid work is central to the organisation of family life and in which fathers' part in family life may include provision through paid work but for whom provision alone is not 'enough' involvement.

Alternative ways of doing family, negotiating new forms of fatherhood and motherhood

Hølter (2007) does locate fathers who attempt to balance their professional role with their involvement in family life, and with their partner's participation in paid work, within family relationships. He argues that the 'organisational' gender of their employers often fails to do so. Hølter (2007) interviewed 140 men, men in part-time work in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Israel, Norway, and Spain and representatives of their employers. Almost all endorsed the principle that fathers were to be involved in children's lives alongside mothers. The division of housework was more traditional than the division of care work, however, for a slight majority (2007, p.434). Although a significant proportion of the men were proactive in arranging for greater participation in family life and a more equal distribution of labour with

their partner, for some men it was a case of embracing opportunity or adapting to enforced change in working hours. Some men's capacity to adapt was limited by traditional cultural understandings of gender and work (2007, p.438). Hølter identified men who were reducing their participation in paid work to increase the part they played in family life as holding transitional positions within a process of uneven change (rather than performing new forms of masculinity). Men in these 'new circumstances' bore the costs of gender equality, in terms of the effort required to access their rights, lack of promotion and vulnerability in periods of restructuring. They encountered informal barriers which, in a variation on women's experience, are the 'discriminatory effects of non-relational values' in the management of business (2007, p.452). Caregiving itself is devalued and companies, managers and colleagues do not 'see' men's needs as caregivers.

The aspect of analysis of particular relevance to this thesis, in addition to the delineation of a context of uneven change, is Hølter's attention to relationality: 'The men in new circumstances were characterized by a new sense of relational gender. The relation to child, partner, or spouse was a central matter and motivator for change' (2007, p.440). Both the dimension of lived, interactive relationship with children and partners, but also of a father's relation to a child and a man's relation to a woman are relevant to his discussion of the interface between home and workplace, between family and work. The impact of this form of relationality on contemporary fathers is also noted by Williams.

> Though many of the men talk about wanting to be different to their own fathers in terms of many key aspects of their relationships with partners and children, they acknowledge that they also *have* to be different if they are to maintain a relationship with their partners. Changes in domestic arrangements are not without conflict, but the men recognize the problems of a failure to adapt as well as the benefits of adapting (2008, p.501).

Among two-parent families who have moved away from the predominant models discussed above, there are two ways of doing family differently which are examined in recent literature, much of which is based in Canada. The first is where parents

divide paid work and childcare equally (or close to equally) between them, whether in part-time or full-time employment and whether childcare is wholly parental or a mix of informal and formal care. The second is where fathers are primary caregivers, with some overlap with dual-residence or single fathers in respect of practices in the public domain. This discussion will examine how alternative ways of organising the practice of mothers and fathers produce different, and differently gendered, conceptions of motherhood, fatherhood and parenting. It will also examine analyses of how mothers and fathers understand and enact their relation to dominant and alternative discursive constructions of motherhood and fatherhood.

In her book *Do Men Mother?* (2006), and related publications, Doucet drew on interviews with sixty-six primary caregiver fathers in answering this question by exploring how fathers care and how masculinity is risked or reconfigured in caring. Among the men who became caregiver fathers, their own as well as their partner's position *vis à vis* the labour market was important in their decision. One group of men, having fulfilled goals in their career, sought a different form of fulfilment. Another group were in transition between jobs or careers and the third, in which there was also an element of transition for some, was where fathers worked part-time, flexibly and/or from home around the hours required for childcare.   For all these stay-at-home fathers, the decision to relinquish full-time employment was a result of a complex mix of factors potentially including: a wife or partner having the higher income with employment benefits and a stronger career interest (at this stage of their lives); strong views on the importance of home care; the opinion that there is a paucity of good childcare facilities in Canada; the cost of childcare; and, in some cases, a child with particular developmental, physical or health needs came to play a role in the decision (2006, pp.88-9).

Befitting her focus on men's caregiving, Doucet focused not only on men's relationship with children but also on fathers' responsibility for children. She developed a framework of three areas of domestic responsibility for the analysis of

men's caregiving, derived from theoretical work on 'maternal responsibility' for children.

> There is considerable consensus on how mothering is linked to the responsibility for children. Sara Ruddick (1995), for example, defines a mother as ''a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives'' (p. 40), while Bonnie Fox and Diana Worts (1999) have written that ''responsibility is the essence of motherhood'' (p. 330). […I]n spite of increases in fathering involvement, the persistent connection between women and domestic responsibility remains. That is, across time, ethnicities, social class, and culture, it is overwhelmingly mothers who organize, plan, orchestrate, and worry about children. (Doucet, 2009, p.105)

Without contesting the powerful pedigree of this association or that it constitutes a powerful demand on women who become mothers, I would note that the understanding of and assumption of responsibility for children varies among mothers and is not, and has not been (LaRossa, 1997), exclusive to women. Doucet developed her framework of three areas of responsibility from Ruddick's (1995) threefold conception of maternal demands, preservation, growth and social acceptability (Doucet, 2009, p.109), although the maternal thinking through which they are identified is not theorised as confined to women in Ruddick's work. The framework, developed for the study of father's caregiving, does set up an opposition between domestic responsibilities and the responsibility for provision of means to satisfy material needs, although it is arguable different aspects of financial or material provision might be relevant to 'preservation'.

Doucet's three-dimensional concept of responsibility does not incorporate the challenges and tensions in combining commitments to caregiving, provision and career, which are part of many men's and women's experience, except in respect of feelings and justifications generated by non-alignment with the persistent division in gendered moral responsibilities (2009, p.114). Nevertheless, many aspects of her detailed exploration of embodied contextualised practice are of relevance in thinking about men's practices of care, partnerships with mothers, and performance of gender whether within an extensive time commitment or alongside a

commitment to paid work. Doucet's research engages with the paradox of mobilising concepts developed out of a history of maternal caregiving even as she asks if a maternal lens has led researchers to miss the different ways in which men take on domestic responsibility. Her work is relevant to the concerns of Chapter 5, the construction of the relation between motherhood and fatherhood, and Chapter 6, fathers' positioning in respect of constructions of masculinity. Those aspects most relevant to the latter are discussed in the next section of this chapter, Section 4.

Mothers' influence on fathers' engagement with the different responsibilities identified by Doucet was considerable. While caregiver fathers in couples took on a role which supported their partner's participation in paid work, men moved into those caregiving spaces which mothers opened up for them (2006, p.121). These fathers reported effectively sharing caregiving with their working partners, who were highly involved outside working hours, in a division of labour that was 'symmetrical and complementary' (2006, pp.81, 95). Single fathers sought to build supportive kin and kin-like networks, in which women were a significant resource (2006, pp.83) to support their participation in paid work and residential care of their children. Doucet was surprised to hear single fathers in a focus group agree that 'an ideal world would be one with a father and a mother' (2006, p.215). The 'complete intertwining of mothering and fathering, especially for fathers' (2006, p.215) was found both in the accounts of partnered primary caregivers for whose caregiving the mothers made space and of single fathers for whom the ideal of a mother's care persisted despite their achievement of paternal caregiving. Acceptance of the significance of the heterosexual interconnectedness identified by Doucet must be qualified by an acknowledgement of the validity of forms of parenting, and partnership, in lesbian and gay parent families, for example, or among lone mothers, marginalised by heteronormativity.

Doucet recasts the necessary theoretical tension between equality and difference in a dynamic, contextualised approach which is attentive to the interplay of difference and equality between men and women (2006, p.25). Her research with primary

caregiver fathers suggest that mothers and fathers may together dismantle category boundaries (Thorne, 1993, p.84) such as fatherhood/motherhood, but the arrangements and interactions through which they do so may prompt borderwork, the reaffirmation of difference, in fathers, mothers and others. I will return to this aspect of her analysis, and her discussion of how caregiver fathers reaffirm masculinity, in Section 4. Doucet's reference to borderwork and the reaffirmation of difference resonates with other research which has found that practices which blur boundaries between the masculine and feminine may prompt the reinstatement of gender boundaries in other ways.

In research with couples where mothers were primary earners, Chesley (2011), for example, framed her enquiry in terms of the doing (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and undoing of gender (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009). Chesley found both resistance to and realisation of greater commonality between parents. In the majority of cases (15/19) the father's move into caregiving was attributed to altered or negative working conditions, while a smaller number (7/19) of couples emphasised the father's positive desire to take on a caregiver role. For some fathers and mothers the normative charge of a belief in a father's duty to provide persisted, as did regret or resentment at the loss of time or status with their children for some mothers, with both situations a potential source of tensions or conflict. However, many fathers' accounts attested to the transformative effect of caregiving, which also created more shared territory between parents and promoted the undoing of gender in the home, although this discourse was taken up by the more educated fathers to the greatest extent. Transformed attitudes also contributed to the undoing of gender in the workplace where caregiving fathers who returned to work approached the interface with family life, their own and others', differently.   For mothers bearing sole financial responsibility, a sense of common experience also occurred in relation to the experience of provider fathers, although this was modified by the differences mothers noted in work-life balance and the domestic division of labour. Sole earning mothers in the sample generally worked less than their colleagues, with negative effects on gender equity in the workplace. In line

with other research examining shifts in the division of labour, Chesley argues that processes which undermine gender boundaries and processes which reinforce them coexist at individual, interactional and structural levels of analysis.

Similarly, among couples in which fathers were primary caregivers or shared care, Ranson (2010) found that one parent could instigate a more hierarchical relation between parents but a more egalitarian practice was the achievement of a father and mother working together. Ranson's research with 19 couples who were going 'against the grain' of a conventionally-gendered division of labour included couples where the father was the primary caregiver and the mother full-time in paid work (crossovers) and dual earner couples who divided work and care responsibilities equally. The latter was achieved by either by working shifts in order to provide parental care (shift-workers) or sharing domestic work outside the hours of paid work and formal childcare (dual-dividers). In terms of common characteristics of the primary caregiver fathers Ranson interviewed, the difference from Townsend's 'package deal' fathers lay in their orientation to the labour market as well as in their orientation to fatherhood. In comparison with their professional (or to be professional) partners in secure and well-paid employment, the men earned less and were less invested in paid work or career. At the same time, although Ranson characterised this group as coming to a decision which was a 'comfortable' convergence of goals, interests and circumstances (2010, p.41), there was considerable variation in the role taken by mothers. Some were managers of parenting and the children, 'CEO mothers', who retained their sense of themselves as good mothers who were the primary parent. Others were partners in co-parenting who recognised fathers' expertise within a commitment to equality. All the employed mothers were committed to building relationship and providing care outside of working hours. In addition, fathers often facilitated their partners' practice of motherhood, a finding which is an important qualifier of the image of fathering as dependent on the mediation of mothers.

In several of the couples interviewed by Ranson, working mothers, but also one caregiving father, retained a predominant authority in the organisation of the daily life of the children which undermined the other partner's parenting role (2010, p.143). Among the couples with older children, Ranson interviewed two fathers who had not re-entered the labour market as the children grew older and lacked confidence that they would do so. In one case this appeared to have placed a considerable burden on the mother to provide in less than ideal conditions. In another, the lack of confidence appeared to reflect an undermining of the father's work as a father by a 'CEO' mother who openly stated 'I would have been much better [at] being at home' (2010, p.130). As confirmed in research discussed below, alternative forms of organising care or greater participation by fathers do not in and of themselves produce more equitable gender relations or degendered parenting partnerships. Among her categories of fathers' masculinities, Aboim identified some autonomous fathers who rejected dependence on or the superiority of women in the domestic sphere and claimed to be 'the best fit for all roles' (2010, p.128). The link between involvement and influence in some men's accounts reflects a desire for equal authority in parenting. Gatrell's research with 20 professionally employed women and their partners found that several of the fathers wished to 'extend the paternal sphere of influence' (2007, p.368). While practical care of the child, including for some a share of infant feeding, were seen as part of this project by this group, tasks which did not build relationship were not. All but one mother, even those who welcomed equal parenting, claimed that the men's defence of a father's entitlement to quality time compromised the quality of their own time with the children, divided as it was between childcare and domestic tasks (2007, p.368). Having identified a sense of displacement due to their partners' earning power among this group of fathers, Gatrell compared the strategies and motivations to enhance their power as parents to those deployed by some fathers in post-separation struggles over roles in children's lives, a literature discussed further below.

However, other couples interviewed by Ranson resisted inequality and imbalance together, through holding each other to sharing responsibility for both care and labour in the home alongside participation in paid work. Ranson characterised them as 'parents as peers' who were parenting 'on equal terms' and became 'functionally interchangeable' (2010, p.173) not only within the home and with children, but beyond it in relation to the labour market. While there was variation in the details, such as some mothers filling the role of emotion experts, Ranson found that mutual agreement, teamwork, shared executive responsibility, and shared emotional engagement characterised their co-parenting. Ranson wishes to reclaim the term parenting, from a gender-neutral usage in relation to gendered practices predominantly carried out by mothers, for 'the cumulative practices of both mothers and fathers who share all such practices more or less interchangeably across gender lines' (2010, p.173). Ranson's study provides evidence that the goal of parenting on equal terms is achievable and of the conditions under which it has been achieved. However, Ranson's reframing of 'parenting' still requires the qualifier of 'equal'. In popular usage 'mothering' and 'fathering', the suggested alternatives, bear distinct meanings which are not symmetrical or equivalent to 'parenting', neither is 'parenting' equivalent to being a parent but may refer more to interactions with children. In sociology, as with the term 'family', both appropriate inclusiveness, the avoidance or impossibility of judging whether parents' practice qualifies as 'parenting' and the need to critically examine the term's deployment in media and policy, require working with the multi-valent and contextualised meanings of a term such as 'parenting'. Nevertheless, the ways in which parenting practice might be de-gendered, and in what ways motherhood and fatherhood re-gendered, are key concerns of this area of research and, within a focus on diversity in parenting partnerships, of this thesis.

Most of the studies reviewed here which have addressed samples the common characteristics of which are specified in some way, as typical (Townsend, 2002), as professional (Dermott, 2008), as men in transition to fatherhood (Miller, 2010, for example), as caregiver fathers (Doucet, 2006, for example) or as parenting 'against

the grain' (Ranson). In respect of a sample of fathers in a range of situations, I draw on the insights of the studies reviewed here on the subject of the distribution of responsibilities and labour and its consequences for partners' participation in paid work and family life. I also consider insights as to the implications of the division of labour for fathers' and mothers' negotiation of their identity and position in relation to dominant and alternative discourses of paternal, maternal and parental responsibility. As might be expected, if aspects of new, intimate and involved fatherhood are significant for men in a variety of social, economic and relational contexts, there will be variation in the way men deploy the discursive resources of 'new fatherhood' in relation to their practice. There was also variation in the extent to which fathers found their experience corresponded to the ideal in terms of emotional satisfaction and participation where the demands of or investment in work intrude. Two broad findings of the research are relevant to the concerns of this thesis. First, across the spectrum of involvement from adapted work hours or commitment to extensive caregiving, fathers making themselves available to participate and mothers making space available for fathers' participation in caregiving appears to shape the extent to which fathers share family responsibilities with mothers. In Chapter 5, I explore the implications of this dynamic for the relation between desire and opportunity to care for fathers.   Second, the link between the division of paid and unpaid labour and the construction of mothers' and fathers' responsibilities is sustained both in the 'conventional' and alternative divisions of labour.

Conscious of the wealth and depth of research in this area, the focus of analysis in Chapter 5 is to compare, across a range of household organisations and employment situations, father's construction of, first, the relation between their own and their partner's practice (where partnered) in relation to parenting children and, second, the construction of the relation between provision and care in their practice. Exploring the relations of similarity and difference in fathers' accounts of motherhood and fatherhood, and the extent to which their characterisation of difference draws on conventionally gendered images, I will explore the range in

fathers' construction of gender in respect of parenting across different household organisations. Secondly, analysis of how fathers represent choices and constraints, tensions and rewards in respect of different ways of doing family and different configurations of fathering practice will contribute to understanding the diverse perspectives on the meanings and practices of family, fatherhood and gender, and fathers' understandings of how these meanings and practices shape and are shaped by their situation.

Lone and non-resident fatherhood

The transition to post-separation fatherhood involves a reconfiguration of the forms of relationship, the part played by fathers in their children's lives, and the practices through which family relationships are constituted, as family relationships are transformed. Diverse situations, practice, expectations and understandings of fatherhood are evident in research with post-separation fathers as in the research with co-resident fathers already discussed. The two issues central to the discussion of motherhood and fatherhood in this section of the review, and in the thesis, are highly pertinent and perhaps even clearer in research with lone and non-resident fathers. These issues are first, how fathers discursively construct the relation between motherhood and fatherhood, and, second, how the division of responsibilities and labour between parents shapes the relation between dimensions of fatherhood in fathers' practice. A father's perspective on each of these issues affects and reflects his aspirations and experience of being a father. I would note that while these aspects are broadly relevant to thinking about fatherhood and family, only part of the research reviewed is directly relevant to the experience of the five lone and non-resident participants in this sample, none of whom co-operatively co-parent. Either their own contact or residency arrangements have been established through the courts, their ex-partner's contact with their child(ren) has been or is managed through the courts and/or by social workers, or, in one case, contact is erratic and a subject of contention. I will discuss aspects of the situation of lone fatherhood and non-resident fatherhood, and of diversity in men's practice

within that situation, in terms of how financial provision, care for or contact with children, and the co-parenting relationship interact.

Lone fathers

Hook and Chalasani describe single fathers as 'caught between two worlds' (2008, p.979). While they are not unique in this, they are positioned by others and must position themselves in relation to a different set of discourses than lone mothers, and do so with a different configuration of resources from most partnered fathers. In US-based research lone fathers as a group are less disadvantaged than single mothers as a group. While lone fathers in employment are able to adapt to managing household and raising children, with the support of kin or professional carers (as noted by Doucet, 2006), it may be more difficult to add paid employment to caring responsibilities, as many women would have to do (Hilton *et al*, 2001). Single fathers spoke of becoming 'a different kind of father', 'a soft father' (Doucet, 2006, pp.129-30). The extent to which the children of lone fathers see their mothers varies, as do the needs of children at different ages. However, as with research with co-resident and non-resident fathers, research with single fathers reveals 'the importance of mothers for men's fathering' through the greater difference their presence or absence as co-parents makes (Hook and Chalasani, 2008, p.987; Doucet, 2006).

In an earlier study, Barker (1994) showed that the different gender beliefs of lone fathers, but also of others in their networks, interacted with wider circumstances to shape the configuration of their practice. Those who believed that childcare was more women's work than men's drew more on the help of women, and particularly their mothers, in caring for the children in ways which supported their commitment to paid employment. Another group prioritised caregiving over paid work, either accepted as an unavoidable obligation or embraced as an opportunity, although, in some cases, embracing extensive involvement in children's lives was in tension with recognition of mothers' relationships with children. As in work with unemployed partnered fathers (e.g. Brannen *et al*, 2004), Barker identified a spectrum of child-

centredness (1994, p.238) among the fathers he interviewed and a corresponding variation in the extent to which the practice of fatherhood affected other life domains. However, a child-centred orientation might also be combined with the recourse to help from women, with caring and domestic work. The help of a network, which might include fathers' mothers, other kin, friends or carers, supported men in combining participation in the labour force with co-resident fatherhood (Doucet, 2006). Barker also notes that, while the men in his sample could be broadly categorised on the basis of the broad orientation of their gender beliefs in respect of parenting, 'individuals were not homogeneously traditionally patriarchal or gender pioneering' as they struggled to resolve tensions at a structural level (1994, p.244-5). For a proportion of fathers, dismantling the gender divide in parenting and re-envisioning of the relation between motherhood/fatherhood has rested on competition rather than co-operation (Neale and Smart, 1997).

Non-resident fathers

For fathers who are primarily resident outside of the children's main residence with the mother, research indicates that variation in practical and relational factors produces much of the great diversity in situation and experience. Practical factors include geographical proximity, the capacity to provide adequate alternative home spaces in which to spend time with children, the availability of time, and commitments to further partners or children. Time is particularly connected to the relational factors. While the quality of time (and parenting) with children is more important than quantity of time per se (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999), sufficient time is a necessary support for meaningful relationships (Dunn *et al*, 2004) and recognition of this has been recommended to professionals in policy and legal settings (Whiteside and Becker, 2000). In addition, perceptions of time with children, as well as of the paternal role it constrains or supports, have been found to be bound up with perceptions of the relationship with the mother, the role of the mother and the role of father as provider.

Mothers' facilitation of the relationship with children, so central in both 'traditional' and egalitarian co-resident parenting partnerships, remains central (Trinder, 2008), if often misunderstood and/or contested (Smart and Neale, 1999). Many fathers accept, even welcome, considerable continuity in the distribution of responsibilities for children's well-being. The role of mother as primary parent and facilitator of the relationship between fathers and children continues (Trinder, 2008). Co-parenting with more evenly shared responsibilities may occur across dual residence arrangements, co-operatively, and to the benefit of children, where there is a prioritising by both parents of the needs and wishes of the children, flexibility in accommodating change and where children feel 'at home' in both residences (Smart, 2004, p.487). However, these conditions did not always obtain, particularly where a rigid adherence to equality was prioritised by one or both parents. Moreover, 'while harmonious families emerge as more child-centred and supportive of contact, they can also demand a great deal from parents' (Wilson, 2006, p.301; Smart and Neale, 1999).

In research with focus groups of married and divorced fathers Olmstead *et al* (2009) found continuity across both groups in the roles they identified: provider, teacher, protector, disciplinarian, caretaker, supporter. However, there were differences in the organisation of role identity, which was more fragmented among divorced fathers, and in co-parenting. The significance and the difficulties of co-parenting post-separation are recurrent themes in the literature on non-resident fathers as reviewed by Wilson (2006). The tension between continuity and change must be managed by both partners in post-separation parenting in a relationship which must continue but on changed terms. However, the negative dynamics of marriage or partnership which the separation may be intended to resolve or end are often carried over into post-separation association in potentially negative ways (Smart and Neale, 1999).

While conflicting demands of work commitments and time with children may affect non-resident fathers, the relation between financial provision and time with

children often tends in a different direction than for co-resident fathers. Olmstead *et al* (2009) noted that divorced fathers expressed resentment at fatherhood being reduced to the provider role. In other research, fathers also conveyed resentment that neither their provider role, nor the meanings of care and involvement with which they invested financial provision were recognised (Bradshaw *et al,* 1999; Natalier and Hewitt, 2010). If child support is framed by society and the laws as an entitlement due to the mother, fathers' authority over how it is spent is limited and their fathering identities constrained (Natalier and Hewitt, 2010, p.492).

The literature reviewed by Wilson (2006) consistently identified that a focus on the ex-spouse rather than the child(ren) in non-resident fathers' talk, and an emphasis on their identity as a separated partner rather than a non-resident parent, appeared to impinge on a focus on the child's well-being. For some fathers, mothers' responsibilities for the organisation of children's lives, often long-established, were (re-)cast in terms of control, or in terms of rivalry for contested territory. 'In all qualitative studies, non-resident fathers talk of a pervasive sense of being controlled, and feeling powerless' (Wilson, 2006, p.302).

In a discussion of policy, law and gender post-divorce, Neale and Smart (1997) point to the development of a concept of fatherhood which positions fathers as contesting parenting authority with mothers on the basis of an equality based on essential difference, summed up in the phrase "children need fathers". Where there is a presumption of equal capacity and rights without attention to the different, and often unequal, conditions and contributions of a mother and a father to children's lives, the professional actors in legal proceedings may proceed as if all other things, too, were equal. However, Neale and Smart go on to point out that all other things are not equal.

> But, as our research has indicated, the material and emotional resources for sustaining co-parenting are scarce and there is no real infrastructure available properly to support co-parenting during marriage, let alone after divorce. This means that when full co-parenting is resisted for quite practical reasons, its refusal is interpreted as the unfair retention of an

outmoded privilege. Thus what is generated is a new site of gender conflict as fatherhood becomes re-cast as a form of underprivilege. (Neale and Smart, 1997, p.214)

Within parts of the fathers' rights movement, discursive constructions of underprivilege, competition with motherhood, and equality based on an unstable conjunction of sameness and essential difference are mobilised. Collier identifies 'a virulent strand of anti-feminism, if not misogyny' (2009, p.93) in some fathers' rights discourse.

> Mothers appear within parts of the fathers' rights discourse as alimony drones, mendacious and vindictive, and unruly and irresponsible figures. Lone motherhood is especially linked to the ideas of masculine crisis in such a way that the absence of fathers becomes, somewhat tautologically, both the cause and consequence of social and family breakdown. In marked contrast, fathers consistently are depicted as respectable and socially "safe" subjects, "sharer[s] of responsibilities", and active participants in paid employment, child care, and domestic labor. (2009, p.93)

The confusion of colonising and essentialist positions in this claim to equality is seen in the polarised representations of mothers. Collier discusses some of the tensions for some men in the partial transformation of normative ideas of fatherhood and identifies a fragmentation of beliefs about fatherhood in the law.

As discussed throughout this review of post-separation fatherhood research, a recurrent theme is contention over the meanings of relationship with and responsibility for children in terms of power and rights. The range of the relations between mothers and fathers following separation is confirmed when the above characterisation of fathers' rights discourse is juxtaposed with the finding of Simpson *et al* (2003) that some men overturn the rhetorical opposition between rights and care.

> We suggest that despite many problems that come with parenting at a distance, increasing numbers of men do create, negotiate and maintain new kinds of relationship with their children and their former partners. […They] overturn an opposition which defines men through a rhetoric of rights,

autonomy and entitlement and women through an ethic of care and responsibility for others (cf Gilligan, 1982 and Okin, 1989). In practice these two dimensions of kinship become imbricated in novel ways and open up possibilities for how men might go about the business of doing fatherhood rather than simply being a father (Simpson et al, 2003, pp.203-4).

The creation, negotiation and maintenance of 'new' kinds of relationships with their children and the mothers of their children is central to contemporary ideals of new, intimate and involved fatherhood, for partners as well as ex-partners. In both, very different, situations, novel ways of doing fatherhood do require an overturning of the rhetoric of oppositional difference.

Section 4   Fatherhood and masculinity

One of the questions asked in relation to what is 'new' in contemporary practice, rather than only in contemporary discourses of fatherhood, is the extent to which fatherhood and motherhood are no longer defined through a relation of hierarchical opposition. A related question is whether, consequently, men's relation to the other terms of familiar binaries through which the binary masculinity/femininity has been constructed. That new practices of caring coexist with ongoing appropriation of authoritative positions such as rationality, responsibility and rights-based justice, is clear in the research discussed above. Such authoritative positions may be both constructed as neutral and appropriated to 'masculinity' through claims of women's failure or incapacity to take such positions.

Nevertheless, Henwood and Procter (2003, p.351) caution against framing relations in terms of power in ways which exclude from view men's desire (perhaps only partially realised) for relationship and to care, and for fair relations with their partners. The question which opened the section above may be framed more positively. Within the range of ways in which fathers meet children's needs, to what extent are some fathers, with partners and others, constructing a different relation with the mother of their children, and between fatherhood and motherhood, based on alternatives to hierarchical opposition such as interdependence, similarity, egalitarian complementarity? Lone and non-resident

fathers face specific challenges in sustaining reciprocal relations with the mothers of their children, and close relationships with their children following difficult circumstances. However, some have negotiated a practice of fatherhood which also integrates a range of potentially opposed characteristics in relating to children and meeting their needs, for nurture and discipline, for example (Doucet, 2006) in ways which break down conceptions of gender difference. How is a commitment to equality independent of or dependent on a deconstruction of difference and/or of masculinity?

It could be said that research with fathers doing family differently is effectively engaged in examining whether and how the de-gendering of practice in relation to family work might drive a change in the relation of fatherhood to motherhood and a different gendering of practices. To the extent that the range of family roles are then accessible to both men and women, with the consequence that gender repertoires associated with sex categories become more extensive and overlapping, it is increasingly difficult to construct the relation between fatherhood and motherhood in oppositional, hierarchical terms. In doing family in the different ways reviewed above, men manage their relation to dominant discursive constructions of masculinity and draw on a range of understandings of gender.

The preoccupation in much research with fathers with the gendered implications of the place of financial provision in fatherhood is clear in this review, although the routine association of participation with paid work with masculinity has been usefully questioned by Dermott (2006). The question of the division of labour is central to but does not exhaust the issues of more equal relations with mothers, a valuing of caring and a recognition of the labour in domestic labour. However, caring fatherhood engages with other stereotypes of masculinity. New, intimate and involved fatherhood is understood as expanding the responsibilities as well as the relational possibilities for fathers and thus their relation to oppositional discursive constructions of masculinity and notions of masculine autonomy. Embodied nurturing, gentleness and comfort, on the one hand, and the recalcitrant

materiality of bottoms and bottles and loss of sleep on the other, are opposed to the competitive autonomy, intellectual rationality, economic power or physical prowess valued in settings dominated by men and in certain representations of valued ways of being a man, recognisable as connoting 'masculinity' (Connell, 1995).

Doucet's (2006) description of the ways in which primary caregiver fathers distance themselves from the feminine and appropriate certain characteristics to masculinity is a valuable analysis of men's lived negotiation of their relation to discourses of fatherhood and masculinity. Alongside similarities in competence in caring for children, and a more shared perspective on children and parenting, Doucet found caregiver fathers were able to 'account' for their masculinity through a balance in the overall configuration of their practice as men. Certain aspects of practice, such as playfulness, encouraging risk-taking, exploring the outdoors and renovating the home rather than housework, which were seen as linking them with men and differentiating them from women, were appropriated to signifying masculinity (2006,p.237). Similarly, mothers found ways to signal, not femininity, but good motherhood, in organising birthday parties, for example. Outside of the home, others carried out gender borderwork. Caregiver fathers felt they were under the surveillance of a 'community gaze', evaluating their competence with children and the risk they posed (Doucet, 2006) to an extent which sometimes constrained how they related to their children the made connections with others. Doucet, nevertheless, concludes that through their practice both care and gender are re-configured.

> Fathers do not put their masculinity on the line but rather are actively reconstructing masculinities to include aspects of traditional feminine characteristics. Fathers' narratives […] are filled with visible and inchoate contradictions, which tell how fathers are both determined to distance themselves from the feminine but are also, in practice, radically revisioning masculine care and ultimately our understandings of masculinities. (Doucet, 2006, p.237)

Doucet argues that these masculine qualities of fathers' care widen the lens in the study of parental caring and reflect a balancing of connection and independence. I would argue that, to the extent that fathers claim that certain practices distinguish their parenting from women's parenting, they are appropriating the positive terms of oppositions which are implicitly hierarchical: between facilitating independence and being overprotective; between exploring the outdoors and being confined to domestic spaces; between child-centred fun and worrying about things (or chores). Distancing themselves from the feminine is a (moment of) demotion of the domestic, and Doucet's analysis risks confirming the link between the two. Furthermore, I would argue that it is not necessary to accept men's definition of any of the characteristics or practices mentioned as definitively masculine and it is necessary not to downplay diversity among mothers as and among fathers. An approach which 'straddles equality and difference' (2006, p.29) is also poised between recognising the work such appropriations do and evading their re-inscription in gendered terms.

In addition, Doucet's characterisation of caregiver fathers and working mothers enmeshed in accounting for alternative practices in conventional terms contrasts with Ranson's characterisation of (a small number of) mothers and fathers who share work and care committed to egalitarian practice on egalitarian principles and holding each other to reciprocity. They are not entirely mutually exclusive accounts. However, attempting to understanding the nature of the relation between accountability practices, mothers' justification of or guilt about participation in paid work, for example, and the practices for which mothers and fathers feel the need to account, such as the fact of mothers' participation in paid work, is relevant to recognising the force as well as the persistence of particular gendered moral norms. It is equally relevant to recognising the ways in which the remit of such norms might be restricted by reference to other demands and other discourses, such as egalitarianism or involved fatherhood. For example, fathers committed to a de-gendering of practice may engage in the deconstruction rather than mobilisation of 'masculinity' (Wetherell and Edley, 1999).

Neither the claim to birthday parties nor to outdoor play need, although in certain settings they may, establish hierarchical difference. By contrast, the broadening of motherhood to potentially incorporate financial provision and of fatherhood to potentially incorporate the nurturing care of children, although not fully reciprocal nor fully accepted, is of great significance in mothers and fathers potentially achieving a more equally rich and secure experience of parenthood. Nevertheless, one of the lines of argument developed in this thesis is that it remains necessary to resist the allocation of activities in ways which might participate in putting the fathers who bake cakes, and mothers who kayak with their kids to the trouble of borderwork. As Lorber wrote, 'whenever we can, we should encourage the degendering of instrumental tasks, physical labor, athletic prowess, emotional sustenance and physical spaces' (2000, p.88).

I make this point aware that the distinction between mothering and fathering may be preserved by recourse to more pernicious binaries. Finn and Henwood (2009) identified distinctions between generations co-existing with inter-generational identification among a diverse but largely full-time employed sample of fathers. The instances of identification with the father as a 'figure of virtue', with a unique role in instilling 'courage, strength, self-reliance and moral discernment in his children', are linked with men distinguishing themselves from their partners. One father, for example, positioned himself as stable and reliable, that is, within the terms of the 'virtuous new father', in contrast to his partner as impulsive and emotional. An intergenerational paternal identification was deployed in the construction, or maintenance, of an oppositional relation between men and women (2009, p.557). These men's children are unborn or infants, and there are elements of fantasy and appropriation in the envisaging of a parent's role in a child's life at such a time. The ideal they invoke has not reckoned with the changed perception in mothers' roles, not only in the workplace, but in the family as teacher and educational sponsor, particularly for middle class mothers. Nevertheless, both fathers' practices, and the links fathers (and others) make between their embodied

practices and conceptions of gender and/or constructions of masculinity, are at work in the ways parenting is gendered.

Henwood and Procter note that prospective fathers

> seemed overwhelmingly to welcome the changing nature of men and masculinity and their new father role […] Without exception, and with great clarity, interviewees related the importance of fathers to the very particular and changed character of the landscape of contemporary manhood and fatherhood. (2003, p.342)

Men's understandings of fatherhood do seem to signal that on one level there has been a change in 'the normative system involved in gender accountability' through 'changes in persons' orientation to these norms and changes in social relations that reflexively support changes in orientation' (West and Zimmerman, 2009, p.118), an issue explored further in the discussion in Chapter 7. For the prospective fathers, 'new fatherhood' offered an arena for doing gender differently because, in some ways, the system of accountability governing fatherhood has been altered. However, both Henwood and Procter (2003) and Finn and Henwood (2009) go on to examine the complexity and contradictions of these men's paternal and masculine subjectivities, which reflect the multiple and contesting normative discursive constructions, variously dominant in different contexts, to which fathers are held and hold themselves accountable. Following their example and recommendation, I will explore notions of 'balancing arrangements' and 'pleasures and distress' and 'men's self-perceptions', (Henwood and Procter 2003, pp. 351-2) in relation to both fatherhood and masculinity in the final data chapter of this thesis.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

The areas of research reviewed in the four sections of this chapter correspond to the focus of analysis in Chapters 3-6 on four dimensions of fatherhood. Although I make an analytic distinction between them, these dimensions are conceived of as interconnected within a multi-dimensional practice and experience of fatherhood.

In Section 1 of this review, I argue for an approach to men's fertility and family formation which recognises the place of relationality in both men's orientations to fatherhood and the process by which men become fathers. From this perspective, beliefs about family as well as personal, if particularly family, relationships are incorporated into evaluations of the socio-economic elements of situations. As noted above, the work of Bernardi *et al* provides a starting point for the discussion of the understandings of ideal or acceptable conditions for family life and on the envisaged place of parenthood in the life course presented in Chapter 3. In addition, both quantitative analyses (Berrington, 2004) and qualitative research (Hockey, 2009) show understandings of family life are not purely individual but contextualised, developing or converging in partner relationships. The work of scholars such as Marsiglio *et al* (2004) and Augustine *et al* (2009) considers the potential role of desire for relationship with a child and acceptance of, or ambivalence about, responsibilities entailed in the parent-child relationship, in men's thinking about having children and being a father. They also consider the potential significance of the uncertainties of conception on thinking about fatherhood. The analysis in Chapter 3 extends aspects of this literature, much of which is focused on the anticipation of fatherhood, to men who are already fathers, and to fathers' reflections on the motivations and conditions, not only of their becoming fathers, but in respect of further children they have or might have. In this way, the analysis is extended to incorporate the significance of the experience of fatherhood in the life course, and of relationships with and responsibilities to existing children, as well as to envisaged children and partners.

As noted in Section 2, 'new' fatherhood is 'new' in that positioning fathers' responsibilities for close relationship at the core of fatherhood alters the terms (or recognises the altered terms) on which fathers exercise authority and work to provide financially (Daly, 1993). This thesis explores how contemporary understandings of the interconnection between responsibilities and relationships inform fathers' evaluations of the heritage of the past, and of the legacy for the future.

Smart's (2007) work in relation to the passing on of cultural heritage points to the complexity of children's subjectivity with implications for parents' expectations of their role in children's lives; their influence is important but not uncontested. Together with Brannen *et al*'s (2004) discussion of the processes by which the next generation must actively take possession as 'subject' of their inheritance, the implication is that an active engagement with heritage over time is characteristic of the intergenerational dynamic. This perspective qualifies Daly's (1993) suggestion that it is particularly characteristic of contemporary fathers to find the elements of their paternal inheritance fragmented. However, to the extent that fathers adapt their inheritance to the conception of fatherhood in their own generation, there is value in developing a more detailed account of the processes and resources through which fathers construct the relation between their childhood past and their child's future in the present moment of the parent-child relationship. Drawing on conceptualisations of temporality in social life developed in the work of Mead and Schutz, this is the undertaking of Chapter 4. The analysis in Chapter 4 is concerned with fathers' understandings of the responsibilities to their children's future well-being, responsibilities which are basic to concerns over intergenerational transmission of educational achievement, gender competence, and cultural heritage discussed Section 2 above. The focus of Chapter 4 is parenting but the analysis is potentially relevant to fathers' perspectives on intergenerational processes in other areas, as is the interweaving of relationship and responsibility in the motivation, means and meaning of paternal legacies.

Within the broad focus of this thesis on multi-dimensional fatherhood in diverse forms, the literature examining the constitution of the division of labour and of gender in conventionally-gendered and alternative organisations of paid and unpaid work, discussed in Section 3, provides a rich context for interpretation. It also provides reference points for two lines of enquiry analysed in Chapter 5. The first is the implications of fathers' representations of similarity and difference between mothers' and fathers' practice, for understandings of gender and of fatherhood. Of interest are participants' perspectives on the difference difference

makes (Doucet, 2006). Research discussed in Section 3 indicates that alternative organisations of labour may co-exist with both the conservation and deconstruction of gender difference (Chesley, 2011; Ranson, 2010). In relation to a sample diverse in terms of household organisation, I will consider the extent to which the dismantling of gender boundaries, in participants' characterisation of the parenting partnership, is aligned with, and confined to, situations where gender boundaries are dismantled through the formal division of labour. I will also consider the extent to which fathers represent their practice as aligned with their desired role as fathers.

The second line of enquiry is fathers' reflections on the implications of the configuration of their practice, and the division of labour between partners, for the contemporary experience of fatherhood. Henwood and Procter (2003) identified a divergence between those who were able to balance their commitment across fatherhood and career and those who were not. Again, in relation to a sample diverse in household organisation and participation in the labour market, but also in respect of the age of participants' children, I consider how balance and tension in relation to the different dimensions of fatherhood and personal life figure in participants' accounts. In respect of both lines of enquiry, I draw on the literature in being attentive to the central place given to partners, their wishes and their perceived perspective, in participants' accounts and to research which points to the potentially distinct perspective of women on fathers' practice (Doucet, 2006). However, I also engage with debates as to the place of financial provision in the norms and practice of fatherhood. I argue for a parallel attention to fathers', and mothers', understanding of their practice within the contextualised, embedded terms of a broad responsibility for the wellbeing of the family as a whole and the collective resources for meeting them, that is, to doing family as well as doing gender.

A further aspect of the work discussed in Section 3 is considered in Section 4. Taking up the analytic attention to balance and tension in the work of Henwood and Procter (2003), Section 4 considered the consequences of the blurring of

distinctions between maternal and paternal for fathers' relation to constructions of masculinity. The consistent deployment of the discourse of 'new' fatherhood by Henwood and Procter's sample does seem to signal a change, rather than simply an expansion, in the discursive construction of norms according to which fathers' practice is evaluated. However, Doucet's work stresses the persistence of constructions of femininity and masculinity as reference points for evaluating and accounting for situations and actions for men and women. In Chapter 6, as noted above, I consider men's representations of moments of ambivalence in relation to fatherhood, and in relation to 'masculinity'. I explore how men manage the relation to masculinity, and practices of accountability, in contextualised ways, noting not only the persistence of gendered moral norms identified in the research discussed in this chapter, but reflecting on indications that the force with which they persist varies and on the potential in alternative discourses for alternative mobilising alternative moral resources for accountability.

Some of the theoretical work with which the thesis engages is discussed in detail in later chapters as the issues to which it is relevant arise. The conceptualisation of plural masculinities and hegemonic masculinity, in the work of Connell (1995) and colleagues is critiqued in Chapter 6. The theorisation of family practices by Morgan (1996) and personal life by Smart (2007), on which I draw in conceptualising doing family and doing fatherhood, are introduced in Chapter 3 but discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7, as is the theorisation of 'doing gender', by West and Zimmerman (1987) and colleagues. In the final chapter I return to key works discussed in this chapter in considering the implications of the analysis presented in Chapters 3-6 for understanding relationship and responsibility in fatherhood within an analytic framework of doing family, doing fatherhood and un/doing gender. The research methods through which the issues raised in this review were addressed in interviews with fathers and analyses of their accounts are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 Methodology: research with fathers

Research Design

The purpose of the research is to explore with fathers their perspectives on the meanings and practices of fatherhood and family, incorporating a focus on family formation, intergenerationality and gender. Given this aim, the method of enquiry was qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a diverse sample. As elaborated in further detail below, discussion with fathers covered life events, beliefs about and reflections on becoming and being a father, as well as dimensions of lived fatherhood, including the partner relationship, the father-child relationship and their participation in family and paid work. I noted in the Introduction that the focus of the research has shifted in the course of the research process. The original core focus of enquiry was the link between the experience of fatherhood and further family formation. That link, in the course of analysis process came to be framed in terms of family practices and doing fatherhood, as discussed in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 7. This was the result of preliminary findings that understandings of family and relationships with family members shaped both participants' orientations to family formation and their expectations or experience of fatherhood more than any direct connection between them. Therefore, the focus on family formation was incorporated alongside, rather than encompassing, a concern with intergenerationality and gender. The analytic concerns were refined to: the place of family formation and visions of family in fathers' life course; a consideration of participants' construction of temporal relations between their childhood, their parenting and their child's future; the construction of the relation of fatherhood to motherhood by participants', in characterising the parenting partnership and the different dimensions of their own practice, and reflections on how fathers were positioned in relation to constructions of 'masculinity'.

In the course of the analysis the research foci derived from these concerns were formulated in four questions:

1. How do fathers characterise their orientations to and decisions around becoming a father?

2. How do fathers construct the relationship between their father's and their own practice of fatherhood?

3. How do fathers construct the relationship between fatherhood and motherhood and between the different dimensions of their own practice of fatherhood?

4. How do fathers position themselves and how are they positioned by others in relation to discursive constructions of fatherhood and masculinity?

The research design is informed by Morgan's (1996) reconceptualization of family as practice and Smart's (2007) delineation of personal life, and by an understanding of fatherhood as multi-dimensional and subjectivity as plural rather than unitary, constituted at the intersection of multiple discourses and within a personal history (Weedon, 1992). Gender, as with other social categories, is constituted on the level of interactions and institutions (West and Zimmerman, 1987) with reference to circulating but contested discursive constructions of femininity and masculinity, motherhood and fatherhood etc. Access to discursive and material resources shapes the availability of narratives through which social life is enacted and biography constituted (Hyvärinen, 2008; Atkinson and Delamont, 2006).

Sample

The scope of the research was intended to be inclusive of a diversity of practice among fathers in diverse situations. The intention was to sample across the categories more/less educated, younger/older, dual earner/sole earner/non-earning and partnered/lone/non-resident fathers. While the majority of the sample are highly educated, partnered, and employed, a third of the sample were in working class occupations or unemployed at the time of the interview. A small number are single or non-resident fathers.

Recruitment, the scope of which was confined to one city in Scotland, was an extended process, pursued by a variety of means. Direct requests to acquaintances and personal recommendations by intermediaries to potential participants were the most fruitful methods. The role of others in introducing the research and, in some sense, vouching for me was invaluable. Aware that a friend had encouraged them to participate, I was careful to stress their freedom to withdraw. The response to advertisements in public spaces was low, but important. It was more successful in venues for younger children than for school-age children. Although participants themselves appeared to enjoy the process, most expressed reluctance to speak to other men about the research. No participants were obtained by snowballing from one participant to another.

I interviewed 31 fathers in the course of 2012. An alphabetical list of participants is included in Appendix 1. Seven participants were fathers of primary school children from three schools in the local area, one of which my daughter still attends, whom I asked directly if they would like to participate. One of these men was a friend but the others I did not know well when I approached them. Six participants were recruited through advertising in a playgroup attached to one of these schools. Four participants had met at National Childbirth Trust classes and had remained in contact. A friend of mine, a mother, who was part of this group, spoke to them about the research and obtained permission from some for me to contact them with further details. Two participants, who were not otherwise connected, were introduced to the research by another friend who, again, passed me their contact details. Two participants responded to a leaflet passed on to them, one by a colleague from the research centre where I am based and one by a librarian co-ordinating a parent-toddler group. Another responded to an advertisement posted on an online community noticeboard. One participant I met at a research centre event, the name of another was given me following a knowledge exchange event. It was a goal of the research to incorporate the experience of fathers in a range of situations including those who were relatively disadvantaged in relation to the labour market. A number of social work professionals working with fathers were

approached, one of whom introduced me to men at a fathers' group of which he was the co-ordinator.   Eight fathers were recruited through this fathers group, although two were not regular members and had attended only on the day I interviewed them. While there is a degree of clustering in recruitment from my local area, an area characterised by cultural and socio-economic diversity, this diversity is extended by recruitment of participants living in other parts of the city.

Twenty participants were educated to graduate or post-graduate level. Level of education did not map straightforwardly onto income level, employment sector or participation in the labour market. For example, six of those educated to graduate level did not work for pay, or worked reduced hours. Nineteen, nearly two-thirds of the sample, could be classified as belonging to either the established or technical middle class (Savage *et a*l, 2013), although two of the nineteen who had been in employment when their children were younger were not employed at the time of the interview. The fields of education, finance and IT were well-represented in the sample and several participants held management positions of some kind. Three of the participants in these categories had been in higher education when they became a father.   Among the lower socio-economic groups, two participants might be considered a new affluent worker in Savage *et al's* terms, and a group of four as traditional working class with a further two participants in the emergent service sector. However, there was movement between forms and fields of employment, and in and out of employment, among this group. Six participants lived in non-earning households at the time of the interview, three of whom had considerable employment experience and three of whom had been unemployed for many years.

At the time of the interviews, participants were aged between 27-51 years old. The age at which participants became fathers of their first biological child ranged from 18 to 42 years; the mode was 33. The average age of fathers in Scotland, although for all births, was 32.5 in 2013 (National Record for Scotland, 2014, p.23). The youngest child at the time of interview was 9 weeks old. The oldest child who was not a stepchild was 17, the daughter of the participant who became a father earliest,

at 18. The year in which participants first became fathers ranged from 1994 to 2012, with the mode at 2003.

Most of the fathers interviewed live in co-resident partner relationships with the mothers of their children. Three of the working class fathers are single parents, two are non-resident fathers and one is co-resident with his ex-partner and their children. For the purposes of the analysis (and in the graph in Appendix 2), the participants are divided into groups of households on the basis of their predominant organisation of paid work and childcare during the period their children were pre-schoolers. Those mothers who returned to work after maternity leave were counted as employed. The sample comprises nine dual earner (one partner in FT and one in 3+ days paid employment) households, 5 households where the working week is divided between paid work and solo care for both partners, ten sole earner households, in one of which the mother is the sole earner, and five non-earning households, three of which are single father households. Two fathers did not live with their children.

Limitations of the sample

Fathers who agreed to speak to me demonstrated an overall positive identification with fatherhood and thus the perspectives of fathers with a negative orientation are excluded. The proportion of the sample which represented themselves as financially comfortable might have been higher if more participants had been recruited from affluent areas of the city. Also, as a consequence of the recruitment process, the sample includes a number of participants in challenging circumstances or affected by multiple vulnerabilities in their own and/or family members' lives. Although lone fathers and non-resident fathers participated in the research, the experience of co-operative post-separation co-parenting is not represented. No gay fathers were recruited. In these ways, although a sample representative of the wider population was not the goal of recruitment, the diversity of experience represented in the sample is shaped by the recruitment process. Finally, fathers repeatedly

emphasise the importance of partners' perspectives but the points of view of mothers themselves have not been included in the research.

Ethics

I am committed to engaging with participants as dynamic, reflexive, ethical agents. The research conformed to the BSA's protocols on ethical practice and was subject to ethical scrutiny within the School of Social and Political Science through a Level 2 Ethics review. The standard that 'research relationships should be characterised, whenever possible, by trust' (BSA, 2002, p.3) is central to the ethical requirements of informed consent and confidentiality. An ongoing commitment to dialogue and transparency within individual research relationships is an effort necessary to protect trust, and to manifest the respect for the participant's active role and equal status (although not power) within the research process central to feminist research ethics.

In approaching potential participants in person or in correspondence, I introduced myself in my role as research student, the focus of the research, and provided supporting information (Appendix 3). At this point, and at the interview, I detailed their rights to refuse or withdraw participation and/or data at any time, to confidentiality and to refuse recording of interviews. Maintaining informed consent was an on-going process through the interview, as different topics were raised. There were times where participants articulated a decision not to speak of something, in some cases for the sake of their partner's privacy, and there were times when participants subsequently intimated the sensitivity for participants or their partners of something said and I excluded it from transcription. Some participants whom I did not know prior to the interview have become acquaintances and may ask about my studies. The interview and material discussed in the interview has not been referred to in subsequent interactions with participants, or their partners, when met in the context of school or community events, for example. Confidentiality has also been maintained through secure storage of data, and anonymity through use of pseudonyms and careful treatment

of identifiers in transcripts and writing. This is particularly important where some participants share membership of a group, and where large amounts of data from one participant are presented together in the thesis.

In support of ethical protocols there is a need for a reflexive awareness of the role of researcher values in the research process (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) and a contextual attention to an ethics of care (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002, p.28). A small number of the men who came to participate in the research through a fathers group had been in very distressing and difficult circumstances involving their (now) ex-partners, in some cases with implications for their contact with their children, often for a prolonged period of time. Aspects of their circumstances had required or involved, in a range of different ways, intervention on the part of social services and/or legal action in pursuit of access to or custody of children. I made every effort to be sensitive during the conversation, to check, as with all men I interviewed, that they remained comfortable with where the conversation was taking us, and to remind them that they could choose to pass over a topic whenever they wished. However, I was able to speak with these fathers in the knowledge that they were not speaking of their experience as a whole for the first time and were already in contact with a social work professional and supported by other fathers in the group.

Oakley is one of many feminist researchers to have rejected the masculine paradigm of a hierarchical relationship between instrumental, objective, expert interviewer and passive, objectified, interviewee-as-data-source (1981, pp.31-40). I have sought to establish respectful, reciprocal and open relationships with participants. Nevertheless, patterns of power are always present, though its exercise 'is neither straightforward nor one-way (Lawler, 2000, p.9). I was dependent on the generosity, openness and engagement with the research of participants. I feel an ethical responsibility to write with an awareness of participants' contribution, and the problematic powers and limits of representation. Whether or not they read the thesis, participants, as well as the academic reader, are part of the audience of the

research and participants will receive a summary of findings. Nevertheless, the responsibility and power to set the research agenda (Wallbank, 2001, p.23) and to present participants' accounts from a perspective not their own, but rather those of relevant theoretical debates is mine (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.141). That responsibility and power is itself situated in relation to the requirements, responsibilities and power of institutional academia (Standing, 1997, p.196). Furthermore, I am conscious that very few participants will have a clear idea of the processes of abstraction and re-configuration in terms of sociological categories, concepts and debates to which their accounts will be subject in the process of analysis, nor of the demands of an academic context and audience on the form in which their data will be re-presented in academic writing. This discrepancy is one of the limits to the principle of informed consent. I have sought to limit this process to sociologically relevant aspects of accounts, and thus deemed some aspects as outside the remit of the research, and framed elements of participants' accounts in ways which limit the reductionism entailed in abstraction. Nevertheless, with the power of an author, albeit itself constrained by ethical and institutional demands, I have subsumed their narratives in my own account of doing fatherhood and doing family.

Interviews

The setting of the majority of interviews was, as participants chose, either my own home (13), or the participant's home (7) or workplace (2). One interview took place over a meal at a pub. In three cases, a young child was present and, in one of these a partner. Another group of interviews (8) took place in a private room within a centre where a fathers' group met. The interview commenced with a discussion of the information leaflet (Appendix 3), which I had given them or sent them by email in advance if possible. There were four elements in the design of the interview: the life grid; the narrative account of becoming a father; a thematically-structured discussion; and a review. I sought to address the research concerns from multiple angles and allow earlier parts of the interview to feed into later discussion. For

example, while the meaning of fatherhood is addressed directly, narratives of developing interests or career choices prompted by the life grid, discussions of fatherhood and motherhood and of the division of labour within the partnership might all address aspects of the meaning of fatherhood. The interactive resources of the Life Grid early in the interview and a discussion of potential factors in decision-making using factor cards (both in Appendix 4) supported participants in reflecting on and evaluating relevant past events, varied the pace of the interview and generated data particular to their circumstances not necessarily anticipated or prompted by more open-ended questions.   Throughout the interview, I endeavoured to be sensitive to and responsive to participants' lead in exploring relevant experience. The interview interaction was intended to support men's reconstruction of their reasoning about the significance of their own biography and its context for their understandings of fatherhood.

Life Grid

> The life grid is a tool that essentially allows for the construction of a visual temporal framework. It is composed of a 'grid' or 'table' structure, one axis of which represents the passage of time. Selected aspects of the respondents' lives (such as family and occupational history) are represented by columns or rows underneath or to the side of this time axis. (Wilson *et al*, 2007, p.136)

A life grid *pro forma* (Appendix 4) was created in advance of each interview, the format having been revised twice early in the course of data collection. The life dimensions given at the head of the table were: Residence, Family/Extended family, Education, Work, Partner(s), and Children. There was a panel for collecting information about the residence, employment, and family formation of the parents of the participants and the mother of his children.   Compiling information in relation to different life dimensions counteracted the tendency toward linearity or privileging either relational or vocational trajectories. Use of the Life Grid supported the interviewer and participants in co-constructing the chronology of their narrative (Wilson *et al*, 2007, p.136) and provided biographical context for situating and interpreting participant meaning-making at all stages of the interview.

Using the life grid addressed concerns that the appropriateness of a very open narrative approach might vary across the sample. Although I felt some more educated fathers were initially slightly resistant to the process, their resistance appeared to dissipate as it became clear that the conversation prompted by the Life Grid was the primary purpose of its use. The response of others and, particularly some of the less advantaged fathers, was more directly appreciative of the production of a concrete biographical record (Wilson *et al*, 2007, p.140). The Life Grid was helpful on several occasions in identifying or clarifying the timing or ordering of events, but also in countering to some extent the tendency to be vague about the duration of periods between events in biographical narratives.

I also found that, as Wilson *et al* suggested, the technique allowed the participant to guide the treatment of sensitive issues (2007, pp.136-140). The gradual accumulation of context was invaluable in making me aware of the parameters of their family situation, employment circumstances, etc. to which I could adapt subsequent questions. It also laid the groundwork for subsequent participant narratives. Furthermore, the different dimensions of the life grid directly address the concerns of the research with how men understand the place of fatherhood across the life dimensions and the place of education, employment, housing and partnership in the life course. It was of benefit that these aspects, which may be sensitive for participants in that they are related to forms of social status, are addressed in the interview in an apparently standardised format but also squarely within a privileging of the participant's perspective on their life experience. In some cases we completed the Grid quite systematically, in others the lines of conversation ran quickly and recurrently beyond it. In some cases, the linear tendencies of the Life Grid had less of a fit with the life or the conversation style or the preoccupations of participants, such as those in the midst of or emerging from struggles over custody issues, for example. The grid remained available for reference, but was only occasionally amended in the interview; the flow of discussion was prioritised and additions or amendments made as part of the transcription or analysis process.

Family formation narrative

In the next stage of the interview I asked fathers to tell me the story of how they became a father. These narratives varied in length and detail and proceeded with varying degrees of prompting, as participants related, or referred back to, aspects of their orientation to fatherhood, their relationship with the mother, conception, the transition to fatherhood and the decisions and events relevant to any subsequent childbearing.

Integral to the comprehension and interpretation of interview data, as with any conversation, is an awareness of story-telling and its different or multiple purposes: to entertain, to generate rapport, to illustrate or to explain. Some participants were raconteurs and some autobiographers, both accepting questions as prompts. Some were literalists who responded to questions economically. Many of the stories told (and some arguments made) seemed to me to have been told in some form before. Some participants recounted humorous anecdotes in which the timing of conception confounded expectations or plans. Many told practised birth stories. Nevertheless, in some cases, participants appeared to be in the process of constructing a story that had not been told before in that way. Sometimes participants commented on the experience of making connections not formerly made. To the extent that the story had a temporal quality, charting a movement from one situation to another, making connections between events and decisions and feelings, explaining and evaluating, it can be thought of as a narrative (Reissman, 1993).

Discussion of dimensions of doing family and fatherhood

The narrative of becoming a father worked as a bridge between the focus on context and events to questions which ask fathers for more abstracted summaries of practice over time or reflections on the significance events or on beliefs. In constructing summaries or reflections in response to my questions or in the course of conversation, their responses also included narrative elements.

The largest part of the interview was a semi-structured discussion of a series of themes including participants' expectations and experience of being a father, beliefs

about gender in respect of parenting, the organisation of family work and paid work, support networks, and their orientation to having further children. As appropriate, their understanding of their partner's perspective was also sought.

Review

The last section of the interview functioned as a review of some of the central themes raised during the interview. I summarised what I thought had been said in relation to each of eight factor cards (Appendix 4) and asked the participant to amend, or elaborate on, what I said if they wished. I also asked if there was anything missing from the list of factors. The factors shown on the cards were Desire for a child, Work/Career, Finances, Lifestyle/Freedom, Family/Friends, Existing children, Childcare, to which a participant very soon added Partner Relationship. Although derived from factors relevant to decisions about family formation discussed in the fertility literature, discussion of these areas also related to life course, context and beliefs about family relevant to the practices of fatherhood and family.

Reflections

As noted above, I sought to provide opportunities for participants to address topics more than once and from slightly different angles, through the different stages of the interview. Although the structure of the interview varied somewhat with different participants, working in this way facilitated elaboration, revision, and the introduction of new information, although at times there may have been a loss in 'narrative' alongside a gain in thematic 'information'. Nevertheless, there was opportunity for narratives about incidents or transitions in relationships or career trajectory, for example, which many participants did take up. Elements particular to participants' diverse situations which surfaced through use of the life grid, such as their experience of education, loss and recovery of contact with a non-resident child, later partnership, difficulties conceiving a child, or migration and housing histories, for example, were introduced in a way which provided the context for the subsequent discussion in the interview and a context for understanding the mix of

opinion, reflection and narrative prompted by the more thematic questions. For a few participants, the breadth of topics covered in the interview also allowed for compression and glossing over time periods. However, as noted, working with the chronology of the Life Grid often prompted clarification or participant reflection and brought to the fore memories which might not have been otherwise prompted. Important narrative elements or further elaboration or correction were often generated in the review of our discussion at the end of the interview.

In line with feminist models of reciprocity in interview settings, I answered questions and sometimes contributed my own experiences as seemed appropriate. However, participants appeared to have a robust sense that the interview was about what they had to say. No doubt the exact nature of interaction was partly influenced by the extent to which my own position or experience was aligned with that of the participant, but I sought to convey a felt acceptance of each participant's positioning as a loving father and embrace opportunities for mutual agreement as they arose in the course of a conversation between parents (on the misery of sleep deprivation or the problem of managing screen time, for example). There were occasionally times when I quietly or lightly indicated my distance from a position, in relation to gender stereotypes for example. Although I sought to cover the ground as consistently as seemed feasible and appropriate and sensitive in the social, interpersonal, ethical interaction that was the interview, I acknowledge also many failures of memory or nerve or skill. I hope these losses are balanced by the gains achieved through a positive rapport and a respectful approach. I did not press where I sensed it was not wanted; I did not want to know what a participant did not want to tell me (Brownlie, 2014, pp.37-8). Yet, I sometimes felt that participants were a little surprised at how much they had said, and they often commented that it had been good to talk about their fatherhood.

Analysis

Just as diverse strategies were deployed in the interviews to generate data, so the analysis process incorporated a number of strategies for engaging with the data.

Mauthner and Doucet (1998) provide a model of combining different approaches during analysis and Finn and Henwood (2009) an example of multi-stage thematic and biographical analysis with fathers. For each participant interview, I produced a transcript with comments, a chronological summary of their account incorporating reflections on the narrative connections made by the participant, and an entry in the Life Course table, each of which I discuss in turn below. For the sample as a (growing) whole, from early on in the period of data collection, I explored the connections and contrasts in the data through the following strategies: examining the order and timing of life course events in the Life Course table; successive readings with broad research foci; and writing and refining analytic memos exploring clusters of themes and the relations between them. Alongside continuing to develop the work arising out of these processes, I continued to read in relevant bodies of literature, developing my reading of transcripts and analysis of the themes in dialogue with others' research and theorisations of family life, relationships, gender etc.

Transcript

I transcribed interview recordings as close in time to the interview as possible, in order that memory of the conversation and context aided comprehension and interpretation of the recording. I included repetition, pauses etc. and sometimes indicated laughter or tone of voice or noted a paraphrase in brackets, where it was useful to clarify which of a number of potential meanings of the words as written was intended. The first reading of each completed transcript, near in time to the transcription, was intended to be as open as possible, and one step in the process of becoming familiar with and reflecting on the participant's account. Making notes, I attempted to build a sense of the account's overall narrative and its context. I noted possible themes, my own thoughts, questions, relevant reflections on the interview, and connections with the accounts of other participants.

Summaries of participant narratives

Narratives are, in a partial and situated form, a way of constructing certain events and relationships as significant and for reconstructing certain processes. At some points, narratives are enacted reasoning, at other times they are the rehearsal of a story honed through repeated tellings. If memory is a poor porter of details and dates, it is of interest as, in Smart's terms, a bearer of social, family and personal meanings. It's meaningfulness in context is often linked to emotion and desire but also connected to family and cultural meanings and traditions (2007, p.38). The research is not narrative research, in that neither the design of the interview, nor the presentation of the analysis are primarily or purely narrative in form, and the concerns of the research questions are not primarily concerned with narrativity. Nevertheless, the analysis is premised on the centrality of meaning-making as a core practice in people's relational lives (Frank, 2002) and on the pertinence of storying as a guiding metaphor for understanding that process in relation to participants' sense of their past, present and future self.

Narrative practice is a context-bound social phenomenon subject to conventions (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006, p.*xxvi*) and a sense-making process. Commonalities across men's narratives may suggest commonly significant elements of the social context and broader interpretive frameworks (Grbich, 2007, p.30). Recurrent conventions may point to the social discourse and authoritative knowledges and power relations (Riessman, 1993, p.65) within or against which men position themselves and are positioned (Lawler, 2000, p.14) as well as the social scripts available to a narrator to work with in certain situations. Stories may also 'narrate' developments in perception and understanding (Hyvärinen, 2008, p.456), which is also of relevance to my interest in men's reconstruction of both events and of reasoning in relation to doing fatherhood and doing family.

The process of writing an analytic summary of participants' accounts involved integrating the various elements of chronology and narrative from throughout the interview, incorporating aspects of the participant's telling, significant motifs and

themes, my reflections on strategies, references and the working of social discourses. I took participants to be improvising out of a pre-existing but dynamic sense of their life as an already provisionally, partially storied whole, although with the potential for making new connections. The form the account of self takes in the interview is stimulated and moulded by the interview context and its conventions, the prompts of the interaction, and the vagaries of memory and daily circumstance. The interview asked of the participant both some kind of accounting for the past and also some account of the reasons for and meaning of decisions and events to do with having children. Thus, while the interview generated a mix of narratives, opinions and reflections, a mix which varied among participants, I attempted to be attentive to both narratives and the storying which is at work in the casting of responses. I listened for the connections made between events, and the inter-relation of events and emotions, for explanations of causes, qualifications of significance and the representation of others' positions, and for tone.

The interview with Tom was one in which I was particularly conscious of how tone of voice and manner in the interview were part of the participant's work as auto-biographer. Tom had to cut his degree short, when his girlfriend unexpectedly became pregnant, in order to go out to work to pay the mortgage and provide for his family. He has fulfilled these responsibilities, in time working his way up to a position of responsibility within a large company, but there have been lean times. Tom places his enjoyment of and commitment to fatherhood as central in his life. However, I felt there was, initially, a self-consciousness about his circumstances, as well as an unacknowledged anticipation that others might evaluate his life differently. As I sought to affirm the account he was offering, the self-consciousness lessened. The sense that Tom felt he was constructing his narrative of proud fatherhood against implicit resistance led me to attempt to summarise some of the narrative lines I saw in his account:

> It's worked out alright. We have, with the support of others, transformed the potentially negative into something positive, through hard work and

sacrifice and the positive attitude I am demonstrating now, into the thing that was always most important.

I have taken up the identity of father in all respects – provision, planning, responsibility, love and care and play, combining strengths from across the spectrum within my relationship with the girls, the family and the wider community (toddler group, play group, expert for friends). And am happy in it.

What children need most is what we have given them, love and attention and fun and time. They don't need a lot of money spent on them.

Identifying a rhetorical move is not to have found a participant out. It is more useful to reflect on such moves as part of a creative process of meaning-making through which people attempt to sustain themselves in a viable relation to the world and others. That processes of construction and reconstruction of connections and significance are dynamic is both inevitable and a resource for resilience.

Participants may be aware of, and explicit about, these processes. Andrew prefaced telling me the explanation he would give to people for his unwillingness to have children before his late 30s with a description of that explanation as a self-justification cast in moral terms. His explanation was that 'because I'd seen what a mess it could be I was kind of, you know, maybe this was a self-justification but I kind of felt 'I'm not sure I could inflict my lack of discipline on children', you know so I was very moral about it.' Later, he settled down and met his present partner and found himself open to fatherhood. Now a father of two, he feels he came to a realisation there had been a 'need to be a very free individual' but also that his anxiety was less located in his parenting heritage than in a potential biological heritage, an anxiety which time had lessened. The imperative to incorporate new material (a miscarriage, unemployment, twins), as well as the possibility of shifting the emotional and psychological weight given to elements in the story over time, are both ways subjects may work to sustain a sense of self able to relate to others, including those for whom they care and consider themselves responsible for, in changing circumstances.

For this reason, participants' storying is meaningful on multiple levels. Reflections in the summaries were one part of a process of engagement with the transcript. Their adequacy and relevance were tested in the course of subsequent stages of the analysis which were always based in the transcripts themselves.

Life course table

From the transcripts and Life Grid I entered data relating to residence, education, employment, partnership(s) and family formation as well as any notable events specified in the participant's account into the columns of the table. Having ordered the columns by the age at which participants became fathers, I coded different types of event in order to get a visual, albeit schematic, impression of different patternings in the timing and ordering of events in the life course across the sample. For example, it was clear that there was a group of participants for whom the formation of the partnership which would become the parenting partnership occurred several years prior to having children. For another group who partnered later, marriage and having children were more clearly connected in time. However, the significance of any patterning is primarily in the conceptual analysis of the transcript data they prompt, or test; narrative writings had suggested a conceptual as well as temporal link between marriage and family formation for this group.

The information I have about a participant's life course is conspicuously a co-construction, as it was shaped by what I asked, and what I asked was, in turn, shaped by participants' responses. A considerable proportion of this information comes out of the discussion arising from the use of the Life Grid which generated more precise attaching of events to time, and more precise positioning of events in relation to each other, than general discussion. For example, it could give a sense of how long a period unmarked by events, for example the period of waiting to conceive, must have been, which was sometimes at odds with an impression received during the interview. Compiling the Life Course table also functioned as a check for errors, inconsistencies or lack of data, and as a useful aid when writing.

Thematic readings and analytic memos

The thematic readings took me back, again and again, to the transcripts. The process of reading with a broad but specified focus (paid work, for example) was a form of coding, in that relevant data was brought together and the relation between dimensions analysed. In a two stage process, the data relevant to the broad theme is collated initially by participant and considered in terms of the account as a whole. Subsequently, the analysis of themes was developed in relation to more closely specified focus (work/provision/partner's work/sources of tension).

At times the analysis was structured by a comparison of groups of participants in analytically pertinent categories. The significance and dimensions of the categories were tested as themes and categories were compared and contrasted in constructing an analytic memo. Possible conceptualisations were tested against each account in order that their pertinence and limits within the sample might be evaluated. Identifying variations or contradictions led to a qualification, dismissal, elaboration or re-formulation of the ideas. For example, early work on the patterning of family formation within the life course of the first eight participants suggested both a connection with literature describing patterns of investment (Bernardi *et al*, 2008, see Chapter 3) and modifications of that literature's concepts to fit the cases recruited to that point. As the sample grew, further development of the categories was required. At other times, the analysis is structured by the different aspects of a theme, such as participants' engagement with their parenting heritage (Chapter 4). Each aspect was addressed in turn with reference to variety across the sample as a whole.

I drew on some elements of grounded theory methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as a 'set of flexible strategies' (Charmaz, 2003, p.256) rather than as elements in a strictly defined relationship with one another and as generic processes compatible with a range of interpretative frameworks (Pidgeon and Henwood, 2004) and diverse theoretical positions (Charmaz, 2003). The analysis process was a constantly iterative one of making connections and testing their fit and scope and modifying relationships through further consideration of the data in the writing process. For

example, the significance of an initial distinction between replication and recuperation in participants' relation to their parenting heritage was revised when comparison between the processes of positioning the past within the present for the two groups did not sustain such a sharp distinction. Identifying the commonalities between the categories led to a revised understanding of the nature of the difference between them, discussed in Chapter 4. The development of the analysis in relation to the literature on family formation, fatherhood, family and relationships, gender and subjectivity was also iterative. The conceptualisation of categories, the relations between them and characterisations of the processes of doing family and fatherhood elaborated in the thesis developed in dialogue with theoretical understandings and substantive analyses discussed in Chapters 1 and 7.

Situating reflexivity

Practices of reflexivity involve reflection on the influences in operation in our reactions, emotions and actions as we try to understand ourselves. They are 'part of everyday practice in the social world' (Gray, 2008, p.936). I noted above that many participants recognised the situatedness of interactions, and of their reflections, in the interview. Researchers and participants alike are situated on a continuum of reflexivity, although the researcher is particularly attentive to practices of reflexivity as a constituent part of every stage and element of the research process. In this brief discussion of the implications of my personal relation to the focus, process and products of this research, I acknowledge aspects of my biography relevant for the design and analysis, and reflect on the dynamic nature of that relation through the research period.

My focus, first, is on 'what motivates our research and what appears to matter to the research process' (Doucet, 2008, p.84). In my relation to the focus of the research, there was both personal and intellectual continuity and novelty. I researched mothers' understandings of their parenting in relation to issues of gender for a Masters dissertation when my daughter was young. Subsequently I have undertaken the funded doctoral research with men which incorporated a focus on

family formation and intergenerationality represented in this thesis. There were new areas of study, but the relevance to personal life and the intellectual concern with parenthood and gender were elements of continuity. In each project, I have been conscious of discrepancies as well as alignments between my own experience or position in respect of the research focus and those conveyed by participants. There have also been rhythms in reflexivity in that some issues have required particular attention, and working through, at particular times. The interpenetration of the personal and the intellectual is the basis for reflexivity. In this case, among the influences which were observable and recordable, the influence of the intellectual exploration was significant for understandings of my personal relational life as much as my personal biography was significant for the intellectual work. However, as Doucet warns 'it is also important to be cautious about how much we can know about what influences us in research' (2008, p.84).

I had been a primary caregiver, often in combination with part-time study, before moving into full-time study. In ways appropriate to these different periods, my parenting partnership has been an equitable one. In relating to participants, elements of biography and situation supported rapport through the availability of common ground with participants as parents, with participants or their partners as primary caregivers, through empathy with the demands faced by a sole earner and the time constraints on family life faced in dual earner households (as well as with space constraints and other peculiarities of the housing market in the city). Even where there were differences in experience, we shared the social context of life with young children. Nevertheless, fathers' positions were distinct from mine, as men and as, in many cases, partners of and parents with women. Participants occasionally explicitly positioned me as aligned with their partner or mothers in general. It seemed to me that, where partnered, participants felt it was important to position their partners as good mothers in order to be good partners, but also that, at times, participants also sought or assumed my recognition, as a woman or mother, of certain scenarios between partners or parents.

I was frequently conscious of gaps in my knowledge in the course of interviews in areas such as the benefits system, aspects of the legal system, or local historical events. One unbridgeable gap is characterised by Doucet below.

> In researching the lives of fathers, I have felt like an anthropologist observing a culture that – though it is my own – I can know only partially because I was not raised a boy, do not have a male body, do not relate to men in the ways that men can and do, and I have never thought of myself as a father, nor have I been treated like one (2006, p.13).

Such consciousness is a guard against a researcher assuming they recognise and understand familiar experience. When I interviewed mothers, in a previous project, I worked to avoid an assumption of shared experience on the basis of shared status. However, I found that into the space around my even more partial knowledge of men's experience and perspective would occasionally crash and swirl culturally-embedded ideas of intransigent difference in men's and women's thinking, as well as feminist critiques of entrenched cultural misogyny. Such ideas positioned as doubtful and naïve any confidence in participants' accounts of caring and involved fatherhood and led me to doubt, at times, that others would have any confidence in my analysis of them. These doubts were tempered, to a degree, by the fact that a high proportion of participants were known, if not to me, to others I knew, although such knowledge is still partial. Against a necessary acknowledgement of the wider context of ongoing systemic inequality and of persistent deployment of debilitative and coercive power by some men against some women, my response has been to place my situated, partial knowledge of men, among whom some have shown respect for women's subjectivity and commitment to gender equality and some have positioned themselves further along the spectrum towards the denial of these values. This knowledge, consistent with relevant strands of research literature, allows me to proceed on the basis that it is possible for men to speak in good faith (if partially, provisionally and in ways their partners may or may not endorse), as participants have spoken to me, but impossible for me to know beyond that. Hearn's directive that 'fathers need to be understood as gendered and as *men*, and

fatherhood […] as a form of certain men's power' (2002, p.245), points to the particular twist that (women) interviewing fathers gives to the always existing issue of how researchers respond to the inevitably selective, partial and provisional quality of self-representation by participants (and researchers) in research interviews.

My perception is limited by my socially situated perspective. However, also in operation 'the sociological collective unconscious embedded in theories, problems and categories of sociological judgement' (Gray, 2008, p.945) and a scholarly commitment to expanding the resources available to my perspective. Thus, I proceeded with an awareness of multiple perspectives and of moving between them. I was aware of positioning myself differently in relation to the data in different phases of the research: engaging with participants during interviews; developing my representation of data during analysis; and then framing it, sometimes re-conceiving aspects of it, in relation to relevant literature. Mauthner and Doucet write of the 'balancing act between three different and sometimes conflicting standpoints: (1) the multiple and varying voices and stories of each of the individuals we interview; (2) the voice(s) of the researcher(s); and (3) the voices and perspectives represented within existing theories or frameworks in our research areas and which researchers bring to their studies (1998, p.140). Hammersley and Atkinson also write that the 'ethnographer needs to be intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness' (1995, p.112). This was my experience throughout the process to some extent, if most when the need to write for an academic audience set the terms on which I engaged with participants' voices and stories.

My reading and interviews repeatedly pushed me to reflect on my practice as a parent, my relationship with my daughter and my partner, the division of responsibilities between us over time, and our decisions about family formation. This was, at times, emotionally demanding but, ultimately, constructive in the dynamic relation of the biographical and intellectual in development of the research. One instance of the interaction between reflection on biography,

sociological concepts and participants' accounts was related to the recurrent experience of listening to criticism of the character of only children. Beliefs about what siblings can be to, and learn from, each other were sometimes paired with claims that only children were more likely to be selfish, spoilt and relate poorly to other children, as discussed further in Chapter 3. While a few participants appeared to temper their remarks if they knew my situation, I was grateful that participants seemed confident that the purpose of the interview was to convey their point of view. I had worried about depriving our daughter of siblings, but hadn't yet encountered the negative characterisation of only children to this extent. I did have to work through the emotional and ideational implications of these negative characterisations for thinking about my own child, occasionally catching myself viewing her behaviour in the light of them.

Parents speak in the light of their observations, but also of the decisions they have made, and, to a greater or lesser extent, explain the behaviour of other children with reference to the beliefs which informed those decisions. On reflection, I came to a position that parity is one of many factors influencing a child's moral and social development. This position is consistent with a sociological appreciation of the influence of networks of relationships and of social context, and consistent with statements by participants who were fathers of one who had worried about only having one child. However, I did move, emotionally, from resisting the assumption that only children were inevitably 'different' in predictable ways to accepting that a home inhabited by one child is going to be a different context in various ways from a space shared with siblings, without assuming necessarily negative consequences for how a child relates to the world. I think this shift has fed into how I understand some of my daughter's behaviour but also how I understand some adults' responses to her. In this case, in the iterative movement between researcher and research, both my understanding of fathers' desires in relation to family formation and my perception of my personal situation were modified.

Reflecting on my almost automatic resistance to an assumption of necessary difference between categories of people, rooted in resistance to the way gender difference has been and is constructed, was connected to another shift relevant to the research. In the course of this research with fathers, I became interested in exploring the extent to which mothers and fathers might be considered, or consider themselves, parents, and the possibilities for the deconstruction of difference through egalitarian practice. Through engaging with the data and relevant literature, I developed a provisional position which seeks to recognise the inevitably contextualised use of language, but also the possibility that men and women may practice a de-gendered parenting but remain fathers or mothers insofar as they identify as men and women. Gendered subjectivities are located within embodied biographies and differently positioned in relation to discourses of fatherhood/motherhood and masculinity/femininity, although the construction of dichotomous, oppositional and hierarchical relations of difference is always to be contested. The effort to think about subjectivity or gender, for example, is both an intellectual engagement and a form of sense-making. My experience and my understandings are one point of reference in that sense-making but also subject to re-construction through the inter-penetration of the personal, emotional and intellectual.

Chapter 3   Relationship/responsibility: visions and investments in accounts of becoming a father

Introduction to Chapter 3

In this chapter I consider participants' accounts of becoming a father, attentive to reconstructions of their orientation to fatherhood and visions of family, and of their decisions, proactive and reactive, around having each of their children. There was some variety among the sample in the re-construction of orientations to becoming a father. While half of participants said they had always wanted to have children, another group of seven characterised their orientation as more passive, and fatherhood as something they assumed would happen at some point. In some cases, this assumption was driven to active desire by time. For six participants, an acceptance that they would have children, or an active desire to do so, developed in interaction with partner's desire and in the context of a specific relationship. For all these fathers, career and partner relationship might be understood as contributing to good conditions for having children and/or as meaningful undertakings in themselves. Where the transition to fatherhood came sooner than expected, some participants with a positive orientation to fatherhood were initially disconcerted by the abrupt re-orientation of their immediate future, the responsibility entailed in fatherhood and, often, the conditions under which they would become fathers. Only two participants described themselves as having been actively reluctant to take on the responsibility of fatherhood when in established relationships with partners who wanted to have children.

The salience of fathers' orientation to fatherhood, whether positive, passive or negative, was dynamic, responsive to the potential for acting in the 'right' relationship at the 'right' time. For many participants, the 'right' time had been not the moment when ideal conditions had been achieved but rather a point where 'good enough' conditions, with the possibility for improvement, were in place. The

relation between the ideal and 'good enough' conditions is one theme of this chapter. In participants' anticipations of fatherhood, ideas of family and connectedness, on the one hand, and intimate personal relationship with a child, on the other, were the dominant themes. Family life with children was understood to offer fathers a place to realise the self within relationship in specific ways. Several participants invoked memories of a desire for relationship and love, for a bond of a unique kind and also for the fulfilment taking care of children dependent on them would bring, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The anticipated enjoyment of being with children and doing things with them was often mentioned. The interconnection between relationship and responsibility, including the embrace of, or anxiety about, responsibility, was a recurrent theme in participants' accounts of the envisaging and experience of fatherhood.

Attention to fathers' accounts of the transition to further children, in addition to their experience of becoming a father for the first time, allows for attention to the dynamic character of aspirations and of evaluations of the resources for pursuing aspirations. To whatever extent the transition to fatherhood might be described as intended or scheduled, if a partner relationship between mother and father is established, the birth of one child is likely to eventually raise the question of whether and when to have further children. The number of children in participants' families varied from one to seven, biological children from one to five (see Appendix 1). Considering the ways in which the partner relationship, resources for providing childcare, financial provision and housing are significant for decisions around having further children can contribute to a broader understanding of how fathers understand the place of family in their lives.

In the first section, I consider how life dimensions, such as education, employment and partner relationship, are temporally and conceptually related to becoming a father, of first and any further children, in participants' accounts. I address the question of the salience of visions of family and understandings of fatherhood in participants' narratives of becoming fathers but also the question of beliefs about the

requisite conditions for family life. I compare understandings of the contributions of such life dimensions to meeting the responsibilities of having children and family life across the range of socio-economic and biographical situations in which participants became fathers.

The second section of the chapter considers the substance of what I have termed participants' visions of family as constructed in the interview. The discussion of these visions of family incorporates how participants, and their partners, envisaged their family, and their beliefs about children's needs and family dynamics with reference to the number of children.

In the final section, I explore the place of understandings of fatherhood, visions of family, and beliefs about children's needs in evolving understandings of the relation between acceptable and desirable conditions for family formation. The desire for a large family, beliefs about the benefits about siblings and about the significance of the parent-child relationship, for example, were presented as informing evaluations of time, health and financial resources in relation to having further children. In this section, I also suggest that flashes of fantasy and feelings of fatefulness in relation to family formation point to the weight of the responsibility fathers feel for their families.

Section 1   Situating fatherhood in the life course

'Good enough circumstances': evaluating the preconditions for family life

One participant, Lucien, spoke of the 'intersection of circumstances' in which he and his partner realised their desire to have a child as 'good enough circumstances'. He mentioned finances, his partner's employment situation and the prior purchase of a flat, for example. Like Lucien, participants situated, with varying detail, the circumstances of their transition to fatherhood within the life course, referring to aspects of the history of partner relationship, their position in relation to paid work, recent experiences or plans for the future. There was sometimes a personal focus in evaluating their biography and circumstances, on having already enjoyed travel,

leisure or socialising, for example, or on the implications of their age. Several participants also spoke of evaluating their circumstances in terms of how far they satisfied their understanding of the conditions for having children. Some narratives were explicitly about achieving satisfactory conditions for having children but some evaluations referred to conditions not yet met.

The conditions most often mentioned were stable partner relationship, financial security, and, particularly in relation to further children, adequate housing, although what participants considered commitment, security and adequate varied to some extent with their level of resources. These categories correspond to the components of the 'package deal' for men, employment, marriage, home and children, formulated by Townsend (2002), but they were not necessarily configured in the same, gendered, way as described in his work (discussed in Chapter 1). In some accounts, the importance of these conditions was conveyed by subsequent efforts to achieve them and/or anxiety about threats to their continuity, from insecure employment, for example. While there is an overlap with the means of achieving independence, security and happiness for people who are child-free and for parents, participants' accounts suggest that the decision to do without resources carries less moral charge where individuals are bearing the cost, rather than children or their partners. Fatherhood led to a greater focus on such sources of security for Luke, who had been intending to travel again at the point he found out he was going to have a son, and for Jason, who had been a free-wheeling musician with a self-sufficient partner. Participants also spoke of the medium-term effect of an increased interdependence between partners' paid and unpaid work (Jason) and of long-term responsibilities as a role model (Luke) and supporter of children's education (Peter).

The analysis presented in this section of the place of fatherhood in the life course explores the relation between having children and other life dimensions, such as employment and partnership, over time. Before presenting the data, I will briefly define the terms used in the analysis, but also their relation to the terms used in the

study in dialogue with which my own terms were developed. In Chapter 1, I noted that the analysis of how participants situate fatherhood in the life course would draw on the concepts developed in Bernardi *et al*'s (2008) research in Germany on how family formation intentions are affected by the wider socio-economic environment. Bernardi *et al* distinguished between an orientation to a sequential pattern of investments, that is, to a project to progressively establish financial, housing and partner relationship security as prerequisites for parenthood, and an orientation to parallel investments. Parallel investments refer to the simultaneous pursuit of projects in multiple life domains, such as having children and building career. This distinction has provided a useful perspective from which to consider how participants talk about the relationship between security, in employment or housing, for example, and their representation of desirable or acceptable conditions for having children.

In extending aspects of their analysis to the reflections of men who do have children, in contrast to Bernardi *et* al's analysis of the orientations of men and women without children, I have developed the categories as follows. First, I have used the term 'cumulative' as an alternative to sequential because it incorporates the understanding that while investments in education, career, housing etc, might be progressively established, this investment is both on-going, additive and needs to be sustained. In addition, although postponement of childbearing until a degree of security in dimensions such as employment and housing had been obtained was associated with the cumulative pattern in my study, the association with a traditional domestic division of labour, which Bernardi *et al* found with the equivalent sequential orientation, was not consistent. Thus, for men and women in a cumulative pattern, the demands of family life might be added to the demands of other life dimensions, including career, for both partners. Second, while the focus of Bernardi *et al*'s study was the projected moment of commencing family formation, a focus incorporating first and subsequent children confirms that the goal of parallel investment is, ultimately, the cumulative establishment of security even if it has not been required or achieved before having children. Third, situating

the analysis of family formation and having children within a broad analytical framework attentive to interconnections of fathers' and mothers' practice in doing family, leads to a focus on the implications of patterns of investment for couples and for partners within couples. The distribution of investments within a couple may vary, and the implications of different forms of investment may vary between partners. For this reason, at the analytical level of the couple, I have distinguished between dichotomously distributed (breadwinner/caregiver) and more symmetrical and reciprocal distributions of investment. Finally, the continuity implied in both categories is not available to all participants. For some fathers in challenging circumstances, their investment in life dimensions is disrupted rather than secure and the relation between them more fragmented than the integrated parallel or cumulative pattern. The impact of wider economic circumstances on the pursuit of security differs by class. I will now explore the ways in which attention to the different aspects of cumulative and parallel patterns of investment illuminates similarities and differences in the place of fatherhood in the life course as reconstructed in participants' accounts of becoming a father

'The next stage for us': cumulative progression

One group of participants' narratives refer to the notion of the life course as a cumulative progression through stages and having children as 'the next stage'. Robert commented that 'having children is a normal thing to do', suggesting that having children, where aligned with social and cultural expectations, may, but need not, prompt reflection. Hugh and Jeremy, with their respective partners, felt 'there must be more to life than this', an 'added dimension'; that 'more' is the unique relationships of parent and child, but also the new relationship between partners as parents with a shared responsibility for a child or children. In moving to the next stage, life dimensions such as career or partner relationship, which may have been or be meaningful in themselves, support realisation of participants' vision of family life and the fulfilment of parental responsibilities for care and financial provision.

Colin spoke about his orientation to having children in terms of life stages. He met his partner during their university years, they moved in together when he was 23 and married when he was 26. They moved to Scotland and bought their house in Edinburgh 2 years later. Once he and his partner were turning thirty he began to initiate conversations about timing, motivated both by a sense of shaping the future and of moving beyond one stage and into another.

> I suppose it felt, this sounds a bit calculating, but we kind of felt that it was the next logical, it was the next stage for us, we'd been together for a reasonable time, you know we'd done the kind of enjoy ourselves and all that sort of, you know, exciting foreign holidays and whatever and it just felt that it was, it just seemed to be the right thing to do next, we were both at that right age, I didn't want to get much older so it just felt that it was the thing we needed to do from that point.

Colin stressed that the establishment of a long-term relationship, career progression and financial and housing security were goals in themselves. Nevertheless, he recognises that their establishment meant there were no practical limitations to going ahead with family formation.

> This house is ours, we'd been living here for a number of years and we'd done what we wanted to do to it, both employed, comfortable standard of living but not through a consciousness that we were doing that to provide for children. It was just a happy by-product that we didn't have those limitations that stopped us when it was time to start a family.

The meaning of marriage, too, was located in both the partner relationship and preparation for children. For Dilhara, Colin, Jeremy, Lucien and Hugh, marriage was about the partner relationship and independent of specific plans for family formation, although intentions to have children may have been discussed. However, while Colin and Hugh said that they had always expected to have children in due course, Jeremy and Lucien spoke of their desire for children as generated within a specific partner relationship.

> [Anna] was always very strongly of the opinion that children were going to be part of her life. She'd always wanted to have kids… So, I suppose it was a

development for me, it wasn't something that was always, it was something that was around, but it wasn't something that was necessarily for me just then. It came within a relationship, rather than external to a relationship or something that I was in a relationship for. (Lucien)

For Gabriel, Tim and Anthony the link between marriage and children was much closer, conceptually and temporally. Gabriel is from a southern European country: 'our tradition is still very strong we get married to have children'. His partner was pregnant two months later. Tim said he and his partner knew they would have children together, 'because we'd been together for so many years anyway', but that it was after their wedding they decided 'okay we're going to go for a kid now'.

Homes and housing were also often closely linked, again conceptually or temporally, to having and raising children. Colin was unusual in buying a fit-for-family house some years in advance. Jeremy reflected that

> It wasn't that long after [moving to the city] that I suppose we started to 'nest'. […] Let's buy a place that will last us. So I guess it was probably that decision to buy a house that made us realise that we were ready to put something in that house.

Hugh and his partner moved out of the city in order to be able to buy a family home, which required refurbishment, four years before their son was born. However, understandings of needs, 'good enough' conditions and achievable conditions are dynamic. Lucien and Anna relocated when their first child was a baby, in part thinking about the different potential spaces and lifestyle for their children. Tim and his partner are planning to move to a bigger home, ideally before they have a second child. Also, as with family formation itself, participants were conscious of a degree of uncertainty in relation to planning for the future, which may to some degree reflect the context of economic recession in which the interviews occurred.

> We're not saying, we'll have this before he's two or four. We know we're going to do it. We'd like to do it. It's just when it happens. It'd be nice to do it as soon as we can, but if it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. (Tim)

Nevertheless, there is less uncertainty for this group than others in the sample. Colin's two daughters were born when he was 32 and 36. The decision was to have two children and then stop. For participants who, like Colin, had been able to achieve the conditions they considered 'good enough' before the birth of their first child, those conditions were in place to have a second child. For others, this progression is not perfectly ordered or fully realised in the time frame preferred. An unscheduled first child or a delay in partner relationship formation may bring forward or push back the timing of family formation, so that putting in place the employment or housing, for example, to support family life is pursued in parallel, as discussed in the next subsection, or within a compressed timeframe, discussed next.

'We knew time was clicking on': compressed cumulative progression

The accounts of a group of four older fathers demonstrated both the appeal of the cumulative achievement of the good conditions for having children but also the key role of economic resources for doing so. However, the most important factor leading to a compressed progression among this sample was later partnering. These four participants formed relationships with their partners later than most other participants, became fathers four to six years later, between the ages of 37 and 40 years old, and went on to have a second child. Peter and Russell said that they had always wanted to have children and Harry assumed he would: 'there wasn't an explicit desire, there was more an implicit expectation'. For all, the 'right' partner in a relationship that would endure was the awaited essential element, the advent of which prompted first marriage, then the purchase of a home and then seeking to conceive. Harry and Liz, for example, met in his early thirties, married when he was 34, then sold his flat and bought a house the following year which required several months of renovation work. Harry said that conversations were not about whether to have children, but when. He also, echoing Jeremy, spoke of the importance of nesting for Liz. Explaining the time it took to conceive, he commented that

she's always been very home-focused and afterwards we realised that actually she probably wasn't happy to put a nest down, because she didn't have a nest. We lived at our parents for some of it whilst the house was really in a state.

The time from living together to the birth of their first child for this group is not brief in comparison with the sample overall. However, it is more brief than for those in the sample who were similarly educated and employed but who married and bought a home several years before having children. This latter group became fathers at between 27 and 34 years old, most having met their partners in education or at an equivalent age. Furthermore, for the group of fathers who partnered later, the time period to the first child was less compressed than intended due to some delay in conceiving. Peter, as well as Harry, experienced enough delay in conceiving to consult a doctor. Russell and his partner, Carol, also sought medical advice which led eventually to private IVF treatment. This was successful and their twin boys were born when Russell was 40. Andrew's partner miscarried twice before their son was born. The time frame for having a second child was also more compressed than some participants who had their first child at a younger age. Peter and Harry both became fathers of a second son within three years and Andrew's daughter was born four years after his son. Peter commented that although they intended to have two children, 'there would have been a point in time though, if it had been four or five years, we probably would have had sensible discussions about not having [a second child]'.

Liam's account offers a contrast to this cumulative orientation in some ways, but also a further example of a compressed timetable. He met his partner Deena in his mid-thirties. Although very pleased at the prospect of having a child, they only had the 'big conversation' about its implications after Deena had conceived. Liam and Deena did not marry but made the transition from living apart together to buying a home together before the arrival of their only child. Both were well-established in their careers and well-resourced to make the transition quickly once they knew they were going to have a child. Sam and Adrian provide a different contrast to the

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cumulative orientation. Although well-established in a partner relationship, they did not see their investment in careers, partner relationship or housing as resources for having children. Adrian adapted to his partner's intensifying desire for a child and Sam adapted when his partner, who wanted a child, became pregnant. Adrian gave up his business and Sam and his partner bought a flat together. Thus, their response to pregnancy was to adapt, in relation to employment or housing, in ways compatible with desirable conditions for family life.

'His conception was my prompt to start doing something': distributed parallel investments

I noted above that Bernardi *et al* (2008) identified parallel investments as occurring where people engage in multiple life domains simultaneously rather than in sequence; a distinction is made between the temporality of parallel and cumulative investments. In this sample, several participants were establishing their career in parallel with having a family. Where this pattern of investment was supported by the investment of their partner primarily in the care of children, the investments are temporally parallel but dichotomously distributed. For Dilhara, having children occurred alongside an existing investment in education and then career. His wife, who was older than him, took responsibility for the timing of family formation and caring for the children, but also for contributing to the family finances through part-time paid work. His own primary focus has been his studies as the means to achieve his current professional position in a financial institution. However, for some participants becoming a father could be a prompt to greater investment in other life dimensions, particularly career. Luke went back to university, Jack started a business and Anthony described how impending fatherhood motivated him to invest in a new career direction.

> Because in fact his [eldest son's] conception was my prompt to start doing something. […] so sometime in 2005 I had a conversation with my boss at the time to say 'Look, is there any other path? […] It just gave me the drive that I had to keep pushing and pushing more and more and more and keep

> pushing and pushing I would say to the stretch of my abilities and even beyond my abilities but I must keep going.

The distinction between undertaking investments cumulatively or in parallel is not definitive but a broad characterisation. Neither is it simply a question of orientation, but also of how resources and circumstances interact with events and decisions in the life course. While conception intensified Anthony's career focus, he had already re-trained into his current field. Furthermore, not all dimensions are pursued in parallel. Anthony's partner, Helen, suggested he would have to show his commitment, by marrying her, before she committed to having children, drawing together two strands of meaning noted in the discussion of marriage above: marriage as a commitment to the partner relationship and/or as the assumption of a joint commitment to children.

For some fathers required to pursue parallel investments in establishing a family and establishing a career, including Tom, the aspiration was to catch up (my phrase) before having further children. An unscheduled pregnancy, as in Tom's case, can propel fathers into parallel investment situations. With practical and financial support from both families, Tom and his partner Angela focused on putting in place the dimensions of family life: a home to care for the baby, a job to provide for the family and pay the mortgage, and, later, a better job with opportunities for promotion and flexible work. Tom's primary investment is family, as discussed further in Chapter 5, but in parallel with establishing housing and employment security. In this way, the aspiration of the cumulative model remains, but it is re-framed. Participants in couples in earning households laboured to put in place sources of security for raising children, even if not always in time for having children. They worked towards the goals of career progression or employment security, economic resources and adequate housing, and sometimes marriage, albeit over varying time scales and in varying order. Just as for those who have been able to pursue a cumulative course before children continue to do so after, those who have not achieved the ideal conditions for family life before may continue to pursue them in parallel with having further children. Of course, their situation is changed

and, thus, the distinction between parallel and cumulative investments is pertinent. Beliefs about children's needs may raise the stakes in respect of financial and housing provision just when financial and time resources may be affected by the need for care, whether parental, informal or formal. As Anthony did above, fathers in this situation spoke of considerable pressure. I discuss Tom's account of adapting his aspirations, as the age gap between his first and envisaged second child grew wider, in Section 3 of this chapter. The average age gap between the first and second of two children associated with parallel investments is 4.75 years, in comparison with 3.5 for cumulative progressions. The aspiration to 'catch up' before having further children may mean that participants in parallel investment situations were more likely to feel uncertainty about whether and when to have another child.

'We both wanted careers and we both want to have the kids': reciprocal parallel investments

Associated with parallel investments in Bernardi *et al*'s analysis is a theme of balancing investments in paid work and family. The most literal examples of this orientation in this sample are those couples in which fathers and mothers invest (near) equal time in caring for their child(ren) and in paid employment. Michael said 'We both wanted careers and we both want to have the kids'. Jason said he and his partner 'knew for Helena to get most out of life, and for us to get most out of [Helena], then both of us had to be looking after her'. For these fathers, becoming a father involved considerable investment in family, reducing their investment in other life dimensions for a period of time. The balance sought by fathers who wanted to be caregivers as much as providers entails an interlinking of balance and reciprocity at the level of the couple.

Dichotomously distributed and reciprocal investments

In relation to the patterns of investment discussed in this chapter, not only the individual's life course and orientation must be addressed but also, first, the investments of the couple as a couple and the degree of co-ordination between

partners in a couple, and second, the implications of the division of labour for each partner. As already mentioned, Bernardi *et al* noted an association of expectations of a traditionally gendered division of labour with a sequential pattern. More reciprocal arrangements were associated with a parallel orientation among his sample of not yet parents. However, in this sample of parents, both the traditionally gendered division of labour, which I have termed dichotomously distributed investments (as discussed above), and reciprocal investments, where partners each supported the other's investment in family and paid work, were found in situations of cumulative progression and temporally parallel investments. In some cases, women retained their investment in employment within a cumulative progression after becoming mothers. In others, women's commitment to caregiving was an important driver of the temporality of parallel investments and their dichotomous distribution. The implications of how participants organise paid and unpaid labour, including the risks of dichotomous distribution and the costs of reciprocity for fathers and mothers, are discussed in Chapter 5.

'My kids are my life': Alternative patterns of investment and disrupted progressions

Those whose accounts of the life course were least in alignment with the script of cumulative progression were those in the sample who were most disadvantaged in relation to employment and those whose family relationships, with partners and/or children, had been disrupted.

Murray and Gerry both became stepfathers at the age of 23. Unemployed, they live with uncertainty in respect of obtaining employment and vulnerable to changes in government policy on state support. Nevertheless, they had been prepared to invest in having children within established partner relationships. Murray, for example, said the experience of bringing up stepchildren as his own 'persuaded' him to have children of his own. His partner was able to have sterilisation reversed, and they had three boys and the girl Murray was hoping for over the next eight years. They expect to have to move to another, larger, council house as the children

get older. Although Murray and Gerry have managed to care for large families on limited income, Gerry was concerned about the impact of an expected fifth child on the family's resources.

Daniel, Lewis and Jack are now single fathers, after relationships of varying duration. Jack had been, and Barry is, a non-resident father. Three were fathers of one child, Daniel of three children. In each case, an unanticipated or unscheduled conception occurred prior to or in the relatively early stages of a co-habiting relationship. Although they might have been focused on other things, such as ideas of working overseas in the case of Daniel and his partner, they all embraced fatherhood. Daniel said 'my kids are my life'. Barry described the transformative effect of taking his son home: 'Aye, I felt like I changed into a different person, as well. Being a responsible dad and that'. Barry and Daniel felt they benefited from their experience with children in their extended family. Barry, Daniel and Jack each spoke of considerable periods spent in employment before and in the early years of fatherhood. However, in each of their narratives, and in Lewis's, the capacity to engage in paid work is represented as eroded by the demands of caring for partners or family members who faced difficulties generated by disability, substance use and mental ill health. Where partner relationship had broken down in this sample, this was often combined with difficulties in some other area, such as employment and housing. Two fathers in this group lived with their mothers.

Luke's son Giles (11) lives with his mother in another city. He was not in a relationship with Giles's mother. Once disbelief that there was going to be a child had been replaced by acceptance, Luke's response to this coming change in his life was to look forward.

> I'm going to be a dad, I can't doss about and just travel around. I need to get a job, I need to finish a degree and get a qualification. So I was looking ahead, I was actually starting to forward plan for the first time.[…] I wasn't just responsible for myself from that point onwards. It was just a very instant change. Right, I need to take responsibility for a son, a child, I didn't know. And I went back to university.

He went on to describe how taking responsibility has been complicated in the years since. When Giles was three or four, in a situation of ongoing conflict and volatility, Giles's mother refused to allow further contact. Luke didn't see Giles again until he was seven. By the end of that period, having worked out his own feelings and position with a counsellor, graduated and found employment, Giles was in a position to propose re-establishing maintenance payments and contact. He has been to court repeatedly to secure parental rights and, step by slow, stressful and enormously costly step, the right to have Giles stay in his home one weekend a month.

While unemployed partnered fathers lived with financial constraint and uncertainty, their partner relationships and their strong links with extended family were represented as supporting a sense of continuity and connectedness in family life. The accounts of having children and subsequent fatherhood of lone and non-resident fathers were marked by disruption and fragmentation in more dimensions and to a greater extent than those of others in the sample. Nevertheless, although only in Daniel's case was the partner relationship sufficiently stable for further children, the extended family were a source of support for fatherhood, in different ways, for all but Jack.

'You don't know what's going to happen until it happens': a work in progress

While I have characterised some investments as more fragmented and some more in terms of progression, family situations are all dynamic. I noted above that I preferred the term cumulative to sequential because investments in each life dimension must be simultaneously sustained, and also that investments must be adapted to changes in situation. The idea of progression must be qualified with an acknowledgement that participants' situations are dynamic and not all dimensions move in the same direction at the same time. Children grow up, relationships may change, and work situations are subject to uncertainty, as participants had found during the period following the 2008 recession, for example. Colin joked about still having a job with a large financial corporation, commenting that 'we've been

through about two years of redundancies'. Henry worked for a company that has been put into administration since the interview: 'I work for [Company] and we're not doing particularly well and every day is a worry'. In this way, the situation of the participants I have discussed as having achieved cumulative investments is not entirely distinct from those who are establishing their career and family in parallel.

However, it is arguable certain risks are greater where investments are dichotomously distributed between partners; employment circumstances for the provider may change, risks in the business arena may not pay off, and the impact of withdrawal from the labour market on employability increases with time. Nevertheless, the resources for resilience in respect of the future material conditions of family life are significantly greater for the employed and partnered in this sample than for those who are in non-earning households or outside relationship with the mother of their children. At the same time, these participants had invested in having children or embraced fatherhood and expressed a sense of fulfilment in the relationships with their children, as well as in managing the restricted conditions in which they sought to fulfil their responsibilities as parents. In addition to the uncertainty expressed by Hugh in the heading of this subsection, the dynamic inter-relation between employment opportunities, the needs of partners and/or children and participants' desires in relation to their fatherhood means that family life is always, as family formation is for a period of time, a work in progress for participants.

Section 2   Visions of family and understandings of father-child relationships

This section explores the substance of participants' visions of family, as constructed in the interview, particularly in respect of the number of children and family dynamic. Discussion of decisions around further children brought out aspects of how participants, and their partners, envisaged family relationships and their beliefs about children's needs and family life.   Their understandings were located by participants as replicating their family of origin, as developing through

interaction with their partner, or as accepted wisdom. I will discuss, in turn, participants' accounts of visions of a family as a whole, the benefits of siblings and reflections on the nature of the parent-child relationship; each was most characteristic of fathers of three or more children, fathers of two and fathers of one child, respectively.

'A group of kids growing up together': visions of family as a whole

> I've always, as I say, my family is absolutely central in my life and we always, I can't imagine enjoying life not with my family, not absolutely can't but that's always been how I experienced life and what seems important in life and […] just the whole idea of raising children and bonding with them, knowing them as people, just to have a family, the whole being a family thing. (Michael)

Michael, father of three, spoke vividly in the extract above of the centrality of family. He was one of eight participants who were fathers in families of more than three children, three of whom were fathers of biological children and stepchildren. Michael's appreciation of the pleasures and strength of the family dynamic of multiple children is grounded in his childhood experience of sibling and family relationships.

> You want to have a family kind of group dynamic. I mean the reasons we always talk to people about is that you've got the one child, that's lovely and then you've got the other child, that's lovely but then you've got your two children together and that's, how they behave off one another is kind of a whole thing in itself and you get to see them doing that and so that's really exciting.

Lucien, a father of two who said he would like to have more children, was rare among fathers of two in speaking similarly of these multiple dimensions of the family dynamic.

> one of the things I particularly value [is] that shared-ness, you know, there's you and you partner, there's her and the kids, there's you and the kids and then there's this sort of systemic feeling of, sort of, togetherness. It may be very fleeting, and then it dissipates and everybody goes off. But I think that's why people do families, often.

Several fathers of three or more children situated the connections between themselves and their children within connections with the wider family and across generations. Gabriel spoke of the particular connection with children who 'are part of you, a certain part of you is put in another person, it's a nice feeling'. He also desired descendants to live on after him, a theme which I examine in detail in the next chapter. There is perhaps a link between this sense of extension of the self through connection with others and Michael's image of inter-generational family relationships as 'an on-going stretching.' Daniel, a newly single father of three, also spoke of a vision of family which extends forward through the generations as well as the importance of strong connections within the immediate family, saying how much he wanted his family to be a 'tight' unit. Russell, father of twins who would have liked to have three children, used the same language; ' we are very, sort of tight family and that's kind of what I wanted'.

There were other cases where envisaged family size had exceeded the size ultimately realised. Gabriel said he wanted five children – 'because we didn't know what it's like to have children'. For Robert, one of five children and full-time caregiver father of three, the impact on the family of a highly demanding third child acted as a brake on the move from three to four children. The characteristics of a specific child qualified Robert's general position, shared by Michael, that a third child prolongs rather than changes family life. Michael and Joan had their children in close succession in order to have 'a group of kids growing up together'. Bruce, father of five, always wanted to have a large family, explaining that he comes from a big family. Bruce, like Michael, seemed to have a strong sense of the contribution of siblings to each other's learning and to see family as important across the life course. Perhaps their shared belief that 'children growing up at a close age brings each other on' (Bruce) contributes to their being comfortable raising a large family. While not exclusive to or entirely unanimous among fathers who had or would have liked to have three or more children, the relative concentration among them of references to a vision of family life as a whole (rather than to dyadic relationships) and to connections with extended family was marked. Speaking of why people

choose to have or not to have further children, Michael pointed out that 'having a busy, hectic family thing is the sort of reason not to and a reason to [have more than one child] I guess'. The vision of Bruce and Michael might not align with contemporary perceptions of children's needs for parental attention and parents' investments in dyadic relationships, as I shall discuss below in relation to two participants who are fathers of one very young child. For many participants, the balance between avoiding too much of the 'busy, hectic family thing' while still having kids 'growing up together' was two children.

'I just didn't think it was fair to have to be an only child': the sibling imperative

A family dynamic which includes interaction between children is also core to accounts of family formation among fathers of two. Less than half of the sample (12/31) are fathers in two-child families, but of 25 participants currently in a co-resident couple relationship, 15 have (or intend to have, in the cases of Tim and Hugh) two children. One point of similarity among these fathers is the stated desire or need to provide for a child the benefit of a sibling, but many in this group also conveyed a clear sense that two parents and two children was their preferred family dynamic. For these fathers, the point of comparison was generally with one child families, but occasionally the idea of a third child was rejected on principle rather than on pragmatic grounds.

Dilhara was typical in stating that his reason for having two children was that they would be 'able to share everything' and support each other. Several participants expressed delight in the positive relationship between their children. Others dwelt as well, or more, on what children learn from having a sibling, particularly learning to share and deal with the conflicts which are part of that learning process. The sibling imperative was sometimes given an explicitly moral character. Tom seemed to correct himself from saying it was the right thing, saying instead 'we knew it was right for us'. Anthony, whose desire for a second child was intense, enduring and secret, said 'I only actually told Helen last week that I had been utterly desperate for another child, because I just didn't think it was fair to have to be an only child.'

Anthony and Peter both described it as 'not fair' to children to deny them a sibling, in terms of their emotional well-being and character development respectively. This aspect was sometimes expressed in terms of avoiding the fate of only children who are observably 'different', in participants' childhood experience (Colin) or from their children's friends (Jeremy). The key concern, expressed most definitively by Peter, is that the only child is 'the one and only thing you concentrate on and that's why they end up inherently spoiled – you can't not spoil a single child'.

Understandings of the interaction of family structure and children's needs, in particular in relation to too much or too little parental attention, can also reinforce the wisdom of having two children rather than three. Harry explained that his own, and his partner's, experience precluded them following the precedent of their families; 'we'd both seen the problems of the middle child playing out, and my brother quite spectacularly badly'. Peter imagined the negative outcome for the son who would become 'the middle child' if he had a third child.

> If there was a third one, something would give. And I think the one who would give would be Craig, the one in the middle. He's the kind of character, as a middle child, he would go off the rails. […] I've always noticed in families of three, the middle one's either very, very quiet, and lets the other two do their thing or is a complete and utter tearaway.

The consistency and brevity with which participants referred to the need for siblings suggested that they were drawing on a certain kind of 'wisdom' which they understood to be widely accepted. Nevertheless, as in the accounts of Harry and Peter, this wisdom interacted with personal theories of parity based on experience and observation. Interpretation and observation are formed in the light of circulating ideas about children and families, such as children's need for appropriate levels of parental engagement. In some accounts there were traces of the two-child norm, and a deep-seated acceptance of the good of having of a fellow-traveller in the family, but also ambivalence. Henry's acceptance of the wisdom as to siblings in relation to his toddler daughter was an intellectual one:

Although my mind's probably reconciled that she'd get more from having a brother or sister than she would get from me, I still worry about it, I still worry that I wouldn't be able to give her as much as I would like to.

Jason and Henry each share care, with their partner, of a daughter, 11 and 19 months old respectively. They were both uncertain about the impact of a second child on their capacity to give the first child 'the attention she deserves' (Jason). Ambivalence was also expressed by Hugh, although he did plan to have a second child. He feared the effect of another child's arrival on his son Rowan, only half-joking, 'what if he turns awful?' Such emotions, fears, hopes and anxieties may come out of the conceptual gap between the actual child, whose needs and joys are so immediately before them, and the abstract child-to-be. While Henry says 'I can't imagine giving another child the love I give Amy', his concerns may not be incompatible with the decision to give Amy a sibling. Anthony, father of two, described his partner having similar fears and finding them unfounded.

Henry and Jason spoke of the particular father-child relationship with an intensity which was most notable among fathers of one, although in their cases probably intensified by their children's young age and greater dependence. The significance of fatherhood and the father-child relationship was clear in Henry's declaration that Amy is the centre of his world and her coming has led him to re-evaluate everything. Jason said that becoming a father is 'taking another step forward in my own evolution as a human being' and that he and Ada are realising a common purpose in bearing and raising Helena. Their accounts are also comparable in the sense that their child needs and deserves considerable parental attention, a level of attention they fear it would be difficult to sustain with the arrival of another child and unfair to withdraw. Concern for children's need for attention was also expressed by some fathers of two. Jeremy, for example, said 'you want to just be able to give time'. However, the necessity of sharing parents' attention is one of the moral benefits attributed to the presence of siblings by fathers of older children. Whether or not they are decisive for Henry or Jason and their partners, understandings which privilege meeting children's needs within the parent-child

relationship and the potential for parental self-realisation within that dyadic relationship may contribute to a weakening of the imperative to provide a sibling for some fathers.

'Don't push your luck': fathers of one child

The sibling imperative had been felt but its moral rationale qualified by fathers of only children in the sample. Sam's partner Catherine was forty when her daughter was born and had decided not to risk a second pregnancy: 'I think Catherine just thought, you know, "don't push your luck"'. Sam felt some concern about raising an only child but he came to see the positives and negatives of the stereotype as, primarily, a matter of how children are raised by their parents. Nevertheless, Sam remarks that having only one child was the outcome of the timing of events for he and Catherine, as well as for friends with only children.

> I can't think of anybody who's only got one child because that's all they
> wanted. In terms of we want one and don't want two. I can't think of
> anybody who's said that was the decision.

Liam and Deena did make that decision because they were content with their existing arrangements. Liam spoke of the disruption having another child would inevitably bring to the balance of finances, career and childcare they had worked out in raising their daughter, Rosa. He echoed other fathers of one child in describing his great contentment with his relationship with Rosa and his fear of spoiling what was working and that he wouldn't love another child as much as Rosa. Like Sam, he found that, when speaking to people, positive and difficult experiences and outcomes of childhood were distributed among those with and without siblings.

The other situation in which participants were fathers of one child was where partner relationships had broken down, as was the case for Lewis and Barry, or where a child was born outside of a partner relationship, as was the case for Luke. Luke is hoping to have a child with his current partner.

A few fathers in the sample, all but one of whom are fathers of one, did not have a positive vision of family at the point they found they were going to become a father. For each, the absence of a desire to have a family linked with a sense of unreadiness on the part of the participants and a desire to defer, or in one case avoid, the responsibility of raising a child. For three participants, Adrian, Sam and Bob, their unreadiness increasingly diverged from their partner's increasingly intense desire for a child. Only Adrian came to explicitly commit to seeking to conceive. Speaking of an earlier period in his long-term relationship with Sarah, Adrian said 'I didn't want that responsibility. I knew what the responsibility was and it wasn't for me'. The overwhelming responsibility of providing for, caring for and raising a child, and the implications of what is required to fulfil that responsibility for their own lives, was described as motivating a desire to defer having a child and complicating their response to conception.

The conception of a child, whether unscheduled (Bob and Sam) or just disconcertingly swift (Adrian), prompted powerful and ambivalent emotions. Sam's narrative was typical in describing a process of adjustment from apprehension to acceptance to excitement at the baby's coming: 'I became more excited about it during the pregnancy. I kind of got over that initial kind of thing'. Even though Adrian had reflected seriously on the implications of his agreeing to try for a baby, when Sarah very quickly became pregnant the reality was still overwhelming. The sense of the baby as a person helped him to adjust.

> It hit me right away that it was going to be a person although not in any way like when it actually arrives. […] There is a person, you have created that person and you have total responsibility for it, so that's the big thing – as you probably know, you're a parent – and then it was the excitement really as well of the fact that there's going to be a baby.

Bob, who went on to have two children, said, 'once they're there and you have that emotional connection, do you know what I mean, then suddenly the other stuff dissipates in terms of its importance to you'. Dave, unlike the others, was neither out of alignment with his partner nor as ambivalent as others in this group about an

unanticipated conception, but had found it difficult to imagine what it would mean to have a baby. He also described the significance of seeing the baby as a person, in his case at the baby's birth.

> You know, it had just been this bump, that we even referred to as the bump, and then, suddenly, the bump is no more and you have this person. Yeah, it was absolutely fine. It was the best experience of my life.

While others' narratives of becoming fathers had referred to already present ideas of family and relationship, the narratives of this group emphasised the transformative impact, whether during the pregnancy or at birth, of the baby's emergence as 'a person', someone to whom they were bound by an 'emotional connection' as well as a duty of care, and through relationship as well as responsibility.

Section 3   Visions of family and evaluation of resources

As noted above, in relation to his first child, Lucien, father of two, spoke of 'good enough circumstances' for starting a family. Participants' vision of family and their understandings of children's developmental needs informed how they addressed the relationship between desire and resources in family formation in the interview. Participants in couples spoke about their circumstances as a couple, one in which a partner's working conditions and aspirations to motherhood were always important factors. Participants mentioned three main areas where the capacity to have and raise children could be limited for couples: time, partner's health and financial resources. I discussed participants' evaluation of time in respect of parents' and children's ages when explaining the compressed timeframe for family formation in the first part of the chapter. I would also note the role of envisaged family size in evaluating the management of time. Michael and Gabriel and Robert (and their partners) were prepared to cope with the demands of having babies in close succession in order to be able to have three 'in time'. Time and age were factors for men who did not want to be an 'old dad' (Colin) but also in terms of the health risks of pregnancy and childbirth for partner and children. In the remainder of this section, I focus on health and financial resources.

Health: Embodied limits to visions of family

In addition to several reports of post-natal depression, the risks and costs of childbearing, whether borne or refused by their partners, figure in several accounts as shaping the boundaries of family formation. Most of these partners were relatively older mothers, but only relatively highly educated participants spoke of the birth and medical aspects in any detail in the interview. I acknowledge the discussion which follows can only touch partially and indirectly on the consequences of women's experiences of difficult and dangerous births for family formation. Two participants referred to age-related risks, and six to medical conditions related to pregnancy or giving birth, which precluded further childbearing altogether for their partners. Nevertheless, two partners faced the risk of severe illness in order to have a second child. For example, the second pregnancy of Lucien's partner, Anna, was consultant-led, highly monitored and unproblematic, but the anxiety related to the illness which marked her first pregnancy remained throughout. Although Lucien would have liked to have another child, Anna does not feel the same way.   As so often, such factors are bound up with others, including the toll and costs of (intensive) parenting itself, but there is a bodily as well as an economic limit to child-bearing intentions.

Henry's partner Harriet also had a terrible birth experience which drove her resolve not to have another child. Yet, Henry reported that the passage of time may have altered her resolve:

> Just the other night Harriet was like 'I think I'm coming round to the idea of having another kid but I'm still not sure' and for a year it was 'we're not having another kid'.

If Harriet does bring herself to risk another pregnancy, it may be, in part at least, another effect of the sibling imperative, as it has been for other partners. Equally, there is the power of a partner's desire. Helen did have a sibling for their son Mark, the second child that Anthony longed for so much. Gabriel's partner, Caterina, gave him one chance for a third child. Having been in hospital for a month after the birth

of her first child, and having risked and endured problems with her second pregnancy, Caterina said she did not want to go through another. Eventually, in response to his continuing desire for a third child, she offered Gabriel one chance and he was, as he said, lucky.

'Making do': parallel investments

That having two children is the dominant pattern in our society was articulated by Lucien. He links his own conformity to this pattern, although he'd like more, not to conformity with a social norm but adjustment to what is manageable both in terms of his wife's health, as mentioned above, and in terms of resources.

> But it's interesting we've got into that pattern of two kids whereas actually I'd like three, I'd really like three, if not more. But financially, forget it. Space and finance, we just couldn't manage.

Lucien feels he identifies evaluations of what is manageable in others' thinking about family size also.

> I think people are concerned about how they would manage with family size, they need to keep them a certain size. You know, if you go up to three you it means have to think about the car, where they're going to sleep, you have to think about schools and nurseries so the financial implications are quite large, it is a step-change.

The step-change from two to three children may be, or appear to be, relatively larger for more affluent families. The resources for family life, such as the form of transport, the quality, size and, in particular, location of accommodation, the type of school or nursery and the level of financial income, with which people feel able to manage raising a family varied considerably across the sample, as it does in wider society. Michael, father of three, commented on this difference, which is consistent with findings in population research that higher income does not correspond to higher levels of childbearing (Dey and Wasoff, 2010; Graham, 2007).

> The people who I've spoken to who have said they can't afford it [another child], they are the ones who are by far the best off. […] What they probably mean is they wouldn't be able to afford to go to Australia and Canada.

However, some participants referred to the idea of 'making do' in relation to managing resources for family formation. They were, or had been, prepared to adapt their lifestyle to accommodate another, and especially a second, child. While for many participants who might have liked to have more children than they have, this logic of 'making do' reaches its limit at two children, for some the limit was reached at higher parities and, for one participant, at one child.

For the majority of fathers of two or more children, the intersection of circumstances was stable enough that the move to the second child was made on much the same terms as they had the first. The idea of 'making do' in order to have another child was not invoked by those such as Colin or Peter, who had 'cumulatively' invested in their careers and in a family-sized home and made no reference to financial constraints. For others, as noted above, having children is a cherished goal pursued in parallel with improvement in financial, employment or housing circumstances. Hugh, whose partner is hoping to have a second child in the near future, commented that

> The point you made about the housing market, people being priced out of moving and things, to a degree it'll stop you having eight kids or whatever. But I think if you want to have another child you'll probably still have one, you know. [...] You kind of adapt, don't you. You manage to your circumstances; you cut your cloth according to what you've got.

Bob and Tom also both use the term 'make do' for this form of managing 'to your circumstances' and apply it to family formation decisions. The desire for children is prioritised in such a way that compromises in lifestyle are understood as manageable, at least for a time. Tom and Angela had accepted the time constraints on their project to become financially secure and were prepared to make the sacrifices again that they had had to make after their first child was born in order to have another.

> We kind of realised you can make do financially. You have to work hard, yeah, and you have to make sacrifices but we were quite impoverished for a while. [...] The point I'm making there is that we realised that we didn't

have to be financially secure to have Lottie because, you know what, we managed it the first time. We just changed the way we did things.

The narrative in which this explanation was embedded was one of accepting financial constraints on family life due to time constraints affecting family formation. Ideal conditions for family life were argued to be unnecessary at the point of having children but could be pursued subsequently as children's material needs increased. As such, it represented an evolution of what Tom understood as 'good enough' circumstances for further family formation.

The logic of making do and non-materialist values appeared together in some participants' accounts. Bob exemplified the principle of prioritising goals for personal fulfilment and making do in practical terms, in their case in the 'not ideal living conditions' of a one-bedroom flat. Although Tom was not prepared to lose the progress they had made since having their second child through having another, Bob said he would be prepared to make do again for a third.

> If Amanda really wanted to have a third child, irrespective of our situation[…], I'd have another child because I believe in the future you just make do and I've got certain earning potential, things cost so much, that's fine, just deal with it.

Being prepared to live with the financial and opportunity costs of having another child in order to fulfil a vision of family is, unsurprisingly, also characteristic of fathers of more than two children, such as Michael. He said financial support to buy a house had 'made the experience a lot easier, but we would have still had the kids'.

One of Anthony's personal goals was a deeply desired sibling for his son. In one sense, he and his partner acted on the principle of making do in having a second child and pursuing (distributed) parallel investments in establishing family and career. However, Anthony resists the acceptance perhaps implicit in the term 'making do', saying 'and we don't have enough. We want to do more'. I quoted Anthony describing the compulsion he feels to push himself in his career and to be

ambitious in his role as provider. Toby, a sole earner father of three, also understood his capacity to earn and to gain promotion to be the key to a better life for his family. However, the acceptance in the narratives of participants who speak of 'making do' has a temporal dimension in that there is an explicit or implicit expectation of an amelioration of their material circumstances over time. They hoped to be making do only in the meantime. By contrast, this dynamic aspect is less evident in the accounts of non-earning fathers, who referred instead to 'getting by, day by day' (Murray) in managing family life in general. For example, with the exception of Jack who could revive his business, lone fathers indicated that future paid work would have to accommodate their commitment to care and was not represented as potentially increasing resources.

Limits to making do

There were limits to the adaptability of circumstances to the desire for further children. Lucien and Tom reached them at two children and Michael, Gabriel and Robert at three. For Liam and Deena their limit was one, in large part because having another child in combination with sustaining their careers was not manageable. For Russell, now father of twins, the financial limit was more starkly drawn than is often the case, although the investment in paying for IVF was gladly made.

> I thought, yes, If it's going to increase our chances massively then yes, it's worth what we're paying for this. The cost was something we had to think about and we just thought 'yeah, pay once but more than once and we'd be having to borrow money'.

Dilhara and his partner waited some time until she could get an evening shift and combine some paid work with care for the baby but were determined to have another child: 'that was the challenge we took'.

Housing for their families was an issue for many participants, sometimes an intractable one. Bruce mentioned that family formation was suspended, between their second and third child of five, for the period he was between jobs and until

they were able to move to larger accommodation. Anthony spoke of having to move when landlords refused to extend leases. Some home-owners were struggling with the small size of their flats or houses as the children grow and the difficulty in upgrading in size without moving out of the city centre. Rented accommodation was not always adequate, and often insecure, and buying is difficult. The concern with housing confirms that an understanding of desirable conditions for having children is relevant for further children as much as for the first child.

Thinking about understandings of the conditions for having children can offer a lens through which to examine how a family's needs are constructed and addressed. The cases of those who are prepared to 'make do' in order to have a second but not a desired third child, alongside the very different cases of fathers who were committed to having two children within a smaller window of time, suggest that a belief in the importance of siblings is important in evaluations of the resources for having another child. The 'sibling imperative' is one aspect of what I have termed visions of family, which interact with other beliefs about children's needs and desires, parents' needs and desires and material resources in shaping perceptions of 'good enough circumstances' for family formation.

Fatefulness and fantasy in visions of family

In their accounts of family formation within the interview, participants generally resisted making claims to control the future or their own biography, failing to discursively align themselves with the individualisation theories of family formation or family life (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005). The characterisation of conception in terms of the spectrum of planning and intentionality varied across the sample, particularly in relation to their first child. When speaking of becoming a father, some participants straightforwardly designated the conception as planned. One of them, Colin, later expressed concern about the effects on a child of knowing they were a 'surprise' child, linking the ideas of a desired child and an intended pregnancy. For another group conception was unintended, whether a shock or a delight. Unintended conceptions occurred in the context of both early stage and

established relationships. A third group used language in ways which distanced the process of conceiving a child from associations with control or instrumentality, even where there was an intention to conceive. As with research exploring fertility processes in the context of socio-economic disadvantage, discussed in Chapter 1 (Augustin et al, 2009; Marisglio et al, 2000 and Ross et al, 2010), many participants were unwilling to use the language of planning in relation to a conception they knowingly made possible. Conception which occurred within a brief period came as a 'surprise' (Jason) or a 'shock' (Adrian). Peter, having initially said, 'we were trying', corrected himself to say 'we just let things happen'. Andrew defined their 'more liberal approach' against a more 'mechanical' one. Jeremy said he and his partner weren't 'calendar watching, thermometer using'. Conception was not always easy for this group, but they seemed to wish to distance their process from the stress of struggling to conceive described by Russell, whose two children were born after IVF treatment.

Corresponding to this disavowal of control and instrumentality is the implicit attraction to naturalness and fatefulness and an experience of excitement at the intimacy, uncertainty and potential magnitude of making conception possible, and of a baby.

> If the situation arose, the right situation, then that would be something that would happen and, I think there was absolutely no, there was no desperation whatsoever, but there was a kind of, we knew full well that there was a chance that it could happen and that was quite an exciting thought that, you know, it could happen. We both felt able to drop that barrier in a literal and metaphorical sense. We felt able to just do that and just be "well, we'll see what happens". (Liam)

This version of 'not planned it but not prevented' (Ross *et al*, 2010, p.46) among more educated and advantaged fathers in the sample, does not entail, it seems, a suppression of a sense of responsibility. They were in a position to meet their responsibilities. It does seem to represent, at least retrospectively, enjoyment of a liminal experience. As well as a shared experience of intimacy and excitement,

there is a sense that understanding themselves to have been allowing but not controlling conception renders the pregnancy something given, and something fateful, because it might not have been given.

A variation on the theme of participants' vision of family relations as unmarked by instrumental constraints are the fantasies of unfettered family formation presented by some in the sample. A number of participants liked the idea, in the abstract, of being a father in a large family. Anthony said 'we'd probably just keep going, I think, if we could'. Bob said 'I love kids and I want more. I'd have a football team of kids, if I could.' Often these fantasies were of high involvement, hands-on, joint parenting.

> Win the lottery and we'll have another ten more, kind of thing, and then we'd not have to worry about it because one of us could not work or both of us could not work and both of us could just be proper, hands-on parents and deal with as many kids as we wanted, make sure they all got the same love and support. (Tom)

Lucien, too has this vision.

> I'd like kids around me. I'd like a whole menagerie of kids, I'd love that. I'd like a big house with lots of kids and feeling that we as parents are the centre of that, and they come and they go. But what I don't want to have to do is to provide for them, I don't want to have to work my bollocks off.

Notably, unemployed participants with more children and more time but less money did not refer to the above fantasies, although they did express satisfaction at spending time with their children. The participants building family castles in the air were conscious of the necessity and benefits of the level of financial provision they earn, as well as of the personal and social benefits of work in many cases. The fantasy is about fathers being with children and being the carer because they do not have to be the provider. While obviously a claim about their orientation to fatherhood, such a vision reflects, I think, the weight of constraints fathers and couples face balancing work and caring, presence and absence and their

understandings of children's needs with the demands of the other dimensions of their lives.

Discussion and Conclusion to Chapter 3

The point in the life course at which fatherhood becomes salient for participants varied, although either the 'right' partner relationship or the partner's advocacy of the 'right' time were consistently decisive in accounts of decision about the timing of allowing conception, where decisions were made. While a few men described women explicitly drawing them into a timetable for family formation (Hockey, 2009), others described more of a process of convergence of orientations, and two men spoke of leading the discussion on timing. However, where a participant's convergence with their partner's wish to have children was delayed, their partner's childbearing was delayed and limited to one child. Thus men's role in the timing of having children was varied in this sample. For those participants who assumed or aspired to fatherhood in their future, pursuing the desired preconditions for having children contributed to aspirations or decisions in respect of employment, career, partner relationship and housing, as well as the timing of becoming a father. However, these are also resources for life without children and had an independent value. Nevertheless, at the point when fatherhood became salient, the relevance of such resources was clear in participants' accounts, whether in terms of their presence or absence.

Becoming a father entailed making decisions with a partner, with the exception of Luke, whether proactive in anticipation of conception or reactive following conception, about what were the family's needs and how to meet them. Those whose investments had been cumulative (and successful) were in a position to move on to the next stage of establishing family life, or in the case of fathers who partner later, establish partnership and housing and family within a relatively compressed timeframe. If participants and partners had not, or were not able, to put all in place before the birth of their first child, they focused on trying to put them in place afterwards through parallel investments in career and housing, for example. For

some, achieving the desired conditions for family life was more difficult given the reduced earning power or increased expenses resulting from childcare requirements; support from family varied. In some cases, such as Tom's, a couple's evaluation of what were 'good enough' circumstances was adapted as the time limit for having a second child approached. The principle of 'making do' in the interim reflected the parallel investments in multiple life dimensions, if also an understanding of the life course as dynamic and an expectation of future improvement in circumstances. However, the capacity to build employment and economic resources and finance adequate housing is affected by class-differentiated access to resources, including level of education. Correspondingly, the logic of making do in the meantime in order to be able to have a desired child was not a feature of the accounts of fathers who had been unemployed for considerable periods of time. If these fathers made do, it was in relation to raising the families they desired by finding ways to 'get by' on consistently limited resources.

Personal ideas of family and beliefs about children's needs, such as beliefs about the benefits about siblings, are discursively constructed, and thus varied, situated and mutable, as well as inter-related with constructions of maternal, paternal and parental responsibilities (Lawler, 2000; McGraw and Walker, 2000). The analysis in this chapter suggests that they inform fathers', and couples', evaluations of resources, including time and financial resources, in respect of having children. The sibling imperative is an example of a widely circulating norm which is both frequently invoked but also, in the face of countervailing demands and beliefs, contested. Having a sibling was presented as decisive for children's experience by some participants, but was re-configured as one element among others in children's experience by those who could not, or did not, comply with it. For many couples, the number of children which satisfies the imperative to provide siblings within the bounds of what is manageable is two. Together with the imperative of the fertility window, this imperative may make two 'manageable' in a wide range of situations, in the face of financial and career costs and risks as well as costs and risks for women's health in pregnancy and childbearing. The principle of adaptation,

worked out in pragmatic terms in the logic of 'making do', may apply at different parities in accordance with the interaction between men's vision of family and their understanding of the resources available and the risks to other dimensions of life. Where circumstances were less susceptible to change, as in some cases of partners' ill health, adaptation took the form of an acceptance that family formation was complete. The centrality of understandings of family relationships and responsibilities to men's orientations to fatherhood and evaluations of the conditions and resources for family formation and family life confirm the value of recognising the relationality at the core of men's aspirations and evaluations relevant to fertility processes and family formation.

The relational, structural and discursive context of fertility processes

I wrote in Chapter 1 that, among researchers in the fields of fertility behaviour and in families and relationships, there has been considerable critique of a tendency to theorise family formation and family life in terms of reflexive modernity and attendant individualisation (Irwin, 2000). Critiques of an over-privileging of autonomy and choice in individualisation theory incorporate at least three strands of refutation, based in an attention to context (Hobcraft, 2006), which are relevant in this chapter. One more, mentioned first, is specific to fertility research. These are, first, that fertility is not always the result of a decision to conceive a child, second, the continued force of structural, classed, constraints in fathers' lived situations; third, the centrality of relationality in shaping and understanding biography; and, fourth, the persistent force of discursive norms and ideals in aspirations and evaluations relevant to family formation and family life. These strands woven into the analysis above will be highlighted below. Furthermore, I argue that the centrality of relationality, seen in references to their family of origin, to the partner relationship and to ideals and understandings of family, in participants' accounts demonstrate that in becoming a father, fathers can be understood to be doing family. I will return to this argument at the end of the chapter.

This research underlines the limits of accounts of fertility confined to intentional conception, such as Huinink and Feldhaus's exhaustive 'conceptual framework to model couples' and family dynamics as a process of purposeful individual action and decision-making over the life course' (2009, p.299), for example. Not only did the direction and focus of participants' orientation to fatherhood vary over the life course, several fathers in this small sample spoke of unanticipated or unscheduled conceptions, which occurred in casual, new and established relationships. They did not occur in marriage, but marriage was often a forerunner of trying to have a baby. Disadvantaged fathers who were in established partner relationships when they became fathers spoke of intentional family formation but those who were not spoke of unplanned pregnancies in ways not incompatible with the analysis of Augustine *et al* (2009) suggesting disadvantaged fathers in the US allowed for the possibility of conception they could not take responsibility for choosing. However, although the resources for taking responsibility for children were different, there was a form of this desire for fatefulness in the accounts of older, educationally and economically advantaged fathers. Furthermore, for several couples intending to have children, the timing or the processes of conception, pregnancy and birth were not straightforward. Thus, men's, women's and couples' decision-making in respect of fertility might be either active, in respect of trying to conceive, for example, or reactive, in responding to a conception, but made with an awareness of the limits of their control over the outcomes of decisions.

In respect of structural inequalities in class and gender relevant to family formation, there was evidence consistent with the pattern identified by Dey and Wasoff (2010) of an association between higher levels of education and later childbearing. Many of the more educated men in this sample became fathers later, and within partner relationships which could be characterised as established in terms of duration and/or practices such as marriage and joint property purchase. Some of the less educated participants became fathers, or stepfathers, earlier and sometimes in less stable partner relationships. Unexpected conception cut across this division by age and education to some extent. However, the difference in resources was evident in

the extent to which participants and partners were able to establish an enduring partner relationship and mobilise means, through employment or purchase of property, for example, for fulfilling responsibilities as parents in enduring ways. Lewis, unemployed, moved into the social housing provided to his partner for only a few years; Tom finished his studies early, bought a flat for his family with parental support, and built up a career in a different field; Liam and Deena sold their respective flats, bought a house and continued with their careers. Whether in cumulative or parallel patterns of investment, the resources of more educated fathers were linked, if to varying extents, with past progression and/or the capacity for future progression in establishing resources for family life. As Dey and Wasoff advocate, policy and academic concern with fertility should be framed in terms of the well-being of parents and children in families, and young, disadvantaged families in particular. Not only is such a focus associated with higher fertility rates in countries such as France and Sweden, but '[f]or many people, reproduction remains at the centre of personal life' (2010, p.937).

I have examined in detail, in this chapter, the ways in which relationality is to be taken account of in conceptualising the place of fertility and fatherhood in the life course, as well as the place of normative understandings of parental responsibilities and children's needs. First, the envisaged relationships of fatherhood, and the significance of the existence and nature of the partner relationship, position a characterisation of fertility decisions as individual calculation of risks and benefits for personal self-fulfilment as partial and reductionist. Participants' thinking about fatherhood was in part about personal fulfilment, but in terms of relationships with and care of children and, in terms of the partner relationship, of adding meaning or purpose to being together as a couple through shared commitment to a child. Participants did not, however, speak of family relationships and responsibilities as something able to be completely known or controlled. Second, I discussed ways in which their sense of what those responsibilities were was shaped within a strong consensus on children's need for a secure environment (reflected in participants' concerns in relation to employment and housing), for example, the value of parental

attention and, for the majority, the value of growing up with siblings. These are examples of the force of discursively constructed norms within which subjects live and relate to others and which have sometimes been downplayed in individualised accounts of the do-it-yourself biography. At the same time, what I have termed the sibling imperative offers an example of a normative understanding the significance of which is negotiated in relation to other moral and personal commitments, to existing children and partner, or to career or lifestyle, for example, in evaluating the resources of time, health and finances for the realisation of visions of family life.

'Doing family' and 'doing fatherhood'

The analysis of family formation in the life course presented in this chapter offers an alternative to individualist and rationalist accounts of fertility behaviour, but also extends the discussion of fathers' contribution to family formation to incorporate the perspective of family and relationships research. In particular, Morgan's concept of 'family practices' and Smart's theorisation of 'personal life' offer ways of thinking about paternal perspectives on a multi-dimensional fatherhood in the life course.

Participants' perspectives on becoming and being a father shift focus between the interconnected dimensions of relationship and responsibility and of a father's contribution to family life and the place of family in his life. Thus, I understand fathers to be both 'doing family' and 'doing fatherhood', concepts which I elaborate in detail in the final chapter of the thesis, Chapter 7. First, an analysis of doing fatherhood is about fathers' part in, but also their perspective on, family formation and family life. Second, an analysis of doing fatherhood considers fathers' perspectives on the place of family in their concept of fatherhood, their practice as a father and in relation to other aspects of their life. Third, the analytic focus is the construction of fatherhood rather than family, because it is confined to fathers' perspectives and because it is attentive to the constitution of gendered relations between fathers and mothers, and fatherhood and motherhood. To do fatherhood

and family is to do, or perhaps undo, gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Deutsch, 2007).

The framework of thinking about fathers' practices analytically as both 'doing family' and 'doing fatherhood' draws on Morgan's (1996) re-conception of the object of study in the sociology of the family as 'family practices', and as the 'active process' of constituting family, a socially and historically located process. Morgan wrote that 'family' 'is not a thing but a way of looking at, and describing, practices which might also be described in a variety of other ways' (Morgan, 1996, p.199). Smart, in *Personal Life*, (2007) proposed a conceptualisation of the 'personal life' as predicated on a degree of self-reflection and connectedness with others and a situated biography which is a site of cumulative interconnections between domains (2007, pp.28-29). Thus, ' personal life' offers a way of conceptualising a perspective on doing fatherhood where the focus is on the part family plays in the practice of fatherhood and on the part of fatherhood across the life domains of the father as subject. It is a 'way of looking at' the practices of fathers doing family, where the focus is on the perspective of and implications for the subject doing fatherhood. In this thesis, I will explore the potential of 'family' as well as fatherhood for 'looking at' participants' accounts of the parent-child relationship, the relation of fatherhood to motherhood, fathers' configuration of practice, and the relation of caring fatherhood to 'masculinity'. The next chapter addresses fathers' perspectives on the relation between the family practices of their family of origin and their own practice as a father.

Chapter 4   Parent/child: a doubled perspective on the legacy of parenting

Introduction

The idea of change between generations is a central premise, and promise, of 'new' fatherhood. In this chapter, I consider how fathers understand intergenerational continuity and change as a child and as a parent, in relation to their heritage from their own parents and the legacy they would lay down for their children. References to continuity between generations were frequently made by participants and the theme of 'passing on' was important in discussions of the meaning of fatherhood. However, in some cases, passing on a desired legacy to their children required a break with their heritage and identification with narratives emphasising the potential for change between generations. As previously noted, one element of what is new in 'new' fatherhood is the emphasis on intimate relationships with children, supported by fathers' greater presence and participation in family life.

The first section of the chapter begins with a discussion of fathers' references to passing on different forms of inheritance. I then extend this intergenerational focus to a father's responsibility for a child's well-being and growth in the present and to the adult the child will become. In the final part of this section, I discuss how becoming a father prompted reflection on the relation between their own childhood and the childhood they desired for their children, and on their father's practice and the experience of fatherhood they desired for themselves. There was considerable variety in participants' relations to fathers: death, absence, violence, emotional distance as well as companionship, guidance, affection and love figured in representations of the father-child relationship. In Section 2, I examine more closely the processes of engagement with childhood experience and with memories of mothers and fathers as parents represented in participant accounts. While, as the variety noted above would suggest, there was a division between an emphasis on

continuity and on breaking with the past, the place of other relationships and of generational understandings of fatherhood in the assembling of a practice is seen for both groups. In the final section I draw on concepts from the work of Alfred Schutz and G.H. Mead in an analysis of the temporality constructed in participants' accounts of engaging with a parenting heritage and laying down a legacy for their children. The section concludes with a brief return to the subject of the resources fathers bring to constructing the connection between their own pasts and their children's future through the present moment of their parenting.

Section 1   Parent and child: transmission and creation of a legacy

Passing on – continuity and connection

Several fathers spoke of the meaning of fatherhood as comprising an element of 'passing on', or leaving a 'legacy'. What is passed on might be a genetic, familial, or cultural heritage which places father and child within a social continuity. For example, when asked why people have children, Lewis replied, 'You want your legacy to be left behind. And what's the best form of legacy? A smarter version of yourself to carry it on'. Peter, a father of two sons who affirms traditional values elsewhere in the interview, spoke of the importance to him and to his father of passing on the family name. 'I'm just so glad that my family can carry on the name. My dad was very, very pleased that I'd had at least one son. […] The whole point of us being here is to have a family'. Peter finishes by speaking humorously of passing on his 'great gene pool', but he is serious in raising both genealogical and genetic inheritance as meaningful elements in his family formation.

Dave, who became stepfather to the four year old daughter of his partner three years before his son was born, had not anticipated his appreciation of this genetic link with his son.

> I would have been just happy with Sophie, really would have been, but having seen someone from a baby grow up, and having seen more of, there's more of my personality in him, more of my mum and dad and stuff like that

in his genetics and that's different, but that's kind of nice to see as well. It's not something I would have appreciated before.

However, a genetic inheritance can also be a source of concern. Lewis would not have another child lest he pass on again the autism spectrum disorder he believes he has passed on to his son. Andrew's narrative of his long coming to fatherhood touched on anxiety, later assuaged, about genetic inheritance in relation to his mother's suspected mental illness. Andrew, father of two, said 'you get to a certain age and you realise I'm not going to live forever, actually. And there's a sense of carrying on something from you and your family into the future. I think that's the strongest thing'. Two participants suggested that their partner's significant encounter with potentially fatal illness was linked to a greater urgency in their desire to have a child.

Gabriel is a father of three and from Southern Europe. His reasons to become a father were 'to give love' but also took up Andrew's theme of continuity beyond death giving meaning to life. He added to a sense of extension in time a sense of extension in space.

> You know that the children are part of you, a certain part of you is put in another person, is a feeling, a nice feeling.

There is perhaps a link between this sense of one's existence extending beyond oneself, which Gabriel likes, and the conception of family expressed by Michael. Michael, father of three, emphasises the importance of both the immediate and the broader flow of family life, from his childhood and into the future. The broad flow includes multiple generations. Michael remembers his Gramps enjoying the generations: 'There was him right the way down to our kids and you could see in his eye how much pleasure he took in that'.

As noted by Smart in her discussion of cross-cultural legacies (2007, Chapter 4), the cultural heritage and family narratives passed on to children and others affords another form of continuance and a dynamic extension of oneself beyond the embodied self. Andrew, an academic, demonstrated a reflexive orientation to social

discourses and accords positive significance to the passing on of his personal cultural heritage. He characterised the desire to have children as a desire 'to pass on your knowledge and background and stories and all of that to other people so that a little bit of you lives on, a little bit of where you've come from lives on as well'. However, in addition to the genetic, familial and cultural, there is a personal and parental element in what participants wished to pass on to their children. Dave, quoted above appreciating the genetic connection, went on to say that being a father is 'guiding someone else through life, that's what it means for me. […] Yeah, passing on, hopefully, the best of me to someone else, I hope'. His point, that not only the genetic inheritance, but the personal legacy to children is central to being a parent, is a central theme of this chapter.

As I shall discuss below, the passing on of an ethical and moral framework was put forward by some fathers as a parental responsibility. Like some other fathers, Sam acknowledged there are situations which can bring two imperatives of parenting into conflict and each parent's effort to pass on such values are modified and mediated by their own and child(ren)'s interaction with the other parent. The school Sam and his partner chose for Sam's daughter, on the basis of its reputation as a good school and their belief in the importance of education, is a religious school. The world view taught there is not in line with Sam's world view.

> She was quite taken with it all at first and I was always trying to give her the other side and Catherine was always, and probably still is, much more relaxed about it. I'm still not entirely comfortable with having a religious basis to your education, […] Catherine and I are relaxed about a lot of things, we don't want her to pick up prejudices from teachers.

Sam clearly conveyed a sense of tension in respect of his desire to preserve their family unit as the site for passing on to his daughter the valued liberal heritage he spoke of having received from his parents.

Responsibility to the future: laying down a legacy

Part of Sam's anxiety as to ideas his daughter might 'pick up' from her teachers derives from an understanding of childhood as a period where basic orientations are still being established. The most consistent element in participants' formulation of the meaning of fatherhood is a sense of responsibility in relation to children's future. This responsibility is bound up with the belief that there is a formative period where it is possible, and proper, for parents to facilitate, through nurture, relationship and environment, a child's emotional, social and intellectual development and prepare them for an independent future.

Colin says

> I suppose the thing that sits in the back of my mind all the time is, it's responsibility. So, it's responsibility for their health, safety, well-being. It's also responsibility for trying to raise two individuals that will turn out to be well-balanced, happy, um, I guess, happy with themselves and, you know, go on to be a success at whatever they want to do in life.

He goes on to mention everyday getting by and the enjoyment of his children, 'part of the reward for all that responsibility'. His words suggest two dimensions of responsibility, on-going care and progressively guiding and equipping children for future life, in its social, emotional and vocational dimensions. Similarly, Adrian sees being a parent as the task of nurturing the self and preparation for the world, as

> doing the best job I can possibly do to make my child the best person he can be. And to make his place in the world, to make him getting his place in the world and making his way in the world as good as I can as well.

The responsibility to the child's present care, and to the adult the child will become is echoed by Hugh, and by Jeremy who said that being a parent 'is about caring for someone, it is about protecting them, it is about looking after, it's about being there to help them grow into something worth being'. In this sense, the period of growing up seems to be understood as a period in which parents have the responsibility to lay down a legacy for their child's future self. Establishing – in the sense that a plant becomes established – the capacity for self-realisation and

fulfilment is an achievement which survives into the future adulthood of the child. The inverse of this achievement is the negative heritage some participants speak of working to overcome, as discussed further below.

Given that, according to contemporary understandings of child development, the practices of parenting cannot but leave a legacy (Lawler, 2000), choices and reflection on how to best do so are intrinsic to being a parent. In line with contemporary discursive constructions of fatherhood as about care rather than provision, the fathers I interviewed all spoke of their responsibility for the emotional and psychological legacy of childhood alongside, or to a greater extent than, a responsibility for the material endowment. However, topics such as preparations for higher education or property investment were not addressed in the interview, an instance of the silence on the material and monetary advantages through which children are passed the social and educational advantages of their parents.[1]

Some, notably those whose parents had divorced or who remembered their fathers' violence or temper, spoke of providing a happy childhood as the most important element in parenting. Tom, for example, said

> My priorities in life are just that my kids are happy and healthy. I just want them to look back on childhood and remember it as a happy time and a nice time because I guess not all of my childhood was.

Henry, whose daughter was only 19 months old, said he wished he could know Amy was happy and he was doing a good job. Although he believed she had every reason to be happy, he hates the idea of her looking back and hating her childhood as he does; 'my childhood was crap and I hated all of it'. Henry had lived homeless and been affected by addiction for a period several years before the interview.

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[1] It should also be noted that, not anticipating the importance of non-material forms of transmission in fathers' talk, I did not specifically address the material in relation to the children's future as I did, to some extent, in relation to family formation.

Providing a happy childhood was presented as a goal in itself, but there was also an implicit concern over negative consequences for children's psychological and social development of emotional trauma in childhood. This concern was explicitly articulated in some participants' references to negative consequences of their own experience of childhood. Some participants spoke more of a happy childhood and some more of the facilitation of character development and autonomy in children and some referred to both, but both happiness and independence were linked to an experience of emotional security in childhood. Bob said 'I do think that security matters, confidence and giving kids the ability to walk off and not turn around to look where you are'. This was the intended legacy of their parenting to their children.

One aspect of fathers' characterisation of their practise which did invoke continuity with earlier periods was their reference to the idea of being a role model. Modelling was seen as one means by which values and wisdom might be transmitted over time through example. Participants did not see parenting or modelling as having a determining role in their children's development or future lives, but as significant enough nevertheless to constitute a significant responsibility. Dilhara, father of two daughters, talked about setting an example as an alternative to 'the way that they [his parents] used to control us'. Gabriel, father of three, endorsed the parenting he received and situated passing it on, in part, in being a role model: 'I think like a father just to show them the good way is all, and this is really difficult, but it is enough'. He said 'the children are learning from you' all the time, and that he sometimes has to resist the temptation to laugh with the children when he should be maintaining his authority.

Bruce, father of five, spoke of his late father as a model for instilling respect in his children, for parents and for others. Bruce said 'I pass that on to my children as well.' He incorporated ideals mentioned by several participants: being there, being honest and being a guide, saying he had a role as a model in relation to his children making their way in the world.

If you want something then you have to, this is what I want in life, then first of all you have to get the education for it, get the qualification, start at the bottom and work your way up and get on wi' it.

He explicitly rejected short-cut or quick fix approaches to achieving your goals. Bruce was in his early fifties and has been in employment for very close to all his adult life. However, his children live in an area where a significant proportion of households will not have experienced such continuous employment. Gerry is father to four children (including one stepson) who has not been in paid work for several years. He expressed concern that his children will lack motivation to work: 'If my dad's not working, I'm not working'. Murray is also unemployed, and described himself as without a role model himself as his father passed away when he was very young. Nevertheless, he was invested in the idea of being a role model for his children, able to 'pass things down to them'. He spoke of learning from his peers about parenting and learning alongside his eldest son as he helps him with homework.

Robert, a primary caregiver dad of three children, links the idea of passing on wisdom, being a model and hero and the meaning of fatherhood, while humorously acknowledging the limited extent to which children take up their assigned role as receivers of such wisdom in daily life.

> R: […] What is the meaning of fatherhood… There is love there, and discipline, and being a hero. You want to be a hero to your kids when you're a dad. That's it really.
>
> I: How? Being a hero how?
>
> R: Someone they'll look up to. Someone they'll come to for advice. Someone they'll think of, "yes, my father did it like this and that was a sensible and wise thing to do, if only I'd realised that before I had children of my own". You want to protect them as well. Not necessarily give them things you never had but give them opportunities and what they need to grow to be the people you always wished you could be. If your parents hadn't been so rubbish and you hadn't learnt from them all their parenting

mistakes that you're now passing on. [laughing] That's the theory and then your main aim is just to get through to the end of the day and have a beer.

Robert's words recall those of Colin, quoted above, in touching on protection and providing opportunities to develop, as well as the distinction between theory and 'trying to cope with whatever's going on' (Colin) and to 'get through to the end of the day' (Robert). So being a role model is understood as an imperfect science, part of what fathers do in the midst of 'whatever's going on' and alongside a whole range of contending influences. Furthermore, modelling is carried out simultaneously on different scales, from who works outside the home and how much, to everyday expressions of affection (Robert), to saying sorry when you lose your temper (Tom), as discussed further below.

The parenting within which intimate parent-child relationships are constituted is a flow of meaningful practice. While there were a few references to personal characteristics in relation to parenthood, such as patience and warmth, there were many, many more to what fathers do. Fathers speak of care and play and conversation and education and concern about their child and about their child's world. Participants in couples very often do so in ways which recognise their partner's influence on their own parenting, as is explored further in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the comparisons between their own and their father's practice drawn by participants were to do with the division of their father's time between work and family (usually in terms of the consequences for the relationship) or to do with ways of relating. Where participants speak of lack in relation of their father, it is framed in terms of a lack, or fracturing, of close relationship, through absence, preoccupation with paid work, reserve or violence. They are speaking about selected elements of building a relationship from good practices and they are defining good fathering practice in terms of building a good parent-child relationship. It is in the direct relationship with their children that the meaning of their acts of direct and indirect care, including provision, is grounded.

Becoming a parent - coming into an inheritance

The structure of relations in contemporary Western society is such that on becoming parent to a child or children you are re-entering the parent-child relationship in a dual position. In addition to being an adult son or daughter, you then occupy the position your parent(s) held in relation to you, with some time-mediated knowledge and memory of being in the position of 'child'.

The idea that the nature and impact of the interconnected relationships and responsibilities of parenthood could only be genuinely known once you had become a parent (and also that you only realised the extent to which this was the case once you were a parent) was common. Jeremy, for example, said of becoming a father 'I can't imagine I had a real view of what it would mean'. Robert commented that 'having children is a normal thing to do', suggesting that having children is a course of action which, where it is aligned with social and cultural expectations, may, but need not, prompt reflection: 'I don't think anyone really knows what they're letting themselves in for when they have children, to be honest'. Nevertheless, some participants recalled reflecting on the kind of parent they would be, and on how their upbringing might shape their parenting, before the baby was born. One aspect of the transition to parenthood is the different perspective from which participants looked back on their parents and childhood.

> I think I understand a bit more about how they felt rather than what they did. And I understand more, I suppose, in that way that you don't always believe that your parents feel as strongly as they might be saying they do. But then you realise, of course they did, in all these ways, because you're feeling all those things, and all the difficulties and all the bonding and all those kinds of feelings that you have.

There was among this sample, as found by other researchers, a division between fathers who wished to reproduce their childhoods and those who were seeking some form of reparation through the parent-child relationship for what they perceived to have been deficient in their childhood parent-child relationships

(Townsend, 2002). In terms of parenting, Michael is content to carry forward his legacy from his parents.

> My brother and sister and I all always said that if we basically could raise our kids in the same way Mum and Dad raised us then we would feel that we had done a pretty good job, that we felt totally happy about the way that we were raised. Apart from the fact that none of us are famous and rich [Laughing].

By contrast, Lucien spoke of wanting the 'unconditional love' possible in a relationship with a child, and enjoying the' feeling that somebody adores you'. He described that as

> 'a real motivator, I think, that it would give me that, almost as if I could make up, make amends for a lack in the experience I had of being a child, um, not that it was actually particularly lacking'.

Significantly, Lucien understood this process of reparation as receiving through giving in relationship: 'that was very much an experience I wanted to provide and therefore to gain personal nourishment from'. In a more extreme case, when Toby said that 'because I had a really bad childhood, I wanted to kind of prove that you can be nice and stuff', he went on to say 'by me having a kid I could show that and I could do it and give it myself'.

For all participants, the relationship between the terms of the heritage received and passed on was significant. However, its significance was particularly stressed by participants who described a relational deficit in their paternal parenting heritage. A third of participants, eleven of thirty-one, spoke of fathers who were absent or violent. The fathers of Bob and Murray died before they were old enough to remember them. Barry, Daniel and Lewis never knew their biological fathers, but Lewis called his stepfather dad. Jack was placed in care as a child. Andrew and Tom lost regular contact with their fathers following their parent's divorce. Toby's parents separated and, ultimately, he withdrew from contact with them. Henry endured systematic violence from his father. For a period following his mother's death in his teens, the discipline Hugh received from his father was sometimes

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excessive and they were estranged for a time. These participants sought to transform the negative elements of their parenting heritage by learning from their experience, and drawing on other knowledge and relationships, in order to construct a positive heritage for their children through their own parenting.

The language of turning negative experiences into a positive resource for parenting and for children was recurrent and significant in how some fathers from disadvantaged backgrounds, or with difficult childhoods in other ways, spoke of parenthood. Daniel, a lone father of three, spoke of transformation through reflection. He sees his whole life of positive and negative experiences and lessons learned as a resource for fatherhood.

> So, I suppose it's using my past to turn me into the parent that I am nowadays and also to use it to give my kids similar experiences as I had growing up as well. […] I can see where I was what I've done and where I've come from and what I'm doing now, and I just put it down to different chapters in your life and life experiences, low points and turn them into positives for my kids. […] Without all these experiences, how could I teach my kids the difference between right and wrong? That experience will help make me a better father.

Toby is a co-resident stepfather to two sons and biological father to another, but no longer in a relationship with their mother. I noted above his desire to 'prove' he could have a nice life: 'Happy settled down family is really the big thing for me 'cause I never really had that when I was young 'cause my mum and dad split up'. Within the logic of transformation, the 'imaginary' in visions such as Toby's, 'of a family with kids and maybe a dog or something and a house', is a powerful pull into the future. The importance of such images, for the vision of love, belonging, security and meaningfulness they have the power to represent, is attested to by Jack. Jack is the father of two teenagers and a toddler from two relationships. He was placed in care when he was four. The source of the power of cultural images of family is located by Jack in the fusing of a symbolic and emotional connection during experiences of childhood distress. The distress is understood as caused by a lack of 'family', where family means love, belonging, security.

J: The majority of people are nice people and just want to give their children what they never had, and what they should have had and what they've seen, so I think it's learning what you've never had.   […]

I: There have been a few people who've said, some from the dads group but some others, about wanting to give them what they didn't have. Where do they get the idea?

J: When you're crying. You're crying and you're a little boy so you're emotionally mucked up. I remember crying a lot when I was a bairn and you're looking at families in windows and your heart would break because you want to be a part of that.

The linking of such desires to be part of a family with an understanding that the legacy of the past may be transformed in the present, may influence some men for whom being parented by a father was an experience marked by neglect, intimidation or conflict in feeling able to take on the challenges of being a parent. Furthermore, the responsibility and desire to endow their children for the future may push fathers into a form of ascendancy narrative of 'overcoming life's problems against all odds' (Brownlie, 2014, p.204) where fathers' overcoming and the children's ascent are bound together.

This form of narrative was largely absent from the accounts of participants from more advantaged backgrounds who were not in (or did not speak to me about) an intractably difficult situation at the time of the interview.   Narratives of transformation were deployed in intractable situations and the positive outcomes of transformation projected into the children's future. Dave, who is educated to graduate level and has been successfully employed and self-employed in the past, had been looking for work for some time in the wake of an unsuccessful business partnership. While expressing considerable concern over his responsibility to contribute to provision, Dave sought comfort in the idea that 'I'm pretty sure that no matter what happens, you know, the kids will be fine.'

I think, in the long run, if they were facing tough times themselves, you know, decades from now, I think that would be a good thing. They'll be able

to reflect on it and go, this is how… [You just keep going.] We came out of the end of it, yeah.

Several participants recognised that the processes whereby parenting and relational practices are constructed (as in a construction is put on them) as good and bad are historically situated and subject to change. A number of participants recognised that resources for parenting are sourced from a range of sites. Andrew is an academic who was 37 when his first child was born. He had reflected in detail on his changing understandings of the potential influence of the parenting he had received on the parent he would be. His narrative of the transformation in his orientation to fatherhood through, alongside accumulating maturity, is, in part, a story of growing acceptance that his biological inheritance and parenting heritage, a source of anxiety, need not determine his experience as a parent. In addition, reflection on the absence of a positive role model for parenting or for fatherhood can feed into a strong commitment to a positive vision of fatherhood.

> I suppose I'm quite aware of the fact that male children in particular need that role model, for you to be there for them because I didn't always have that and as a result kind of went a bit astray at certain points, which I won't go into.

Andrew now expresses complete commitment to a father's responsibility to stay with his children.

> So I'm aware of what a deficit of dad being around is like, so I suppose I'm aware that I need to be there. So there's no way I would ever entertain leaving my kids, for example. There's absolutely no chance I would do that. I don't think that the good father does that.

Having distanced himself from his father's model, Andrew then goes on, in a move also made by Hugh and Tom, to distance himself from condemning his father: 'I mean I don't blame my dad for what he did. It wasn't my life and he had his reasons, and so on. But I wouldn't do it.' In this section I have considered accounts of the substance of inheritances and intended legacies. The processes of 'passing on' are explored in more detail in the next section.

Section 2   Engaging with a parenting heritage: assembling a practice

Processes of engagement: selection, rejection and inversion

In this section I consider the 'how' of participants' engagement with their parenting heritage, such as role modelling and transforming the positive into negative, by examining participants' descriptions of processes in reference to specific practices. In doing so, I will also consider how participants constructed the process of engaging with the past in the present

The discourse of transformation constructs a break with the biographical past, but also continuity in understanding the past as the material to be transformed. Furthermore, not all aspects of the past are subject to transformation. Toby, for example, says that achieving a different experience for his children from his own has been possible through retention as well as rejection of selected aspects of his father's parenting.

> I suppose the real answer is I just done the opposite of the things I didn't like from my own dad and done the things I did like from my dad. I almost felt like I was getting the best of both worlds for the kids because I had had goods and bads and I could take away the bads and make them goods.

I commented that the narrative of turning negatives to positive was particularly present in the accounts of those from less advantaged backgrounds. However, the double move of rejecting and inverting selected elements of the parenting practice of their own parents is present in most participants' accounts, although the extent to which their parents' practice was represented as a reference point in accounts varied.

Jeremy, for example, said he didn't take them as a model; 'I don't look back and think should I use that as a way of knowing how to do it or even not to do it – I don't use them as a negative example either.' Rather he 'just play[s] everything by ear really', evaluating 'cause and effect'. Andrew and Tim used the same phrase,

'play it by ear', while Harry 'makes[s] it up as he goes along'. While this ties in with the many assertions that parenting is intuitive and comes naturally, consistent with a discursive tradition of self-sufficient competence potentially invoking constructions of masculinity, participants did go on to acknowledge a variety of trials faced and aid accepted. In this instance, Jeremy, on reflection, commented that

> the only thing is that I do bear in mind, the way my father's attitude was to my education and the way he tried to drive me and I try not, I try to take a very encouraging, explaining attitude towards things rather than "that's not right".

There is an interaction between Jeremy's evaluation of his experience as a child and his beliefs about what is good practice which feeds into his judgement of 'cause and effect' as he plays it by ear when interacting with his children.

When Robert spoke about his parents as parents he made a series of contrasts between his life in his family of origin and family life with his partner and children. He referred to specific practices, and their implied consequences and meanings, in sets of opposed pairs, although sometimes one part of a pair is implied.

> My parents didn't shout. They were very much into, they'd guilt you into doing stuff, 'Oh, you know...' So I try and avoid doing that. I prefer shouting instead. It's more straightforward, hopefully, less lasting damage. My sister Liz basically taught my parents to hug when she was about 18. So, certainly, hugging and that sort of stuff is something we've gone for much more than my parents did. Ah, my family is not a very chatty family either. So, you know, we'd all sit around at meals not talking. It was always an event when we managed to get a conversation going that wasn't about the details of, you know, what we needed to do the next day.

'Shouting', hugging and chatting are the more open, direct and engaged behaviours in each pair in the areas of discipline, love and relating. In this way, they are aligned with the emphasis in contemporary parenting discourses on warmth, intimacy and a somewhat more horizontal structuring of parent-child relations which recognises children's voice and developing autonomy (Jamieson, 1998, p.161).

Peter, while he regretted the ebbing of some traditional values, was very pleased that his family is a demonstrably affectionate one; 'I don't think we have a problem as a family expressing how we feel about each other and that's good'. But he also noted the embodied legacy of his childhood occasionally surfaces as a point of resistance despite his commitment to a new practice.

> You know it's quite funny, I, I, my family weren't very tactile. And I think I am when I'm doing it, but sometimes I'm not comfortable when the boys want a cuddle with me, and I wonder if deep down, the way that I was brought up, that sort of comes back.

Robert, quoted above, used the word 'shouting' as shorthand for one category of interactions with his children in contra-distinction to the less 'straightforward' strategy of emotional manipulation. Adrian and Tom had the opposite experience. Their fathers shouted. The practice was passed on, but then reframed as negative within a parenting approach negotiated with partners, and its replication as a problem to be addressed. Adrian was grateful for and committed to passing on what he received from his parents 'in terms of love and appreciation because I was made to feel like that from my parents'. His reference to shouting is in the context of what he sees as a negative legacy from his father.

> But usually with the negative I realise that that's what's happening, and I recognise it and stop, or have done anyway. But I did spend a long time shouting, because that's what my dad did. And not all the time, but just when I felt was appropriate and then realising oh, that's not. But it had to be pointed out to me, because it was just the norm as far as I was concerned, and it was okay.

He went on to say that his partner helped him to see the detrimental effects of shouting for all the family. Tom, too, spoke of other role models and of the role of his partner in directing his parenting practice away from the 'smacks' and lost tempers which were normal when he was growing up.

> I would just lose my temper, go away and then calm down and go 'oh, that was a bit much'. And then I would go and apologise to the kids, and say 'Daddy lost his temper', whereas my Dad would never have done that. [...]

Yeah I definitely learnt from their mistakes as well as learning from positive role models as well.

Like Peter, Tom is describing certain embodied responses as an irruption into the present of emotional and physical reactions built up within childhood parent-child relationships. Like Adrian, Tom is 'learning' and actively seeking to transform the impact of these responses, in his case by modelling contrition and reconciliation.

Hugh, father of a young son, offered a case where a practice is definitely rejected, in this case corporal punishment, even where considerable effort is made not to reject the practitioner in doing so.

It was quite difficult for me 'cause as I said my mother died when I was 14. There was just me and my dad. My brother was away at university by that point. So it was just me and my dad and obviously he was finding things hard and there were a few times then.

Aspects of participants' accounts, such as these, suggest that in identifying points of tension or difference between their own and their parents' parenting there is an interaction between the taking up of the discursive norms of their generation, engaging with the values of their partner, evaluation of childhood experience of parent-child relationships and enduring personal, emotional, embodied dispositions which shape engagement and resistance in relation to parenting practice.

I have noted that some participants spoke of building a positive practice as the opposite of negative experience, but participants also drew on other resources for building parenting practice. Barry, who has never known his father, had observed other family members with their children. Tom said that while his stepdad was a slightly better model than his father, his grandparents on his mother's side gave him 'the other perspective to things that I've got to avoid doing'. Henry, who was subject to considerable violence as a child, pointed out that there are limits to how much you can take from a problematic experience in working out how to parent. He argued it still remains to make parenting choices on the basis of what you positively believe.

Essentially, my dad got it wrong. That doesn't mean, we could have
parented in a lot of different ways and done it better than my dad done it. It
kind of, we, out of all our friends are more on the liberal side. There's been
no controlled crying, we're still breastfeeding – that's the way we chose.   We
have friends, they do controlled crying, there's naughty steps etc. etc. I don't
agree with what they're doing but they're doing what they think is right for
the child whereas my dad, my mum and dad didn't do what was right for
the child.

Jason's upbringing and adolescence was warm but impacted by, as he put it, serious
issues with boundaries. He was similarly clear that, while he has a strong basis for
his belief in the importance of boundaries for children, he 'doesn't want to be
reactionary' in his parenting.

I hope her experience, that she can really benefit from the experience that
I've had. But I don't want to think too much about how I look after Helena
or how I respond, I want to sort of to respond on a day to day basis but to be
consistent, I think that's very important.

I mentioned above the role of participants' partners altering parenting practice.
Some participants acknowledged the positive influence of women in a wider sense.
Andrew, for example, described how his confidence in Deborah as a partner and
mother, and in their capacities as a parenting team, contributed to the easing of an
anxiety which had hitherto compelled him to reject fatherhood.   Adrian referred to
the contribution of former partners as well as his present partner: 'I think the
women that I have had relationships with have made me a better man, you know,
for the most part anyway.' Mothers as well as partners were an important resource
for fathers in this sample.

The maternal model and ideal fatherhood – seeking a position of balance

Participants' mothers were represented in the data in a variety of ways. Some
participants tended to speak of their parents as a unit, and, in some cases, of their
parents' values in general rather than certain practices in particular. However, in
this section I consider three instances where the participant is reflecting on the

legacy from their mothers, either in contrast to or in the absence of their fathers, in the constitution of their own parenting practice.

Russell's mother was presented as a positive model for practice. Russell remembered his father working 70 hours a week when he was in secondary school. His mother gave up work when his older brother was born. This is a model he rejected; 'certainly, I had no intention of replicating that model at all'. While he recalled making a particular effort to spend time with his father when he could, the primary presence through his childhood and adolescence was his mother; 'I remember she involved us in everything'. And it is this model of involvement that he did intend to replicate.

> I certainly take that involving the children in what we're doing don't want them to feel that this is what we do and they have to be over there playing with their toys out of our way. So, yeah, it was great that I had so much time with my mum as a child. Carol always says that I'm very maternal, she's more the paternal one.

While Russell is proud of the maternal virtues and wanted to care for the children, he could not simply invert the traditional division of labour as his partner also wants to care for their twin boys. The model of intimate parenting offered by his mother is an important resource, albeit one aligned with contemporary discourses of fatherhood, but one re-contextualised in the context of equal parenting. Russell's account points to an assembling of the elements of practice on different levels: the large scale of the division of paid and unpaid labour, the overarching but everyday scale of an approach to parenting and the intimate scale of activities with the boys.

Two other participants who engaged reflexively with the parenting legacy from their mother, Daniel and Bob, were among those who grew up without their biological fathers. For those in the sample whose father is absent, the parenting heritage is constituted both by the absence of the father and the parenting of the mother. Sons of single mothers respected their mothers' efforts to bring them up and provide for them. They also recognised that the enormous difficulties their

mothers faced, in working and caring for the family on their own at that period, were too great not to have consequences. Murray, for example, described himself as being 'really a handful' and 'shuffled about' because his lone mother could not cope. Andrew referred to a period where he 'got away with quite a lot, most of which my mum didn't know about, to be fair, but she wasn't there to police it a lot of the time.' In discussing his parenting heritage, Daniel drew on an ideal of fatherhood, alongside the re-contextualisation of positive practices from his mother, as I will discuss shortly. For Bob, the legacy from childhood is mixed, and the positive experience of independence difficult to replicate for his own children.

For Bob, the characterisation of his childhood and its legacy is divided between the negative and positive aspects of his mother's situation as a lone mother. He referred to his mother's anxiety as a quality he seeks to avoid in his own parenting, but he does seek to pass on to his sons the quality of self-reliance, developed in the hours his mother was working. When Bob's mother moved to a large city to take up employment she had no support network. He describes her worrying a lot, struggling to juggle commitments and aware of the stigma around single mothers in the 1980s. Bob would sometimes play sport but would often wander off and explore the city before finding his way home.

> I mean, she used to worry, definitely. And it was *overly…* I think it was also, maybe, losing her partner and then a son who was quite willing to walk off. I just did her nut in. Can you not just be in one place at one time so I can ring and know that you're okay and get on with my job? So I can see it from the other side now, as a parent. God, it must have been incredibly frustrating, but…

Speaking of fatherhood earlier in the interview, Bob had referred to his resolve not to be over-protective, overly anxious or overly directive.

> Because I don't want to be an *over-*, I don't want to hover over my children, make them lead the life I think is right for them. And that will definitely come from a childhood thing, in terms of I railed against everything as a child and school was terrible for me. […], yeah, definitely give little ones the space to develop and express unique characters at the end of the day. Fight

your own control tendencies. Because I notice myself doing it. 'He's a five year old. Stop it. Relax. Let him get on with it.' And they need bumps and bruises to learn, you know.

One of the key goals in his fathering is, this would suggest, to maintain a balance between providing security and facilitating independence – a common goal (with moving goalposts) for parents. Bob values the independence he forged in the spaces made available between his mother's anxiety and her unavoidable absence. His challenge is passing on the benefits of independence to his children in quite different circumstances. His children – much younger than he was when he was roaming London – are cared for by their mother during the working day. In addition, although he is at work long hours, Bob is parenting at a period where childrearing norms demand more intensive (Lareau, 2000) and more risk-averse (see Furedi, 2006) parenting.

However, there is a means of facilitating the beginnings of independence in these circumstances. I noted above that Bob linked security, confidence and independence. When he spoke of his partner's parenting, he attributed to her the creation of an environment which builds confidence which, in turn, fosters independence. Bob is conscious of constructing a working model of fatherhood, with his partner, from his beliefs and experience. The accounts of other participants suggest that they, too, are constructing a working model, whether they draw heavily on the memory and example of their father, or an ideal imagined father.

Daniel was one of four children of his single parent mother, from whom he takes the model of a 'tight' family unit.

> We were in the house quite a lot 'cause we did get picked on when we were younger and that. So, when we were in the house, my mum was either baking with us, or making soups. So we were always doing things as a family, we always sort of had that family unit [...] and I try and make sure that my family, that my kids are tight with me and it's a good family unit.

To supplement what a maternal model does offer, Daniel turns to an imagined ideal experience a father might have provided.

> Or if there were things I couldn't do when I was younger and maybe wanted to do wanted to do with my dad like play football or something like that, then I know that if I play football with my sons they're going to enjoy that.

A further important aspect of his fatherhood draws on ideals of openness and intimacy in contemporary discourses of fatherhood and parenting. He desires to be friends with his children, although not at the expense of good parenting, so that they feel they can speak with him about anything in a way he did not with his mother. In this way he suggested the creative achievement of a balance between the experience of childhood and an imagined childhood, the maternal and paternal legacy; 'So, I suppose it's using my past to turn me into the parent that I am nowadays and also to use it to give my kids similar experiences as I was growing up as well.' Daniel's recourse to these three reference points – experience of mother-like care, images of fatherhood and contemporary discourses in which mothers and fathers' contribution to children's lives in similar ways - can also be seen in his discussion of the roles of mothers and fathers in the next chapter.

Engaging a child's perspective

As noted above, several participants referred to the dual perspective of being both parent and child. Some participants spoke of imagining their child's point of view, and invoked their own point of view as a child, in interacting with their child(ren), and in respect of the environment they sought to provide. They expressed a consciousness of their children's perspective on their actions, and on childhood as a whole, both in the present and retrospectively from the future. Sam, Colin and Harry described imaginatively moving between the 'parent' and 'child' perspective in the midst of parenting practice. For Colin, his effort to put himself in his children's shoes is also part of the effort not to be like his father, through 'treating them as [he] would want to be treated at that age'. Colin, like Liam and Robert, spoke of moments where 'I sound like my parents'. His efforts are driven, he said, by his memories of how he felt, 'really annoyed, whatever, hurt, angry', as a child when his father treated him in an authoritarian manner, and by the hope that his children 'won't be remembering the same things about me'. Colin remarked that

rather than developing from 'deliberate pondering', quite a lot of his thinking developed out of subconscious processing of 'a collection of experiences from life' as well as changes in the meanings of actions such as smacking over time.

Harry, too, combined reflecting on his experience as a child with recovering a child's point of view to construct an alternative to the example of his father. In Harry's account the key foci were teaching and play; his father did not play and the exchange of knowledge was problematic for their relationship.

> And I think, if I think about how do I know what to do, it's because I remember how I was as a child. Which obviously has a limitation in that it only goes back so far in memory. But I tend to work from that because my dad wasn't a very good example of how to do it. So my dad was very much was like, he was happy to teach but he didn't like it if I knew more than him about something. And would actually actively withhold some knowledge.

Harry then went on to describe another man, an employer who played a mentoring role in his life as 'much more giving of learning and teaching sort of stuff'. And this preference for a teaching/learning interaction feeds into his preferences in ways of being with his children, although he does make himself play with them. In these activities (and in the morning routine) there is also room for fun in its own right; 'so yeah for me it's about what would excite me as a kid, it's about doing new things or just things that I found funny or that whole thing about things kids find funny'. Of recovering a child's point of view, he said 'that's the only way I can learn, that's the only aid I have, because I don't really know any other parents now – as any friends with kids this age have moved away'.

In an anecdote told by Sam, the parent/child perspective seems to be split between him and his partner, Catherine.

> S: We were round at friends who both had children around about the same time as us […] and there was something that came up that one of them did, it might have been Lucy, and I think Catherine said 'Oh, for goodness sake why are you saying that? Why are you doing that? Why are you making a fuss about that? And I probably said, you know, 'why are you

[Catherine] making a fuss?' And one of the other mums said 'because she's a mum and she wants, she expects her daughter to be perfect', or something like that, kind of not being serious but her expectation of what she should be.

I: That's really interesting, that she should formulate it in those terms. And did that resonate with you?

S: Well, it's obviously stuck in my mind, stuck in my mind. […] I think Catherine might be, these friends we were visiting have got a dog. I don't dislike dogs but I'm not into dogs. Catherine is into dogs and had them as pets. This is a big unruly puppy that bounds around and terrifies Lucy and Lucy equally does over-react and is a bit hysterical when it comes leaping up. […] And I think Catherine reacts really badly to Lucy's hysterics, 'oh for goodness sake, calm down, ra, ra, ra' and I'm thinking the bloody dog's twice her size and is just about knocking her over and, you know.

Catherine could be said, in this anecdote, to be speaking from the position of a parent responsible for training her daughter in appropriate and creditable behaviour. Catherine's perspective may have incorporated an external, societal perspective on the child's behaviour, against which Sam is representing to her the child's perspective. Sam's narrative suggests that Catherine's confidence with dogs feeds into her response, while Sam's feelings about dogs and his imagining of how large and overwhelming the dog must seem to his small daughter blend and draw him into a different evaluation of, and response to, Lucy's distress.

Recovering the child's point of view is understood to derive in part from the reconstruction of their own subjectivity as a child within the parent-child relationship. I'd like now to consider an example of such reflections in relation to how fathers think of their parenting in terms of gender equity and gender competence. In relation to parenting, several participants disavowed the significance of the child's gender for what was fundamental to their parenting and the parent-child relationship, affirming their own commitment to parent (or, at least, play) 'across' gender and engage with sons and daughters in both gender-typical and gender-atypical activities. Gendered activities were represented as a medium for gender-neutral parenting in the context of the father-child relationship. Only a

few participants, those whose orientation to contemporary gender relations was more critical, identified the need for parenting to be more than neutral but actively engaged in resisting the gendering of children's worlds. For some fathers of girls, and fewer fathers of boys, children's play, activities and products are located in a broader context of gender binaries which constitute inequality. Gender competence, and competence in gender-typical activities, have often been considered important of a child's social development (Connell, 2002). They were considered particularly relevant for boys, for developing peer relationships. They may have been relevant in participants' relationships with their own fathers, and they may be felt to be the particular responsibility of fathers. Fathers' understandings of the significance of their sons' gender is shaped by both their alignment or otherwise with dominant discourses of "masculinity" and their perception of the potential force of "masculine" norms in their sons' lives.

For example, Lucien has experienced masculine stereotypes as 'restrictive' and 'inhibiting' in his relations with his gentle, rugby-playing father. He critically considered the nature and effect of dominant norms and ideals of "masculinity" for fathers and sons more explicitly than most of the sample. He expressed concern that the norms of masculinity might prove a threat to the degree of intimacy and ease in relations with his son, Felix, saying 'there's the worry that he's going to become over-blokey, I guess, and a bit cut off'. This concern was juxtaposed with a sense of responsibility for facilitating Felix's competence in satisfying the norms of masculinity.

> When we knew he was a boy I was like 'what's he going to need like in terms of his development as a male?' I construct my world in the way I do but I want to make sure he has enough of the social and cultural cues for him to decide for himself.

Although he has rejected the masculine stereotypes associated with some of the activities he once shared with his dad, such as sport and a men-only drinks at the pub, Lucien is now considering their, albeit problematic, potential as 'cultural vehicles' for father-son connection. He spoke of now

wanting to retrieve some of these masculine things so that they're available and part of my repertoire so that I can retain some kind of connection with him [Felix]. Thinking about my own father going through sport I suppose. But also wanting to retain who I am. So it's a worry.

Thus, Lucien's commitment to supporting his son's gender competence led him to envisage a change in repertoire in order to bring himself into alignment with his son. He believes his son's capacity for alignment with norms of masculinity may be important in developing a relational, social self with his peers and in the wider world. The tension in this position is that Lucien's capacity for communication and closeness with his young son were developed and sustained in opposition to 'bloke' modes of being a man, and outside corresponding modes of relating with his father. Lucien's commitment to being 'warm', 'available' and 'loving' is another element in his 'repertoire'. There is, perhaps, the possibility of a multi-dimensionality which might allow Lucien to 'retain who I am', and so make a range of positions available to his son Felix for Felix's repertoire, so that Felix is able 'to decide for himself' on his way of being a man.

Re-contextualisation

I have been considering the processes by means of which elements of a legacy were selected, rejected inverted and the importance of the parent/child perspective to selection. I have examined passages where participants have discussed their engagement with their parenting legacy, in relation to specific practices or the organisation of parenting practice and the re-contextualisation of practices. Even in the accounts of participants who are content with a high degree of continuity between their parents' and their own parenting, replication is not, then, wholesale but a taking up of principles or attitudes or practices abstracted from a heritage and applying them in a new context. For example, Dilhara describes a degree of replication in the structure, including the emotional structure, of his family of origin. The age of becoming a father, the number of children and the gap between them is similar for Dilhara's father and himself. Dilhara said he was 'very close with the mother, but my sister was very, very close with the father, to my father' and

commented in relation to his daughters: 'I think it could be the same attachment that I have with them, probably could be, yes'. However, while his partner Gayesha has primary responsibility for the arrangement of the children's lives, and although their preference would be for her to not have to work, they are not able to replicate his parents' arrangement in this respect. As he cares for the children during her three evening shifts he is making a [largely] satisfying, if unsought, adaptation to the different circumstances in which he is a father.

Michael, a father of three who shares care and work with his partner, has replicated the structure of his family of origin, two boys and a girl all about two years apart. His father spent a lot of time with the family because when the family lived overseas his father finished work at lunch time, 'so he was always about and we five were always together'. While his father was stricter than his mother, he was less strict than other dads. He was 'more involved than the other dads that I knew kicking around but not as involved as current dads are, the new flock'. Arguably, Michael replicates this pattern of less authoritarian and more involved than the norm, having translated it into the idiom of contemporary involved fathering and egalitarian parenting in a dual earner/carer household. In an example which confirms the relational quality of reflexivity, Michael also emphasises the on-going work, with Joan, of constructing their parenting practice.

> Joan and I will take an awful lot of time talking it through, I guess. You know, we'll have a chat about what we think is going on, what we've let slip, what needs to be done, that we're consistent and sort out what we think needs to be done in the near future.

Gabriel, too, was content to replicate his upbringing, saying he would 'just try to teach what I was taught, maybe because I am happy with my education [upbringing] I have received, so just to teach the same education'. But while the principles he received from his parents constitute a legacy he wishes to pass on to his children in turn, the parenting practice through which he and Caterina will do so is their own. From his parents he will accept

Support looking after the children but not support and advice about how to [raise them] because I think we have our ideas clear. The grandparents are always wanting to help, "you should do this", but sometimes they are wrong because it is an old-fashioned way to educate them. So we always have been happy with our positions.

Thus, even participants who were positive about their parents practice in its own time distinguished between principles or attitudes remembered with affection or appreciated in retrospect and the understandings and resources appropriate to raising children in their own time.

I don't think I've gone to them for advice on things because I think probably always see them as being a different generation. I listen to what they have to say but I'm much more likely to take advice from people now, who are having children now. It is a long time ago and things have changed an awful lot. (Liam)

Dilhara, as well as reflecting on a change in attitudes to discipline, emphasises the role of the information revolution on the resources and choices made available to parents, as well as the proliferation of expert knowledge about parenting (Lawler, 2000).

I think that's a generational thing. I mean as we go on we tend to learn things I don't think they were learning very much about what's going along, we've got the internet at the moment and so information is available at the press of a button, so we get to know how to do things much faster than they did so we get to do things much better than they did.

I have considered how participants characterise the processes by which they engage with their parenting heritage from the perspective of their own generation, and autobiographical links made between their remembered emotions and characteristic experience as a child and their practice as parents. In the final section, I will consider in more detail the temporality of the connections made between their own inheritance and the legacy they would help build for their child.

Section 3   Temporal connections between legacies: sedimentation, relevance, reflection and emergence

The positions of 'child' and 'parent' are both relational and temporal categories. The 'childhood' I refer to in this discussion, for example, encompasses multiple points in time but may be referred to as a whole in distinguishing it from subsequent life stages. In addition, how participants construct their own and their child's childhood is responsive to the dynamic of growth and change in their children. Childhood is broadly defined as a period for which parents are responsible in particular ways for their children. Adulthood is broadly understood as a period where the child, as an adolescent or an adult, exercises greater independence in understanding their past and future and greater responsibility for everyday and large-scale decision-making. However, I do not suggest that participants saw these distinctions as absolute, that they failed to recognise independent thought and action in their children even in childhood, or that they will cease to feel responsible for contributing to their adult child's wellbeing, although their interactions will be adapted to the child's status as an adult.

In reflecting on participants' location between legacies and within parent-child relationships, I will draw on the work of Alfred Schutz (1962, 1967) and G.H. Mead (1932, 1936) in conceptualising the present as the point, and means, of connection between pasts and futures (Muzzetto, 2006; Fine and Flaherty, 2001). I draw here only on specific elements of their work which elucidate participants' references to temporality in relation to parenting. Although their theories of the temporal constitution of subjectivity are distinct in important ways, Schutz's phenomenology (of the natural standpoint) and Mead's symbolic interactionism jointly offer particular analytical purchase on sociological thinking about time (Adam, 2004; Mattley, 2002; Reiter, 2003). These conceptual framings are useful to my discussion of participants' construction of temporality in reflecting on their dual position in the child-parent relationship. First, the concepts of sedimentation and the system of relevances, which writers on temporality have taken up from Schutz's writing

(Muzzetto, 2006), are particularly resonant with participants' understandings of their responsibility to build up in the present resources for the child's future self. The 'project', that is, the imagining of future action the meaning of which is felt in the present, involves facilitating the 'sedimentation' of positive experience, in the formative years of a child's biography, which contributes to the 'system of relevances' which, in turn, structures the child's experience and interpretation of the world. Second, Mead's conceptualisation of the always emergent present as a moment of reflection and interpretation (Flaherty and Fine, 2001, pp.149-50) suggests terms in which to consider participants' discussion of the connections, and disconnection, between their pasts and their children's possible futures in the present.

Laying down a legacy: sedimentation and the system of relevances

One dimension of the meaning of fatherhood as given by participants was their responsibility to the child as an adult, a responsibility infused with desire for the child's good and the desire to be a good to the child. It informed their sense of a parenting project, which does not encompass the whole of their parenting, but is a strand of intentionality, to use Schutz's term (Muzetto, 2006,p.14), in that the meaning of the project in the present is to be realised in the future. The constant consideration of the influence of the present, which is always becoming the past, on the future is central to several aspects of parenting mentioned by participants. These include the parental responsibility for socialisation, generally understood as social integration, and to widely held understandings of the importance of consistency, for example, in helping children learn about how to interact with others. Participants invoked this consideration of the future in the present on a range of time scales. Henry said of their aim to be consistent in their parenting, 'We don't want Amy to be able to do this on one day and not be able to do it the next day'. On a larger scale, as discussed above, several fathers linked childhood experience to the capacity for self-realisation in adulthood. However, there seemed to be an understanding that they parented in hope and good faith but that the intended meaning of their actions did not guarantee their eventual meanings. In

Schutz's terms the 'in-order-to' meaning of participants' future-oriented practice becomes the 'because' in past-oriented reflection (Muzzetto, 2006, p.14). As noted above, some participants envisaged their children looking back on their childhood in the future (as participants looked back on their childhood) and hoped but did not assume that their children would remember childhood as participants envisaged it for them.

Participants' construction of the process by which an emotional and embodied legacy might be laid down for their children could be understood to have two dimensions which correspond to the concepts of sedimentation and the system of relevances in Schutz's work (Muzzetto, 2006, pp.15-17). The first is the building up of understandings of themselves and the world through experience for the child, and the second is the deployment of these in understanding and acting in the context of subsequent experience. Participants linked the nature of parenting and the childhood environment, such as security, to future characteristics, such as confidence.   In Schutz's thought, sedimentation is a socially-mediated process whereby 'instant after instant, lived experiences accumulate in the individual's consciousness forming a sort of sedimentation, 'a stock of knowledge at hand'. These accumulated experiences are interconnected through different forms of relation, including time, so that the 'chronology of sedimentation has a constitutive character' (Muzzetto, 2006, p.15).

Accumulated experiences can be understood as connected through the 'system of relevances', as conceptualised by Schutz (1970). The system of relevances describes 'the selective activity of consciousness: it turns the attention to one point or another of the lived experience and interprets them according to the cognitive interest existing at the moment of the attentional modification' (Muzzetto, 2006, p.16). Relevances are 'socially constituted and pertain to the culture handed down through socialisation' (Muzzetto, 2006, p. 17). This image of handing down culture through socialisation, however the latter is understood, is an echo of participants' references to passing on values, wisdom, stories, both 'something of yourself' but

also 'a little bit of where you've come from'. The system of relevances is 'a function of each individual's biography, of his or her lived time. It is therefore necessarily unique to each individual' (Muzzetto, 2006, p.17). Biography is also understood as the specific configuration of socially constituted elements in Hollway's writing; sedimented meanings are laid down by the multitude of discursive subject positions inhabited over time and productive of similarity and variability (1987, pp. 118-9).

The comparison between the logic of Schutz's notion of the system of relevances and participants' understanding of parenting is in participants' hope and belief that their interactions with children and the role model they offer can lay down and build up a set of understandings and series of experiences for their children of moral, relational and practical relevance to their sense of self and their interactions with others. They variously hope and believe that these understandings will be of enduring relevance, and that it is above all enduringly relevant understandings of self and moral relations with others which are their responsibility: 'if there is a chance that [full-time parental care] makes a difference, then that's something we should give our child' (Bob). At the same time, fathers I interviewed often disavowed any paternal right to influence over their children's lifestyle and career choice together with the capacity to do so, although research examining parents' role in the reproduction of class advantage in respect of educational achievement and cultural capital qualify this claimed limit to parental influence (Vincent and Ball, 2007; Irwin and Elley, 2011).

Schutz's concept includes constant iterative revision of the system of relevances: 'At every instant, the system of relevances interprets the event to which it turns its attention, and that interpretation modifies the system itself in a continuous circular process' (Muzzetto, 2006, pp16-17). Some participants acknowledged explicitly, what was often implicit in others' accounts, that other influences would be felt alongside the influence of upbringing on their children's understandings of the world and decisions within it. Alongside, the 'temporal moment' in which the system of relevances is activated (Muzzetto, 2006, p.17) it is useful to think of

aspects of the 'present moment' in Mead's work, understood as a moment of reflection and interpretation (Flaherty and Fine, pp.149-150). I will discuss Mead's concept in greater detail in relation to fathers' engagement with their inheritance, but note here many fathers' awareness of multiple elements brought to bear in 'moments' of interpretation and their desire to pass on to their child resources for reflection and interpretation in the successive moments of the unknowable future present.

Fathers' inheritance: reflection and emergence

When men become fathers, from whatever point that becoming is meaningful, and come to occupy a dual position in the parent-child relation, this affects the 'system of relevances'. As noted, for many participants, the alteration in status is a prompt to reflection on the childhood and future they desire for their children. It also prompts, as I discuss in this section, re-construction of the meaning of that childhood experience, both in the sense of assembling together remembered material but also putting a new construction or interpretation on it in the light of their altered situation.

Two interrelated aspects of Mead's conception of the relation of the past and future in the present are relevant to a father's location between two legacies: his emphasis on the present moment as a moment of reflection and interpretation, and the concept of emergence. The present's 'chief reference is to the emergent event, that is, to the occurrence of something which is more than the processes that have led up to it' (Mead, 1942, p.1 cited in Flaherty and Fine 2001 p.150). Always becoming and disappearing, a succession of presents 'cutting into' the future bear the possibility of novel interpretations, that is, emergence. Within the moment of interpretation there is both a moment of reflection on the multiple courses of action possible and the immediate future of the action taken. Flaherty and Fine also point to the social nature of this processual 'moment', whether others are present or their perspectives imagined (2001, p.150).

In this moment of reflection, the meaning of pasts are subject to reconstruction in establishing a new relation of a past and a future. 'Emerging events turn preceding processes into causes or conditions and, due to their unpredictable novelty (emergence) they first break the continuity of time and are then, from a retrospective and reconstitutive view, integrated into a continuous overall context (Reiter, 2003, pp.259-60). These paired movements of breaking and re-making different relations with pasts can be seen where participants reflect on their parenting inheritance, or on the role of their father in their biography. For some, as discussed above, there are welcome continuities with the previous generation, easily translated into the idiom of their own. For others, the discontinuities are more decisive, more of the meanings are problematic and the conditions for future action located more exclusively in more recent pasts. Knowledge is bound up with the temporal, embodied processes of experience and memory.

I have discussed here aspects of the concepts of emergence and reflection in Mead's concept of the present in somewhat artificial isolation from the context of his theory of the relation between time and subjectivity as a whole. I have done so, in this analysis of temporality in fathers' accounts, in order to take up the implications of emergence and reflection for considering what those accounts suggest might be brought to bear on a present moment of reflection. The discussion in this chapter suggests that in, first, dialogue and interaction with others, and partners in particular, and, second, the deployment of discursive and narrative resources, lie the possibility of the 'novel' for fathers' re-construction of the link between pasts and futures. Material continuities from participants' pasts condition what is accessible as a 'resource' for new futures (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006) as well as how stories are told and heard in different settings (Ezzy, 1998, pp.247-8).

Discussion and conclusion to Chapter 4

Resources for interpretation

Ezzy's (1998) discussion of Mead writes of the role-taking entailed in the 'passage' to different temporal zones as well as the anticipated or remembered responses of

others. Thus, participants speak of an imaginative and emotional capacity to take up and connect multiple perspectives - themselves as child, themselves as parent and their child's - in an exercise in empathy which connects the past and future in the present. It seems reasonable that the multiple past moments relevant to the present moment may be relevant in different ways, the meaning and knowledge produced by a more immediately past experience influencing the reconstruction of a less immediate past or vice versa. For example, two participants described extended periods of counselling which they described as altering their understanding of the relationship between their parents and within their childhood families (cf Belsky et al, 2009; Chen and Kaplan, 2001). Another participant described being able to imaginatively reconstruct, now that he had experienced intense love as a parent, the intensity of emotion expressed by his parents in their affirmations of love for him and his siblings. The intersubjective context of these processes of revision exemplify the centrality of interaction, and perhaps especially dialogue with others, to the potential for novelty, emotion and reflection. Furthermore, reflexivity is relational even when subjects are alone insofar as others' perspectives are imaginatively reconstructed and engaged with emotionally and reflexively (Holmes, 2010; Brownlie, 2014).

However, as the concept of relevances recognises, not every element of lived experience becomes the focus of attention. I have noted participants' reference to knowledge of what to do as a father coming naturally, or as a matter of instinct or common sense. At the same time, many participants spoke of learning from or agreeing to the strategies proposed by their partners, and also of their partners as readers of books and/or as knowledgeable about children and parenting. In this way, some partners will be the means of introducing 'expert discourses' (Lawler, 2000) into the system of relevances prompting and shaping interpretation, and promoting reflexivity in fathers' parenting practices. The responsiveness of playing it by ear may also refer to the adaptive and emotionally sensitive reflexivity often called for in parenting children, when a formerly effective solution no longer solves a problem, or relatively stable situations become less so and there are lots of tears.

Furthermore, a consciousness of the high level of societal expectation on parents, and, within the discourse of new fatherhood, on fathers, may intensify the relation between understanding a child's needs now and their well-being in the future.

Narrative

Ezzy (2005) argues that the temporal sweep of sense-making is supported by the dynamic, intersubjective, iterative constitution of an integrative narrative (Ezzy, 2005). The representation to oneself or to others of the relationship between the past (and future) and the present can be understood as the 'self discovered in its own narrational acts' (Ezzy, 2005, p.245) in the present of the narrating moment, in which emotional dynamics and strategic self-representation may play a motivating role. However, I would point out that the subject's experience of narrative as an attempt at sense-making might be (perhaps, must be) only partially successful. There may be (perhaps, must be) also an experience of the distance or discrepancy between a given narrative and the biography-laden narrator. The narrative does not exhaust the narrator even as it constructs him or her in or for a particular moment. Furthermore the narrative may not be recognised, the narrator's entitlement to speak from a particular social script refused by others, as Henry's desire to be involved during his partner's pregnancy was not recognised by midwives (Chapter 6).

Participants' sense of the possibility of creating discontinuity with elements of pasts in the narrative of transformation (discussed at the end of Section 1) is bound up with a form of 'expert knowledge' characterised by some as 'psy discourses' (Rose 1990, Lawler, 2000). The influence of 'psy discourses' is seen in the prevalence of the 'psychoanalytic imagination' (Illouz, 2007) and consequent widespread understandings of 'the nuclear family as the very point of origin of the self – the site from which the story and history of the self could begin' (Wilson *et al*, 2012, p.126). The 'promise of 'freedom' through an actualizing of the self – through uncovering the truth about the self and enabling persons to achieve the 'real' self' (Lawler, 2000, p.24) is most clearly expressed in the discourse of transformation, which is reliant

on some form of break with the experience of the family of origin. Andrews argues that the stories of her elderly interviewees 'simultaneously reveal and challenge the power of the developmental narrative whereby early childhood influences and deprivations in general, and the role of the mother in particular, are perceived to be critical over the whole life span' (2004, p.9). Similarly, that the legacy of childhood is relevant but revocable is core to many participants' reflections on their parenting heritage. Mead's concept of the relation of past to future is relevant: 'What we deem irrevocable in the past is determined by constructions of the present.' (Reiter, 2003, p.260) In embracing as a father a model of father-child relationship (largely absent) from their experience of this relationship as a child, these participants have reconstructed elements of their past as revocable.

The analysis of the power structures at work in this call to self-discipline and the production of good, co-operative citizens is a necessary sociological project, alongside ongoing critiques of the paradoxical constructions of motherhood, fatherhood and children's needs (Lawler, 2000). It is, nevertheless, possible to also recognise the moral and ethical project of participants to construct a fatherhood by means of which they take up their responsibility to children and, in many cases, partners, from the materials available. There have been critiques of the discrepancy between the discursive norms of fatherhood and the practices of fathers who identify as 'new', 'intimate' or 'involved', particularly in relation to the allocation of time and resources, and in relation to questions of equality within parenting partnerships or between mothers and fathers outside of them. Yet, contemporary discourses do open up a sphere of meaning within which a commitment to more intimate relationships with children is articulated with a narrative identity incorporating transformation in order to lay claim to the conditions for being a good father.

The literature has sometimes described fathers' paternal models as fragmented or inadequate and fathers as driven to other sources, such as peer fathers, as models, given the changed demands on fathers or aspirations of contemporary fatherhood

ideals (Daly 1993, Masciadrelli *et al*, 2006). I would argue that a more detailed analysis of processes of selection, re-contextualisation and transformation shows how fathers take possession as subjects (Brannen *et al*, 2004, p.179) of their inheritance from their own fathers, and mothers, whether that inheritance is to be accepted or rejected, adapted or transformed. Acknowledging differences in biography, partner relationships, family support and material resources, all participants were actively engaged in assembling a practice, building relationships and laying down legacies. I acknowledge the class distance between parenting aspirations which emphasize a tight family unit which keeps kids out of trouble and an emphasis on a confidence-building sense of security from which children can go and realise their potential in the wider world, as well as the distance between the futures they envisage. However, sociological analysis of how fathers' classed positioning in relation to discourses of fatherhood informs both their evaluation of the past and their aspirations for the future is enriched by attention to how narratives connect and construct different 'times' (Brownlie, 2014), how they construct the connections and discontinuities between subjects, and how parents understand their children as both receptive and self-determining in relation to the practices of their parents (as noted by Smart, 2007, p.106). I argue that attention to the temporality in intergenerationality contributes to an analysis of fathers' understanding of themselves and their children as subjects of inheritance (Brannen *et al*, 2004) and narrative subjects and of the intergenerational as also the biographical. This analysis contributes in turn to discussions of change and continuity between individual generations and between generations of fathers.

Participants endorsed contemporary ideals of 'new', 'intimate' and 'involved' fatherhood in eschewing a distant, authoritarian performance of masculinity for openness, warmth and 'being there'. Participants' accounts locate parenting practice, and the meaning of fatherhood, fundamentally within the relationship and the responsibilities of relationship. The deficits they speak of, and seek to transform into riches, are overwhelmingly deficits in relationship – absence, indifference, violence, disrespect, reserve, tension. The meaning of their acts of care, provision,

and affection is generated within, or in relation to, the relationship they are sustaining with their children. The possibilities for enacting new understandings are, however, framed by continuities in material resources and the dynamics and commitments of existing relationships with people and institutions. Relational and discursive resources shape the memory and significance of experiences and emotions of being parented. These memories, emotions and reflections are part of the material from which participants, many of them reflexively, assembled and constructed the parenting practice which is to both constitute and convey their own legacy – that which remains – for their children. That parenting practice is, for most but not all participants, enacted within a parenting partnership. The parenting partnership is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5   Similarity/difference: constructing the relation of fatherhood to motherhood

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to explore how participants' accounts of parenting construct the nature of the relation of fatherhood to motherhood. The construction of fatherhood is relational in that understandings of fatherhood, and parenthood, are defined and negotiated in relation to understandings of motherhood, but also participants' practice as fathers is negotiated in relation to their partners' practice of motherhood.   Having discussed fathers' vision of the family relationships and responsibilities and their part in family life in Chapter 3, in Chapter 4 I considered how participants situated the prioritising of their responsibility to sustain nurturing parent-child relationships as what was 'new' in their own and/or their generation's parenting.   A third key dimension of contemporary discursive constructions of good fatherhood relevant to an exploration of diversity among fathers is involvement. Henwood and Procter found 'good fathers are also depicted as actively *participating* in domestic life, as having *shared* responsibilities and roles, and generally *cooperating* with their partner in the home' (2003, p.343).   The form and level of co-operation in the parenting partnership, on the one hand, and how responsibilities and roles are shared between partners, on the other, are relevant to understanding fathers' involvement but also to how fathers construct the relation of fatherhood to motherhood.

The first section of this chapter explores how participants, primarily participants within couple relationships (25/31), engage with embodiment, biography and the particular perspective these provide in reflecting on distinctions between mothers and fathers. In each case, the distinctness of motherhood is recognised but the implications of difference for the responsibilities and practice of fatherhood are restricted. I then analyse the ways in which participants characterise the parenting partnership in terms of similarity and difference, with varying emphases on

commonality and complementarity. In doing do, I consider the interaction of maternal and paternal expectations and desires in accounts of compromise or concession in respect of the promise and premises of new, intimate and involved fatherhood.

Discourses of involved fatherhood address fathers' part in relation to children, but also in relation to mothers with whom they might share the responsibilities of family life, and the possibility of a more egalitarian division of the labour of family work. In addition, the interconnection of women's participation in the labour market and levels of responsibility for domestic labour have been core to feminist critique and politics (Lister, 2003), but also to recorded increased participation by some men in family work (Coltrane, 1995). The ideal of involved fatherhood not only emphasises sharing in the care and raising of children to financial provision a responsibilities for fathers to fufil, but positions these as more central to fatherhood. How this responsibility is combined with the responsibility for provision in fathers' practice, and how it is distributed between partners, is the subject of much of the research reviewed in Chapter 1 and Section 2. The section examines the implications of the relation between paid work, financial provision and caregiving for participants' practice of fatherhood and their part in the parenting partnership. Just as there was considerable variation in practice across the sample, so the tensions and costs of participants' positioning in respect of the labour market and in relation to normative and alternative constructions of fatherhood varied.

Section 1   Defining the relation: what motherhood means for fatherhood

Co-parenting as a couple is practised within the ongoing emotional, moral and power-inflected dynamics of a partner relationship. In discussing the particular qualities and strengths of their partner, participants acknowledged her status, role and contribution as a parent. But they also established the place of their own, albeit interdependent, status, role and contribution to parenting within the parenting partnership. In the interview, participants in couples were appreciative of their

partners as mothers. Such appreciation established their partners as good mothers worthy of respect, and themselves as good partners who respected the mothers of their children. Participants' efforts to secure recognition of their partner's good motherhood attest to the normative force of social expectations on mothers, and to participants' awareness of these. Even among lone or non-resident fathers, in situations marked by profound conflict, loss or distance, most were careful in their characterisation of their former partners as mothers.   Nevertheless, many participants seemed to actively enjoy this opportunity to speak appreciatively of their partner as a mother, and terms such as 'fantastic', 'incredible' and 'awesome' were used. Participants also often invoked recognised ideals of motherhood, such as sacrificial, nurturing care: 'She is very devoted to the children. She does everything.' (Dilhara); 'She'll do anything for them.' (Toby); 'She'll put the kids first.' (Dave). Some noted an 'unconditional' (Hugh) and self-sacrificing quality to mothers' devotion (Lucien) so that 'inherently mums will not even think about making sacrifices, they won't view them as sacrifices' (Bob).

There is potential, long exploited in patriarchal discourses of motherhood, to align such terms in ways which naturalise and reify women's, and only women's, selves as subordinated to meeting children's needs (Lawler, 2000). However, some expressions of appreciation seemed to reflect an experience of the difference between themselves and their partners, rather than idealisation. Also, there was a valuing of the 'real' in mothers' relations with their children and their experience as mothers. Harry said of Liz, 'she's very real, she gets quite frustrated, um, it's not like it's always very beautiful, Mary Poppins, float along, but she's very good with them, very kind'. Recognition of the difficulties and downside of partners' experiences countered the naturalisation of devotion as coming easily to mothers. Some participants spoke of post-natal depression, but participants also demonstrated awareness of the desire to sustain an identity outside motherhood (Peter, Bob), of negative perceptions of earning mothers (Lucien) and non-earning mothers (Anthony) and the struggle to develop or sustain genuinely supportive support networks (Jeremy, Toby). Furthermore, although the terms of the ideal

identified cluster around mothers more than fathers, some participants used similar phrases of themselves 'I'd do anything for them' (Russell) and many claimed to cuddle, nurture and organise activities.

Motherhood and fatherhood: embodiment and biography

In line with Doucet's work (2009) with fathers in the first year of their child's life, many participants referred to the stage of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding to locate either the period of difference between mothers and fathers or as the source of a longer-lasting distinction. Harry is typical in connecting this early bonding with children's turning to mothers for comfort.

> For me, you can't get away from the fact that they came out of Liz, they were breastfed by Liz, she was the one who was cuddling them more than I, and you can't get away from that, that she was that first source of comfort. So I think, you know, if they trip over and get hurt it's still more likely than not that they'll go to Liz rather than me. But I remember that as a kid, it's quite normal. (Harry)

Michael, who was intending to and did share care of children with his partner, commented that

> I suppose the very, very, very beginning in that kind of way that maybe all dads have, I think, maybe just me, but when your baby's first born and the moment they were first born, and at that moment I became a father, I didn't really have that. Obviously, the child is born but it takes quite a bit longer to fully bond.

Adrian, Hugh, Jason and Toby also spoke of needing to build up the emotional connection with their child through a different process to the specifically embodied connection they believed mothers had with their babies.

> I think a mother and a child have a slightly bigger bond than a father and child because the mother gave birth so they have that instant connection whereas with the father they need to build it a little bit, but really I think they're just equal. (Toby)

Several linked time and bonding and building relationship with their children. Tim, whose son was only nine weeks old at the time of the interview, and Henry, who began solo care of his daughter for three days a week at the end of his partner's maternity leave both describe the importance of time spent caring as the means of forming a bond with their baby. Tom also mentioned the step change in confidence from first-time to second-time father as enormously significant for his levels of involvement in physically caring for his second child, with whom he feels he developed a stronger relationship. He held her straight away and felt able to bathe her in the hospital and care for her on his own: 'and be there a little more from the start, because I don't feel I really was from the start with Caroline [his eldest]'.

Luke also held his son straight away. He was not in a partner relationship with Giles' mother.

> For three hours I just stood holding him thinking 'wow, this is incredible'. And I really think that was vitally important, um, in terms of my bond with him, because when he was three the contact broke down.

Thus, the significance of establishing a bond with their baby was affirmed by participants, alongside the importance of time spent building a bond where the sense of connection was not experienced immediately after the birth. Participants with extended or regular periods of solo care spoke of an added dimension of working out how to parent. Henry noted the qualitative shift in his knowledge of, and care for, his daughter once he took on solo care three days a week. Thus, participants placed limits on the ultimate significance of the embodied bond between mother and child for the difference between mothers and fathers as parents.

This reference back, to mothers' specifically embodied link with babies, was often juxtaposed with a claim that, otherwise, there was very little necessary difference between what mothers and fathers do. For example, while some referred to discipline as being, in theory, more the father's remit, discipline was also described as not the father's remit in practice, and as the most difficult aspect of being a father

(Toby, Murray). While some rejected as 'unfair' having to be the disciplinarian any more than their partner (Gabriel, Michael) others identified their partners as more likely to discipline (Hugh, Jack and Liam). Discipline is one of a number of areas in which comparisons between mothers and fathers went both with and against stereotype: Julie is more cuddly than Peter but Tom is more cuddly than Angela. Liam worries more than Deena, Penelope is more matter-of-fact in interactions with children than Tom, Russell is more 'maternal' than Carol.

Participants indicated no belief in an inherent limit to fathers' capacity to care for children who were not being breastfed. Affirmations of competence were a feature of several interviews, perhaps suggesting paternal competence is not assumed. Anthony, a breadwinner father, said 'I don't think it's particularly hard to be a father, to be honest. It's not complicated. It can be hard but it's not complicated.' Lewis, a single parent, remarked, 'I thought parenting was quite easy actually. I still do.' Similarly, Dilhara, who cares for his children during his partner's evening shifts, noted that

> I find that some of my friends find that difficult, looking after kids while the mother is away. They find it quite difficult but for me it's not. For some reason, I'm okay. Because I can give them a bath and feed them and put them to sleep.

Dilhara's comments were typical in initially addressing the practical dimensions of care in these cases. However, Anthony, for example, does go on to speak of 'the Fear' parents live with, the fear of losing their children in one of any number of possible, random ways. He also mentioned the struggle 'to carve out a space to be part of their growing up'. Thus, statements of competence did not necessarily imply a lack of concern or engagement in respect of emotional and relational issues in the father-child relationship, as indicated in the discussion of some fathers' concerns about the impact of a second child on that relationship discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the close engagement of everyday care may introduce an element of uncertainty sometimes, as indicated by Henry below.

> She's normally a lively, bubbly girl but she'll have days when she's tired. She's a person. I have days when I'm pissed off. Why shouldn't she have those days? But that mood is much more difficult to look after. And those are the days I worry about not getting it right.

Men and women's different embodiment was invoked by some fathers as the basis of a distinct parenting perspective on adolescence. These participants located differences between being a father to a boy and to a girl in a common experience of embodiment for daughters and mothers, on the one hand, and fathers and sons on the other, as well as in the dichotomous positions of heterosexual sexuality. Although many presented fathering as gender-neutral in relation to younger children, perceptions of risk differentiated between parenting older boys and older girls. There was mention of anxiety in relation to girls, primarily around issues of harm, implicitly including sexual harm, and (hetero)sexuality, implicitly including pregnancy in some cases. Thus perception of risk has implications for father-child interactions. In Dave's case, apprehension about the impact of gender in adolescence derives from a consciousness of an external gaze on displays of family. He predicted his step-daughter's coming to adolescence will narrow the options for spending time together: 'I'm not going to be able to go camping and stuff with a teenage girl because it would be awkward and because she wouldn't want to'. Also, ambiguity in appearances in respect of men's interactions with girls is to be avoided, because the subject imagines others' perspectives, and because others police such interactions (Gabb, 2013). The altered embodiment of puberty brings shifts in familial understandings of the relations between male and female bodies in families in both domestic and public spaces (Doucet, 2006).

Colin, father of two girls, also formulated what difference there is between parenting as a mother and parenting as a father as a difference in perspective, again particularly in relation to 'the teenage years'.

> I kind of wonder if being a father to two girls is different to being a father of a girl and a boy or two boys. I think it probably is. I think being a father does give you a different view as opposed to just being parent. […] I'm not

looking forward to teenage years. Well, I know what teenage boys are like because I was one. I think I'm going to be quite different then from what Jennifer is because, obviously, she having been a teenage girl is going to have a different slant on it.

However, for some the difference in perspective was more diffuse. Both Adrian and Jason suggested contrasts in the socialisation of men and women can influence their respective perspectives.

> I think the only difference is in the terms of the sort of gender type thing […is] they can look upon identical things in a different way, obviously, you know, and that's probably the main difference, I would say. In that you know probably a lot of men don't consider about emotional, the importance of emotion as much as women, as much as a mother would do. They would think about it, but they would think about it in different ways. (Adrian)

These references to perspective constitute an acknowledgement of the shaping of biography, including 'growing up as a guy' or girl (Doucet, 2009), as socially situated. Nevertheless, Bob, whose father died when he was a baby, pointed out that parents' roles are 'different at different times' and also that, given the possibility of the loss of one parent, either may potentially come to fulfil all roles.

Lone and non-resident father participants spoke of the ongoing development of competence outside of a parenting partnership, and drawing on other resources; 'most parents should say they are learning something new every day especially through their kids' (Daniel). Nevertheless, three of four participants who reported that the mothers of their children were negatively affected by alcohol or drug use referred to the attachment of mothers and children. For example, Jack, who campaigned long and hard to have his son live with him as discussed in detail in the next chapter, said

> I feel that every kid should have their mother, and I feel William is going to have a hole with that missing if Miranda doesn't play a part and that. I've seen so many things with William. […] He's only two and the phone goes and he'll say 'mummy'.

Daniel's children also see their mother only in supervised contact. Daniel ascribes her drug use and difficulties parenting to mental health issues and said she is now learning how to be with the children again. If the significance of the mother-child relationship is affirmed in these interviews, so too are limits to these specific mother-child relationships in these specific contexts.

The situating of the significance of the embodied bond between mother and child affirms the possibility and responsibility for fathers to develop a personal relationship and the competence to care for children, and to engage in caring for them. Recognition of the mother-child bond was not mobilised in these accounts as a rationale for less involvement, but reconciled with beliefs that fathers could and should be involved parents. The nature of fathers' collaboration with mothers in parenting is the focus of the next part of this section.

Participants and their partners: the co-parenting relationship

Many participants saw variety as characterising the relation between motherhood and fatherhood in contemporary Western society in terms of the organisation of paid work and caregiving in households and diversity in terms of parenting roles and styles because of a 'blurring' of the boundaries between motherhood and fatherhood.

> I think that what is traditionally fathering is quite distinct from what is traditionally mothering. I think the barriers between the two are a lot softer, a lot hazier than they used to be and I think to be a father, you can be a father who mothers and a mother who fathers, if you know what I mean. I don't think a person has to fit within the gender stereotype, the gender role anymore. (Anthony)

> I've seen so many mums parent in different ways. I mean I've seen dads do exactly the same. (Bob)

Although in relation to a range of practice, the majority of participants who were in couples represented parenting as a collaborative project. There were no examples of co-operative co-parenting outside of partnership in this sample. Participants characterised the parenting partnership in terms of elements of similarity and

difference, with varying emphases on commonality or complementarity, as well as compromise, each of which I discuss in turn below.   In this analysis, the term commonality, 'the state of sharing features or attributes' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014) refers to an emphasis on similarity between participants and their partners but also connotes ideas of common ground and agreement, as well as of parenting as common, shared, territory. (The resonant example of usage given was 'a commonality of interest ensures cooperation'.) The term complementarity, 'a relationship or situation in which two or more different things improve or emphasize each other's qualities' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014) is intended to represent the range of ways in which participants spoke of each partner's different contribution to the parenting partnership. (Again, the example of usage, 'a culture based on the complementarity of men and women', resonated in this context.)

Ranson (2010) referred to Daly's argument that researchers should focus on complementarity rather than interchangeability in parenting. Understanding parenting in terms of complementarity would

> recognise men and women as steeped in different gender traditions, having different legacies in their own families, inhabiting different bodies and recognizing different strengths and contributions they can make to co-parenting (Daly, 2004, p.14).

However, Ranson noted that the extent to which complementarity was gendered varied among the couples she researched and that de-gendering of practice was achieved by some. The extent to which the characterisation by participants of parenting partnerships as complementary is a re-inscription of gender difference, and the extent to which difference was constructed as oppositional or hierarchical is discussed further below.

Commonality: 'going about things similarly'

Similarity of approach to parenting was understood to help reduce "friction" in terms of parenting (Colin). Michael and Gabriel, who like Colin met their partners during education, link 'fairness' with the similarity of their approach as well as the

equitable sharing of responsibilities as parents. Michael emphasises commonality in terms of both the overall approach to child-rearing and the moment by moment of parenting practice.

> [W]e've got very, very similar ideas about what we wanted for the kids. Very, very similar about how much we should be hothousing them as future geniuses and how much we should be leaving them just to grow up and be happy, erring on the growing up to be happy idea. Um, so um we generally have agreed on most things and go about things similarly and if we don't we are able to kind of reasonably talk it through. I'd say that her approach is very, very, very similar and we divide up things almost exactly. [...] Neither of us wants to be the strict one only and neither of us wants to be a complete soft touch either. I genuinely think it's exactly the same approach. We hope so anyway – that's the plan. That's how it feels.

Henry, in a dual earner/carer household, described the importance of an overarching alignment in the couple's orientation to parenting but also ongoing negotiations as to how to enact that orientation in the fine-grained practices of their individual parenting.

> We both came to it with similar ideas and we might have had disagreements about the minor points of them but the main ideas of what we wanted to do, maybe the implementing of the way we wanted to parent we've disagreed on not the, and I think that's probably easier, you know.

This equivalence is located as 'modern' by Michael and may reflect a degree of deconstruction of gender difference. Neither Michael nor Henry described their partner in the conventional terms of the maternal ideal mentioned in the first part of this section.

Complementarity: 'a partnership of individuals'

Some participants, in speaking of the difference between themselves and their partners seemed to be formulating what was distinctive about their partner's practice within the parenting partnership. In these cases, participants identified strengths in their partner's parenting in areas in which they aspired to improve their own practice or which balanced their own tendencies. In an example of the latter,

Anthony praised his wife's honesty and integrity in interacting with the children and contrasted her 'rigid morality' with his own 'fudgy, woolly liberal' approach. Dave respected his wife's decisiveness in evaluating the family's changing needs. Jeremy described his partner, Heidi, as 'very caring' but also 'a very good encourager, as well, which is something I struggle with'. Elsewhere, Jeremy refers to his determination to differ from his father in encouraging his children: 'I try to take a very encouraging, explaining attitude towards things rather than "that's not right"'. Thus, Jeremy conveys an appreciation that Heidi provides for the children's needs so well in an area he believes important. Qualities appreciated by fathers in their partner's parenting which complement or compensate for aspects of their parenting, may or may not align with or be mobilised as stereotypes of motherhood or femininity, and may be models for fathers.

Other forms of complementarity are more closely associated with a gendered division of labour within the parenting partnership. Several participants in sole earner household couples explicitly acknowledged their partners' primary responsibility for organising children's daily life and, a smaller group, supporting fathers' involvement. Harry appreciates Liz's matter of fact encouragement to play.

> I find [playing] quite hard. I'm encouraged by the fact that Liz finds it hard and straight boring. Liz's very realistic about it and says 'Harry, it's going to be boring. All you have to do is sit there and hold on to a car and they just do the rest of it'.

Acknowledging that his partner managed the practical details of family life, Bob appreciated her facilitation of his participation at a general level.

> In terms of 'what do we do, how do we deal with this?' it's very two way. She's really sensitive, do you know what I mean, in terms of, involving me in that, because if she didn't, you know, in some ways, I could feel very detached from the process.

Peter's phrase, 'a partnership of individuals' conveyed the complementary quality of his and his partner's parenting, but was also offered as an acknowledgement of the potential for tension where certain roles become primarily one partner's

responsibility.   For example, while Peter placed Julie at the centre of family life, he commented 'she tends to try and do more one on one. I can handle both of them together, but she tends to parent on a one to one basis'. Another difference is that,

> albeit we're both sort of loving and caring, the more caring side comes from Julie. I definitely have to take more of a grip of the discipline side of things. I think the boys take her further, in terms of pushing buttons. They know with me that they can't go that far. I know that frustrates her to a certain degree, but it also frustrates me 'cause I think why can't she get them to stop at certain points.

Complementarity was thus not always presented as a perfect fit. Jack, in relation to a long-term relationship earlier in his life in which he and Celia had two children, spoke of this dynamic tipping out of balance.

> I wish I was more of a man to Celia, I was more like into the kids and I didn't really pay her enough attention to her so I think that's where I went wrong. [… She was] the mother figure. And I was the idiot who played games and she said she had three kids.

As well documented in research (Hochschild and Machung, 1989) gendered complementarity in parenting persists alongside egalitarian orientations in other life dimensions, with varying implications for equity (Doucet, 2001). For example, although Liam and his partner Deena have both worked full-time since their daughter was born, Liam said that his daughter saw Deena as the one who would always be responsible and 'know exactly where we are' and himself as the one who could sometimes be silly. Hugh, whose partner Carrie is employed three days a week, referred to a mix of stereotypically traditional and more egalitarian divisions in his discussion of tasks. In addition to a part in caring for Rowan outside work hours,

> I do all the things like gardening and DIY, and look after things to do with the car and so on. So I suppose that is traditional roles, erm, but like cleaning and stuff, we share that equally. I think it's more just that Carrie doesn't work as much as I do so that's probably why she tends to do the cooking.

Hugh's response is typical of this sample in the absence of any overt presumption of justification in traditional gender roles and a discursive appeal to ideas of fairness and pragmatism in accounting for who does what and why.

The division of domestic labour was not addressed in detail in interviews. Some participants spoke of heavy involvement, most of sharing the domestic work and one admitted his partner took responsibility for domestic work. In the course of discussion participants mentioned cooking (often) housework, dishes, laundry as well as gardening, car care and DIY. They also referred to caring tasks such as giving baths or bottles, singing to sleep, staying up with babies, playing, worrying when they were ill, taking them to hospital, walking children to school, helping with homework and taking them to activities. Their accounts were peppered with references to many of the tasks of domestic work and care of children, although the majority said that their partners did more. It seems that a good partner both contributes to domestic labour and recognises his partner's (generally greater) contribution. Several participants, but by no means all, attributed differences in practical competence to gendered socialisation, in respect of mothers' multi-tasking (Peter, Jason), for example. The gendered expectations which sustain those kinds of competence, and the higher levels of maternal labour the competence facilitates and represents, work against the suggestion that personal orientations to domestic labour are not shaped by gender within even 'modern' couples.

Unlike participants who emphasised the opening up of options for parents through the blurring of mother and father roles, Andrew referred to the persistence of a complementarity shaped more by continuities than new opportunities.

> [There is] a whole stock of kind of cultural information that you can just take in about what a father's supposed to do and what a woman's supposed to do that's sort of coded in to the society. And some of it is, you know, you kind of feel it's a bit of a burden and maybe you don't want to do things that way but it's only little steps, little increments that people change in their everyday lives, I think. […] Even the really free-thinking types politically,

artistically, sexually whatever, then, you know, once they have kids, they
start to get really conventional. It's really interesting.

Andrew's comments are interesting in that he works part-time and cares for his
children while his partner works part-time, and thus his practice is not simply
traditional. Although the organisation of time may have important implications for
the parenting partnership, the parenting role is still worked out in the give and take
of relationship, in the interaction of partner's understandings of motherhood and
fatherhood, and in the different ways each partner makes their own contribution
and makes space for and supports the other in making theirs.

Concession: 'I just have to say 'okay''

Some participants' narratives do suggest the continuities in conventional forms of
complementarity described by Andrew. In two variations of this narrative a father
or mother holds a culturally-informed, biographically-rooted, profound personal
investment in the role of provider or caregiver. These commitments were seen to
drive a complementarity sustained by concession, due to the difficulty of
compromise. Lucien, for example, felt he has had to concede something of his
desire to participate in caring to Anna's commitment to the role of primary
caregiver. Toby, by contrast, felt he could not concede his commitment to long
hours at work to Penny's desire he spend more time at home.

Lucien described his partner as very sure of her desire to have children contrasted
with his more 'free-floating' approach to life at the time. Lucien later suggested
there was a richness for his children in an 'experience of difference' between their
parents. The attraction of difference in a partner, and the resource that difference
could be for a child, is echoed by Jason. However, Jason and Lucien also spoke of
the parenting partnership involving concession to a greater extent than other
participants, although others may have found compromise a significant dimension
of the parenting partnership without speaking of it in this way. Jason shares
caregiving and paid work with his partner and Lucien was home with his partner
for the first six months of their eldest child's life and then had solo care one day a

week for several months. They commented specifically on the interaction, at moments of tension, of three positions: they have an independent investment in parenting; their partner occupies an authoritative position in relation to caregiving; and they believe it is to their children's benefit to support their partner's parenting.

> I suppose, I suppose just the feeling of being disenfranchised at times. Starting with the birth, but carrying on. Sometimes you feel like, you know, 'mother knows best'. Sometimes dad knows best. But sometimes it's actually, I've just got to suck it up, I've got to forget about my ego or my pride and say 'okay, this is what is best for Helena'. […] My experience of fatherhood is that I've had to compromise a lot of my ego in that respect. Which isn't a bad thing, actually. (Jason)

Lucien also describes a shift in his sense of his role within the parenting partnership to an acceptance of the supportive role he intellectually rejected.

> So we were both going at it, often with different ideas, and it just doesn't work. […] I think I learned to support her more, you know, I'll take her as, she's the lead and I'll support her more, rather than giving my view which isn't good for the kids, you know, it's undermining. […] But that's a very deliberate process. We said, okay, I disagree but what we need to do now is stick together on it and present a united front.

Lucien was open in exploring a sense of frustration he had come to feel at the constraints on his realisation of the potentialities of fatherhood, which he became aware of, largely, only after he became a father. By contrast, he acknowledged that his partner's investment in a vision of motherhood was longstanding as was her claim to be primary caregiver. Lucien recognises this claim, as well as his own only partially-met desire, but also the cultural and institutional structures which have shaped their decision-making.

> …There's the battle within the relationship – who's going to get to spend time at home. I just have to take a back seat […] But there's no way in for me. I just have to say 'okay' but it generates a lot of feeling about 'actually I'm a parent too'. […] but it's almost like you glide into this cultural vehicle because it's got some of, there's an inertia to it, it's just going forwards, um, and, you know, it wasn't disastrous but […]

And I felt it would just be awful for her, I think it would. She really wanted to be a mum, more so than I wanted to be a father, and I think there was the weight of that 'well, how dare I come along at the last minute?' […] And I said to her when I was working four days how wonderful it was to have that day with Isabella, just to have that time with her. And [she said], "ah, I can appreciate that, I understand what you're saying". That wouldn't be to say that she'd give her part of it up.

Later in the interview, Lucien linked these feelings with the demands of fulfilling his on-going responsibilities as provider. It is arguable that he is reflecting on an experience of doing fatherhood somewhat differently, but finding it does not make enough difference. He feels there has been too little space for the time-intensive, intimate fatherhood he would like to have realised with his children, and that he has made little headway against the inertia of social structures and discourses positioning him as primary provider and secondary caregiver.

Toby's account offers a contrary example, in that the tension produced by a perceived lack of balance between time in paid work and time caregiving in a father's practice was felt more by a mother. I mentioned, in Chapter 4, Toby's commitment to a reparative vision of 'a family with kids and maybe a dog or something and a house'. His commitment to financial solvency and building up 'a comfortable life' for his family did not allow for concession when Penny requested he reduce his hours to part-time.

At the time it was a nice family thing, I was going home to them. I knew at the end of the day I was going home to them and I knew I could maybe just go into their rooms and see them or whatever and they were always going to be there. That was kind of nice. But, at the same time, most of the conversations we had were about maybe going to part time so that I could have lots of time with the kids and lots of time at work but it just wouldnae work. Because then there's money problems, paying rent and bills and so it would never have worked.

Toby does acknowledge the basis for Penny's proposal, but his counter-offer is to make the most of the time they do have.

> And it's not like you can just say well, I have to work. It's never that easy. 'Cause she's in the house all the time with the kids. She can't understand that I need to work. Two days we just need to cherish and use it the best we can.

Toby is still co-resident with his ex-partner. He didn't specify a reason for the end of the partner relationship.

Participants' accounts point to ways in which fathers and mothers negotiate the terms of collaboration in everyday practices, in specific variations on generic situations, and taking into account the force of moral responsibilities bound up with gendered identities. The examples of Toby and Lucien reinforce the findings discussed in Chapter 1 that fathers' involvement is negotiated by fathers making themselves available to be involved and, if it is not to be oppressive to mothers, moving only into those spaces made available by mothers for their involvement (Doucet, 2006; Gatrell, 2007; Ranson, 2010). Participants' narratives all attest to attention to the well-being of partners, as well as to the power of beliefs about children's well-being in shaping negotiations and relations between parenting partners. While examples of commonality attest to a dismantling of borders and equal sharing of responsibility in some parenting partnerships, accounts of complementarity and compromise also attest to the primary, although not exclusive, role still often granted by fathers to mothers in defining those needs, how they are met and by whom within the parameters of fathers' availability. I consider in the next section the ways in which the division of paid work and caregiving may reinforce similarity and complementarity in partners' construction of the relation of motherhood and fatherhood.

Section 2   Configuring practice: what fatherhood means for the meaning of work

A second aspect of how fathers establish both the part they play in family life, and the lived relation of fatherhood to motherhood, is the place of paid work, financial provision and caregiving in a participant's practice of fatherhood. As well as

affecting and reflecting the division of paid work and caregiving between mothers, fathers and others, the meaning of paid work has implications for the place of fatherhood in relation to other dimensions of participants' lives. In considering the place given to financial provision in a participant's characterisation of both paid work and fatherhood, I also attend to where lines of tension or conflict might lie in accounts of the relation between dimensions.

Jeremy, a sole earner father, articulates the tension between binaries running through many participant accounts, the tension between presence and absence, care and provision, relationship and responsibility.

> I suppose the hardest thing about being a father is the conflict between, you kind of need to fulfil two roles. You need to be carer and you need to be provider and there's often a lot of conflict between the two because you often have to go away somewhere else to be the provider and you have to be there to be the carer.

Jeremy spent nearly a year sharing the care of his first child with his partner, Heidi, having refused to renew a contract which did not guarantee him paternity leave. He speculated he may feel this conflict more than some fathers because of the contrast with that early period. Thus, he identified the relevant distinction as between the roles of provider and carer rather than father and mothers, as these roles are divided between mothers and fathers in different ways in contemporary Western society: 'in this day and age I think everyone has a different balance. So I think parenthood, fatherhood it's all the same'.

However, on reflection, Jeremy spoke of the on-going hold of deeply-rooted normative expectations, which may or may not be shaping the way the division of labour is organised on a daily basis, but which may affect how people feel about or respond to different ways of organising paid work and caring for children.

> I think there are some differences [between mothering and fathering]. Not necessarily in terms of the way things should be done on a day-to-day basis, but I think in terms of, if you look in a workplace, for example, there are people who do things, and there are people who manage things and there

are people who are ultimately responsible and accountable for things, and I think actually the difference lies right up at that top tier. I think ultimately a mother feels more, is more ultimately responsible and accountable for a lot of the caring for the children. And I feel a father is ultimately responsible and accountable for that whole providing side, even if in fact it's the mother working just as much, the mother may be bringing in more money than the father, but deep down, I think there's something deep-rooted that actually *you* need to make sure that's done, and *you* need to make sure that's done.

Jeremy reaffirms his position that, beyond the care of very young babies, there is no need for there to be a difference, beyond what is determined by 'individual circumstances', a position held by several participants. In this discussion of working households, I will examine some of the interconnections between 'individual circumstances' and representations of providing in participants' talk about work, as well as talk about managing the tension between relationship and responsibility in their fatherhood.

The discussion is organised by the four main forms of household organisation represented in the sample: dual earner (9), sole earner (10), dual earner/carer households (5), and non-earning households (5). The accounts of one earning non-resident father and one non-earning non-resident father are included, respectively, in the sole earner and non-earning household sections. I have categorised households as dual earner where one partner works full-time and the other three days or more in order to distinguish them from household organisations where one partner, normally the mother, takes on full-time care, and those where partners are committed to sharing earning and caring when children are young. These categories, alongside non-earning households seemed most relevant for the life stage which is the focus of the research. Participants were allocated to the category according to the form of organisation most typical of the period before their youngest child went to school. I note that participation in paid work and/or vocation for most people, women as well as men, extends before and after the period where direct provision for dependent children is required and the briefer

period where extended periods of caregiving for young children must be provided or purchased.

Furthermore, as noted above, the division of labour in the working week cannot be considered as representative of, is not held to map on to, the division of labour over the totality of the time parents care for children. While the effects of change in understandings of men's and women's contribution to parenting vary with household organisation, Colin and Anthony both describe ways in which time absent at work is combined with care when present.

> I had two weeks off but it doesn't stop there. As soon as you, when you're back home from work on the first day back, you know, walk through the door and there's a child presented to you. (Colin)

> [Fatherhood] means being responsible for, well, for bringing in the bacon and for pushing to make sure that you can provide. And not stopping that push whether you want to or not. And, it means ah… backing up your wife, making sure that she's got good support because she needs it and it means looking after children and not avoiding that as some fathers seem to do. Yeah. Taking your turn. Yeah. And it means caring as well, looking after them. (Anthony)

Fathers in dual earner households: adapting or accommodating paid work

One group of fathers in dual earner households adapted their participation in paid work, and the fulfilment of the responsibility to provide, in order to improve the balance of their investment in family life and paid work. Within the framework of full-time employment, these fathers use the possibilities of flexible work conditions to try and establish a balance in their practice. Although not the absolute balance of equal division of their time, they try and balance presence and absence as well as between time and focus on the children and time and focus on paid work. Hugh and Tim, for example, regularly go in to the office early so that they are able to get home earlier, although Tim's request to work his hours in four days was refused. Hugh and Lucien both worked a four day week, taking the fifth day as leave to care for their (first) child for several months after their partner returned to work from maternity leave, while Colin took a month's unpaid leave at that point with each of

his two children. Colin also said that home had more impact on work than work on home. He had 'consciously accepted that there is a period when my main focus in life is not climbing the corporate ladder, it's, you know, working in order to provide for the family'. Once children are older Colin may resume his focus on career progression, but he commented that it was 'quite likely that at the stage I'll probably be more career focused, but possibly I'll be too old then'.

By contrast, a small group of dual earner fathers were in the category of those for whom the responsibility for provision was subsumed in their existing and ongoing commitment to career, which their participation in family accommodated. Sam, who is a self-employed professional, Liam, who is in education, and Dilhara, who works in the finance sector share the responsibility for provision with their partners. Their part in direct care of children fits around the demands of work, but may be considerable. Liam takes care of his daughter during school holidays and Dilhara for the three evenings a week when Gayesha is working. The meaning of paid work for their partners varies. Gayesha would prefer not to work. Liam's partner, Deena, is as committed to her career as Liam to his. For Sam, the vocational aspect of career figures strongly in relation to his self-employment. By contrast, the security so important to financial provision is part of the meaning of his partner Catherine's work in a local government post; Sam also felt that motherhood was more meaningful than career for Catherine.

Some couples' arrangements were dynamic through the period when their children were young, as their attitudes to parental and formal care changed.   Lucien and his partner have shared care, used formal care while both working, Anna has been full-time caregiver, and then they employed a nanny. The accounts of two other dual earner fathers offer examples of the dynamic interaction of the meanings of paid work and fatherhood as participants seek to resolve tensions between life dimensions.   Peter, whose sons were five and eight at the time of the interview, had decided to resolve the tension between time at work and time for family by stepping back from a commitment to career which 'took too much of his life'. He hoped to

develop a career more able to be adapted to the demands of family life: 'what's more important now is time with the kids and a balance'. although his partner worked four days a week, he was concerned about the implications for long-term financial security.

In Adrian's case, the responsibilities as provider once led him to a change of career, and now complicate the possibility of making the change made by Peter. Before his son's birth, Adrian closed his small, beloved, but time-consuming retail business. After a period sharing care for his baby son, he went to work for a corporate retail employer where he has been very successful in his role. However, the increasingly oppressive pressure of arbitrary targets applied in his workplace was a preoccupation recurrent throughout the interview. The source of tension most strongly conveyed was not between work and home but between his role as a provider and his sense of himself as a worker. He said to his line manager, 'I feel like the company's telling me I'm a failure'. Speaking of the lack of recognition of 'the responsibilities that I have as a family person and how you meet them', he goes on, 'and the only way I've got of doing that [meeting them] at the moment is in this job and the job's just not for me anymore.' Adrian and Henry, who is in a dual earner/carer household, both describe the alienation they feel working for large retail corporations in a way which contrasts markedly with the appreciation of flexible working conditions alongside greater job security of those participants whose work is technical or professional.

Several participants in dual earner households acknowledged the significance of different aspects of paid work to their partners, as well as the benefits overall of formal childcare to their children although availability, logistics and expense could be problematic. Colin supports Jennifer's pursuit of her career in combination with motherhood and described her as more ambitious than himself. Liam clearly conveyed the equality between his and Deena's right, need and commitment to pursue their careers and his satisfaction with his daughter's nursery. Typically of those in dual earner households, Peter recognised his partner's need to balance

'adult time' and engagement in other activities through paid work with her commitment to time with the family. He said of Julie that 'she would not enjoy being a full-time mum'. Lucien described his partner, Anna, as loving both being a mother and her part-time work in her area of choice in which she is also studying. Thus women's work was characterised positively by most in terms of career, enrichment and/or financial contribution, although for some the latter was secondary or implicit. However Tim, whose partner is on maternity leave and planning to return to work 4 days a week, and Dilhara, whose partner works three evening shifts, gave financial necessity as the primary reason for their partner's participation in paid work.

Some dual earner fathers downplayed the connection between provision and fatherhood as opposed to motherhood, and positioned provision as just one aspect of fatherhood: 'That's just part of it, it's really a mutual thing, you know' (Hugh). Although dual earner fathers shared responsibility for provision with their partners, in dynamic situations it was mothers who tended to expand or reduce their hours of paid work and, of course, who were entitled to maternity leave. The exception to this pattern is Peter, who was in a transition phase and whose future working schedule was unknown. Thus, to whatever extent their participation in paid work is adapted to achieve a balancing of the parts they play in family life, their contribution includes time allocated to financial provision to a greater extent than their partner when children are pre-schoolers, and their contribution to care is one element of a provision of care that also includes their partner, family and/or formal providers.

Fathers in sole earner households: 'bad balance' or 'good balance' in parallel investments

The responsibility for financial provision is most clearly the remit of fathers where they are the sole earner in the household. There is considerable overlap between fathers who are sole earners and fathers whom I described in Chapter 3 as pursuing career and family formation in parallel. For these sole earners the responsibilities

for provision brought by fatherhood have been the impetus to pursuing their career. Yet, among sole earners, as among participants in dual earner households, there are fathers whose accounts emphasise adaptation and those who emphasise commitment to career. The dependence of the family on a father's provision increases the pressures of paid work, but also the structural interdependence of the earner's financial contribution and the carer's availability to contribute caregiving.

Half-ironic references to the 1950s model occurred in the accounts of two fathers whose household organisation followed a 'breadwinner model' for the period where their children were pre-schoolers. However, the meaning of apparent continuities in household organisation was considered to have changed. This organisation of family life was not accounted for as an expression of traditional values or politics in general, nor as the product of assumptions about gender roles. Harry characterised his father's attitude to his mother's role as 'we will have a 1950s relationship so you will be at home and you will do the cleaning'. By contrast, he presented his arrangement with Liz as one among theoretically multiple options - they had spoken of each working three days – and as a pragmatic response to time-limited circumstances which included the cost of childcare and the benefits of Liz's redundancy, albeit aligned with a valuing of parental time with young children. Harry described his current employment as 'golden handcuffs' in that it allows and requires his partner Liz to fill the role of primary caregiver (if parental care is preferred). But he sustained his position on the role of contingency, that things might have been otherwise.

> There's a bit of me that goes well, actually, I like what I do, I like all that, but it's not necessarily where it ends and I think we just ended up, through a lot of circumstances, where we did.

I mentioned in Chapter 3 that for Anthony, father of two sons, fatherhood was represented as the rationale for pursuing his career. While endorsing contemporary diversity, as quoted in the introduction to this chapter, Anthony admitted that he is happy that his children are cared for by their mother, while ruing how traditional

his words sound. Correspondingly, he acknowledged a certain affirmation of self in a masculine tradition, coexisting with political and value commitment to freedom from gender roles.

> I do have quite a sense of myself that's related back to how my father was, being the guy who works, makes the money and pushes for his family all the time. So, my politics are very egalitarian and very like, live and let live, but my personal life is very traditional. And my personal preference is actually quite traditional.

Thus, Anthony's preference for a traditional model was represented as a personal preference. It sat alongside his partner's complex feelings in relation to care and work. Helen was made redundant during maternity leave. Anthony believes that Helen 'likes the fact she has quite a lot of input into her children's upbringing but hates the fact that society looks down on you for being a mother these days if you're not working'. It also sat alongside a sense that the effects of his demanding work, such as exhaustion, compromised the balance of dimensions even when he is home. He said he didn't feel he was making 'the contribution I'd like to make, you know. I'd like to show them the world and make them think about things, even the baby, but I don't do enough of that so not a great balance just now. Bad balance'.

For Bob his investment in career is in tension with fatherhood, but distinguished from paid work, the purpose of which is provision. His decision to continue with his preparations to start up his own IT business once they found out that his partner, Amanda, was pregnant, was presented as an opportunity for personal fulfilment, as was Amanda's decision to be a full-time caregiver. Bob referred repeatedly to the tension he feels, not simply in the face of the conflicting demands of paid work and family, but between his investment in his business and the possibilities of combining a more involved fatherhood with employment, the primary purpose of which is financial provision.

> No, as soon as Reuben was conceived, had the 20 week scan I was like 'what am I doing? Go and get a job, go and enjoy it the second time around' um, that was my personal turmoil. Things had started to pick up, why would I

have wasted those years to build this thing and then, because I have a second child, walk away from it? So, that definitely kicked in, in terms of going, hmm, what is important to me.

There is some sense that Bob and Amanda's commitment to supporting each other's personal fulfilment is worked out against clashing timetables. He is hoping for sufficient pay-off from his investment in the business to allow him to make up for lost time with his sons, and at an age when their time with their father will be most meaningful, as Peter, a dual earner father discussed above, saw himself doing.

However, some sole earner fathers do adapt their participation in paid work in an effort to balance the dimensions of their fatherhood and their part in family life. Gabriel, self-employed in property management, is the 'flexible man'. Bruce, father of five, works flexible hours to live according to his priorities.

> I always said "children, you work around children. Children can't work around you". You still have the same career and the same lifestyle but you have to prioritise things a bit more and the priorities is always one, children, and two, employment.

Like several dual earner fathers Tom appreciates the flexibility available to him in his managerial role with a large employer and has chosen a shift where he works four long days and can be with his children in the morning: 'it's a really good balance'. He contrasts himself with his stepfather:

> He's got very different priorities on life and he's always been very work-related and achieving, you know, goals at work and becoming highly successful and stuff. Whereas when I had children my priorities lay completely with them I kind of work-life balance is so important to me.

For sole earner fathers making parallel investments in career and family, the investment and demands had been distributed almost dichotomously between the breadwinning father and the caregiving mother. For each, their share of the distribution has entailed some compromise and even loss, as well as gain. All but one of the sole earner fathers spoke of their partners as past, potential and future workers. The risk of dichotomous distribution, so often but not always

conventionally gendered, is that the inequalities generated by caregiver's break from the labour market will perpetuate an asymmetry in relation to the labour market and undermine reciprocity between mothers and fathers. To manage this risk, participants spoke of plans for their partner to re-train, for example, in the future, establishing reciprocity over time. Several of these partners are graduates and the others have considerable employment or professional experience. Bob's partner, Amanda, is interested in going into business for herself in her field of expertise; Tom's partner, Angela, is working towards a professional qualification in the area in which she is currently working part-time; Gabriel's partner and Harry's had begun part-time work shortly before the interview. Nevertheless, in a few cases, participants mentioned that their partner was conscious of the challenge of re-entering the labour market in which skills and expertise may no longer be up-to-date.

Two fathers in sole earner households were not the partner in the household who was earning at the time of the interview. One, Robert, was a long-term primary caregiver and the other, Dave, had been sole earner for a period but recently became unemployed. Robert has been an 'at home dad', to use his term of choice, for the twelve years since the birth of eldest child. In thinking about the meaning of fatherhood, Robert made an analytical distinction between the work of primary caregiving and the relational aspects of parenthood, 'love plus the job'. He has always encountered, in the media or from acquaintances, expectations that fathers are providers, discussed from the perspective of 'masculinity' in the next chapter, but the force of these expectations has intensified in a period of transition. He has lived a fatherhood independent of paid work or provision for many years, but the changing role of caregivers in children's lives as they grow has implications for the relation between caregiving fatherhood and other life dimensions.

> You know, lots of my time is spent doing things round the house looking after the kids and stuff like that. But compared with how it was before, it just, I'm just playing at being a housedad I feel. And a lot of my identity, my social status was tied up in being a full-time housedad. People would say

'what do you do?' 'I'm a housedad' and I knew that was the entire answer, that was satisfactory.

Robert also spoke of a progressively widening gap between his own and his partner's employability and earning capacity as he continued at home through the years his family expanded to three children. He was aware he was facing challenges faced by many women who stop work to care for children.

Dave, too, was facing the challenge of re-entering the labour market after the failure of a business partnership. I have categorised his household as dual earner in describing the sample as a whole because he was in work when his children were pre-schoolers. His anxiety offers a counterpoint to the de-centring of provision in some accounts, suggesting that the significance of the capacity to provide may be felt more keenly in its lack. He links 'being there' for his children, being someone they can depend on, and financial provision.

> The worry is not being there for them. That's the main worry. And not being able to provide for them. And I'm looking for an income. That's the real worry. That's something that keeps me awake at night, I mean literally does keep me awake at night.

Dave said that he always worked to live: 'I've always been kids first.' The silver lining to the very black cloud of not working is more time with his son and his step-daughter. However, although his partner is self-employed, Dave is not in a situation where full-time caregiving offers a viable alternative fatherhood. He is a working man temporarily deprived of work and a father who would provide if only he could. Robert and his partner have privileged the dimension of caregiving over provision in his practice of fatherhood, but with some risk to other life dimensions. For Dave, the significance of financial provision in his wider responsibilities as a father was not diminished by his increased participation in family life.

Non-resident earner: provision and contact

For Luke financial provision and participation in his son's life are interconnected. He saw fulfilling his responsibility for financial provision as fundamental to re-

establishing contact with his son after it broke down in complex circumstances when his son was three. He had not been in a partner relationship with Giles's mother. He has paid half his income towards supporting Giles throughout the extended and expensive legal process which eventually resulted in Giles staying with him and his partner one weekend a month. However, tensions around money had been an on-going issue, which he felt intruded on his limited contact time with Giles and to which he had to develop a response.

> She'd try to set him up so that I would buy him things when I saw him. And it would be quite heavy for him. […] I had to kind of make changes with that and sort, it's still an on-going issue but I just don't talk to him about these things. It doesn't work her trying to do that. I don't buy him things, I give him pocket money, I thought that would help. He does a task at our house and he gets pocket money every month and anything he wants it comes out of his pocket money and so he chooses it, you know. And anything else, I just tell him 'I give your mum money'. He knows that now.

His financial provision needs to be managed as part of his parenting, as all provision does, but in distinctive ways. Luke feels that 'for her I was there to provide cash. There wasn't really any value put on me parenting him, you know, or being his parent'. Much as he and his partner try and make their home a 'normal' home for Giles, Luke said, 'fundamentally I just feel the loss of being able to parent him normally'. Provision is the fulfilment of responsibility for his son's well-being, and act of care, and the base from which he has rebuilt relationship with his son. But for Luke, too, it is not the core meaning of fatherhood.

Dual earner/carer households: Less work, more care, career loss

Four couples – Michael and Joan, Jason and Ada, Henry and Harriet, Russell and Carol - resolved to share, as equally as possible, the time spent caring for the children and working in paid employment. While these couples organised the division of labour on these principles from the outset, Andrew and Deborah came to do so with the birth of their second child. The decision was driven by a shared belief in the value of parental care, of both parents' care and of the importance of paid work, in a range of ways, to both parents. The decision was made in the

context of their existing patterns of participation in paid work, often already composite. Only Henry moved from a standard full-time position to reduced hours. Russell, who was taking up a position where he would work four days after a period of study, hoped he would be able to sustain the established equitable division of labour. The accounts of other dual earner/carer participants conveyed tension not between commitments to work and family, but around employment insecurity, incompatibilities between provision and career investment, and the career costs of part-time work.

Henry and Harriet value parental care: 'I think Amy gets more from one of us being there all the time than she would from childcare and a day where all three of us are here.' Henry works four days out of seven, Harriet the other three. Like Russell, Henry noted that the organisation of maternal, paternal and formal care is partly a matter of the earning power of each in the labour market. Henry recognises their decision not to use formal childcare reflected both their beliefs and their situation.

> If you're earning sixty grand a year, sixty quid a day is nothing. If you're earning sixty pounds a day, sixty pounds is everything. What we wanted was easier to put into place because of that.

Henry is qualified in a creative career. However, unlike the others in this group, his paid work is unrelated to his core interest, but rather a hated necessity and a source of anxiety. Henry spoke about Amy as being the centre of his world and having had to re-evaluate everything; 'I hated my job, didn't care about it at all. Since Amy was born, I'm scared I'm going to get sacked every day'.

Jason said their decision to share care derived from their belief that 'for Erin to get most out of life, and us to get most out of Erin, both of us had to be looking after her'. His partner was determined to facilitate this. Fatherhood brought significant change to the place of family and to the place of work in his life. Whereas before his work had not really been a matter of fulfilling a responsibility he now feels

> pressure on me to find a thinking space to work out where I'm going and what I'm doing. I think, until Helena was born I only ever thought about

myself, you know. Of course, I thought about Ada but she was a very independent woman. So, we have a relationship together. […] But when Helena was born it kind of had to be Helena then her and then me.

Jason spoke of a creative vocation alongside working to earn. A musician, he continues to do paid work which incorporates music in classes and therapeutic work. For Jason, being Helena's father is 'realising my purpose in life', but he feels that 'there isn't a single goal, there are several goals'. He expressed great contentment about caring for Helena; it is the pressure of establishing a career which provides, as well as the pressure on his partner relationship noted in Section 1, which figure as sources of tension in his account.

Michael explained that he and Joan both wanted to have careers and family, but that their highest priority was the family. Michael's understanding of family appears to be very much about mutual relationships rather than roles and an equivalence between partners in terms of the desire to care – 'I have no less desire to look after them than Joan did' – and the capacity to care - 'we could swap and you wouldn't notice'. The unscheduled arrival of their first son kick-started their family formation; they had two more children in the following four years. Throughout they have both worked three days in the week, when Joan has not been on maternity leave, with family providing childcare on the day both worked. This commitment to caring for their children themselves required the postponement of investment in their careers of choice and a focus on the paid work they were already doing. In Michael's case this was teaching part-time. Michael remembered the exhaustion brought by three young children and family crises in the extended family, but expressed no direct tension between balancing family and paid work. The tension in his account was between the demands of his paid work and his creative work, which he was forced to suspend, due to the strain on his health, for a time when the children were young. His partner has re-trained. The intensity of his commitment to resuming his career, now that all the children are in school, was conveyed in his response when I asked about their having another child.

I want to get on with my career and I don't want to feel bitter about that and I know I probably would. And I know it would be career-destroying if I did it again and there's just no way I'd be able to pick it up again.

Andrew has not always divided the working week with his partner. Andrew's first child Aaron spent significant periods of time in paid childcare. When their daughter Belinda was born, four years later, their views and their situation had changed, due to the contraction of opportunities in their sector due to recession which had also prompted a reflection on what was best for their children. Andrew continued to work three days as an academic, as he had since before Aaron's birth, and his partner continued to work as a consultant two days a week, but they shared parental care of their children. Andrew felt their experience was representative of certain 'element of the pre-bust economy which was really like that, people were just, it was a bit crazy, people were working all the hours and just stick the kids in nursery and I think there's been a bit of a change afterwards'.

As well as the often prohibitive costs of childcare in the UK, Andrew spoke of the costs to career of working part-time, the most obvious alternative to the problem of one parent bearing the costs of taking time out to care for young children where parents value parental care. Like Michael, Andrew counted the cost of necessarily prioritising his reliable, regular academic work over pursuing his own creative projects.

> Well, work, obviously has to continue unless you're landed gentry […] obviously, that has to continue. Career, well that's more tricky now. That's the thing I think that, because we're both part time, I think for both of us that has suffered in the last few years. Um, because, well, we've [he and his partner] discussed this quite a lot and the way I put it is 'If I wanted to have a career, I'd have to be really ruthless with you guys now'. I'd have to say, I know I'm only part time but if I want to be somewhere in ten years' time before I retire, then you guys just have to fuck off and leave me alone to do my writing and my research and I'd have to go off to America and do something like that'. And I just couldn't.

These couples organise work and care in order to facilitate fathers' ongoing extensive involvement in care and mothers' participation in paid work. Extensive involvement and the demands of financial provision, have entailed a deferral of the pursuit of their vocation and/or career for most of these participants. Where their paid work for the purpose of provision was connected with their creative vocation, there was greater satisfaction than when it was not. For Henry and Jason, whose children were very young, there was the problem of combining parallel investments in provision and career-building with their investment in caregiving. Michael was returning to his creative work, alongside his paid work, after a deferral and before it is too late. Andrew, who is older, felt that the deferral of career pursuit entailed by involvement had become definitive.

Non-earning households: differences in accounting for fatherhood

Six participants were fathers in non-earning households. In considering the relationship constructed between work, career, provision and fatherhood in the accounts of this group of fathers the most significant difference was between those who were fathers in two-parent families, Murray and Gerry, and lone fathers, Daniel, Lewis and Jack. The language of Barry, a non-resident father who would like to be a single father, was similar to that of lone fathers. In discussing past paid work, there was a greater emphasis on flexibility and gaining a range of skills than career-building, although in some cases their school careers had not provided a robust platform for either. Partnered fathers referred to on-going training and government schemes. An orientation to paid work in accounts of lone fathers was displaced by their primary responsibility for children.

Murray and Gerry appeared to feel a requirement in the interview setting to account for not working. They spoke of their ongoing efforts to secure paid work, but equally of the difficulties in doing so. Fathers of seven and five children, (including three stepchildren and one stepchild), respectively, neither had been employed for several years. Each gave an account of health troubles which were obstacles, in different ways, to finding employment. In Murray's case the period of diagnosis

and treatment was lengthy and he believed his condition, with its associated insurance costs, is a disincentive to employers. For Gerry, the health issues affected his confidence so that job interviews were intimidating. He was due to receive treatment and hopeful of finding work, partly on the strength of a skills course he was attending, afterwards. Murray made no reference to earning or providing in relation to fatherhood, linking the responsibilities of fatherhood to practical care, although this included thinking about housing and purchasing necessary items for the children. However, Gerry, who is younger, feared that if he did not find work he would offer his children a negative role model. His sense of financial need was intensified by the prospect of a fifth child: 'I definitely need a job now'.

Those not in relationships with the mothers of their children also offered explanations for their withdrawal from the labour market in the interview, but more briefly and in a more matter-of-fact manner. All but Lewis attributed their withdrawal from the labour market to the requirements for care of children and/or family.   For example, Barry described the need to care for his disabled mother and alcoholic brother, with whom he lived at the time of the interview, as the reason he stopped work seven years before. Alcohol and drug use by those around them figured prominently in the narratives of non-earning lone and non-resident fathers in this sample. As noted in Chapter 2, as a result of the recruitment strategy for this study, the sample includes some fathers who are vulnerable, and whose circumstances are challenging, in multiple respects. Daniel had to stop working to care for his partner and children even before his partner, affected by mental health and drug issues, was required by social workers to leave the home. Daniel undertook housework, cooking, childcare 'to make sure everything went right, so it was all about me keeping our family unit together and if it meant I had to do everything that was what I had to get on and do, eh'.

In their new situation, Daniel is committed to making 'sure that my family, that my kids are tight with me in a good family unit'. He was uncertain as to his ex-partner's future role in the family; she sees the children in a supervised contact once

a week. He spoke a lot of the activities he does with the children and their friends, but also his involvement at a community level. Daniel saw paid work in his future as long as it fitted around his caring for the children, the youngest of whom was five.   He reported frequent praise for being a good father and this affirmation, although he spoke of it diffidently, appeared very important to him. I had a sense that Daniel brought to the roles and relationships of fatherhood the investment and labour others may bring to a career project. Lewis is 'caring for' his son, who is affected by an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Similarly, Lewis said his 'long term plan' was 'to get Gavin as much help as I can'. The interweaving of responsibility and relationship in the language of new, intimate and involved fatherhood offers a discourse within which Lewis and Daniel are able to constitute a paternal vocation independent of provision and position themselves, in the interview, outside of those discourses which posit work as a norm and a requirement.

In situations of adversity, fathers in this group had been unable to sustain the connection between employment, partnership and fatherhood. Disadvantage had contributed to limited education and employment experience, ill-health, or the need of different family members for care in ways which compromised their capacity to work and to achieve provider fatherhood. Identification with those aspects of new, intimate and involved fatherhood which provide an alternative, through foregrounding paternal involvement in care and intimate father-child relationships, is available in different ways to partnered, lone and non-resident fathers who are not earning. The presence of the child(ren)'s mother renders paid work possible, in principle, for fathers. I have noted that the discursive resources available to contemporary fathers supported lone fathers in positioning themselves, implicitly or explicitly, as outside to those discourses which posit work as a norm and a requirement for fathers and in general. Non-resident fathers often have very limited opportunities to care for and parent their children, as was the case for Luke (discussed above), and where there is no financial provision, both dimensions of fatherhood are circumscribed.   Non-earning fathers are still subject, to different extents in different contexts, to the normative charge of other discursive

constructions of masculinity and of fatherhood, and to the rhetoric and regulation of government policy. Nevertheless, identification with new, caring fatherhood allowed affirmation, in the interview, of the self as a good father and of the self in relationship with their child(ren), albeit one dependent on state provision of the financial support for the material elements of caregiving.

Discussion and conclusion to Chapter 5

Contemporary ideals of fatherhood construct a fatherhood in which the distinctions between fathers' and mothers' practice in relation to children are blurred, and more equal participation in the parenting project is endorsed.   The degree to which those who draw on these ideals re-construct the relation between mothering and fathering 'on equal terms' (Ranson, 2010) is negotiated in the lived parenting partnership and the lived practice of fatherhood, not always with much room to manoeuvre and not always on equal terms.

Participants constructed the relation of fatherhood to motherhood with reference to differences in embodiment, biography and perspective, but affirmed the possibility and responsibility to develop a personal nurturing relationship with children. Accordingly, participants characterise the parenting partnership as a collaborative project, but their role varied. Participants who emphasised the similarity of approach and even interchangeability also emphasised the justice of each taking the delightful with the difficult in caring and parenting.   Among participants who characterised their parenting partnership in terms of complementary contributions, partners' practice was sometimes positioned as distinctive, but as models for their own and, thus, not as definitively gendered. However, partners might be described as facilitators of involvement or bearers of expertise and responsibility in ways which potentially reinforced traditional gender distinctions and, perhaps, allowed fathers more latitude in their involvement (Miller, 2010).

However, complementarity might also reflect respect and support for desires and investments around caregiving or career in partner relationships which were framed in ways which emphasised role difference rather than gender difference. At

times, this recognition of investments was presented as the basis of compromise but, occasionally individual rather than mutual compromise was represented as sustaining complementary, if not always conventionally gendered, parenting (as Chesley (2011) found). Thus, the possibility of equal partnership was affirmed in participant accounts but so was the finding that fathers' involvement which is respectful of mothers is the negotiated product of fathers making themselves available to be involved and moving only into those spaces made available by mothers for their involvement (Doucet, 2006; Gatrell, 2007; Ranson, 2010). Explanations of apparently traditional elements in the allocation of tasks or responsibilities in terms of fairness and pragmatism should not be assumed to be simply re-inscriptions of difference and even inequality. When fulfilling paternal responsibilities in the absence of mothers, lone fathers balance the different elements of care, those associated with motherhood and those with fatherhood, in their own practice (Doucet, 2006, pp.129-30).

The research reviewed in Chapter 1 suggested that the gendering of roles in relation to care and parenting were influenced by the differences in the division of paid and unpaid labour, although decisions about sharing responsibility also influenced the division of labour in the first place (Townsend, 2002; Dermott, 2008; Ranson, 2010). Participants in this sample endorsed the shift from the reluctant delegation of close relationship with children to mothers, seen in Townsend's (2002) 'package deal'. In some cases, the shift is to the 'intimate fatherhood' where relationship is not delegated but family work may be, described by Dermott (2008). In others the shift is seen in shared involvement in and responsibility for relationship and caregiving as described by Ranson (2010). Most often, in this sample, participants located their practice in a middle ground, where participation in paid work was an important contribution to family but participation in family and domestic work a central part of fatherhood.

Variation in fathers making themselves available to be involved in family life and mothers making space available for different forms of fathers' involvement has been

shown to be shaped by mothers' and fathers' relation to established discursive constructions of fathers as 'morally' responsible for financial provision (Doucet, 2006) and mothers as responsible for care (Miller, 2010). While there was some alignment between more or less symmetrical arrangements of paid and unpaid labour and an emphasis on commonality or complementarity in talk about mothers and fathers, such alignments were not consistent. Arrangements were dynamic, responsive to change in children's needs or other aspects of parents lives and able to be altered by negotiated changes in practice. Egalitarian understandings of gender and egalitarian practices of fatherhood, which combine together to produce new ways of doing family, may also combine with, respectively, aspects of 'traditional' organisation and more 'traditional' understandings of gender.

In this sample, participants' level of participation in paid work varied, as did the meaning of paid work. Responsibility for provision was presented by some as only one meaning alongside career, but by others as the primary, if not only, meaning. In non-earning households, providing through participation in paid work was either an aspiration, for partnered participants, or replaced by a vocation of solo care by single fathers, drawing on the ideals of nurturing, involved fatherhood where responsibility is located in sustaining close, strong family relationships. In sole earner households, the pressures of provision may be intensified by the interdependence of the earner's financial contribution and the carer's availability to contribute caregiving. In addition a dichotomous distribution of responsibilities risks ongoing asymmetry in relation to the labour market between mothers and fathers. Participants denied that apparently traditionally gendered organisation of family life reflected traditional values or assumptions about gender roles. As in relation to the parenting partnership, they were produced by the same mix of pragmatism and personal preference which produced dual earner arrangements, where most, but not all, women desired to work, and dual earner/carer arrangements, where both partners wanted to both care and work if not always in the job they had.

Although many participants saw diversity, in both household organisation and parenting, as characterising the fatherhood of their generation, many also referred to tensions in reconciling different dimensions and costs in relation to care or career. Long hours or demanding careers led to emotional tension over incompatible time in respect of work and children, although the tension was mitigated by an acceptance among some of these fathers that, in earning, they played a necessary and valuable part in family life. For some there was a tension between a commitment to work which pays the bills and a ceding of work which furthers vocation or career. A third source of tension is living with the imperative to provide amidst threats to, or a failure in, their capacity to do so. Where there was no reference to tension or participants spoke of achieving a balance between paid work and family, there was also present an acceptance of the mother as primary caregiver, and enjoyment of good working conditions. The situation of these fathers was aligned with wider socio-economic conditions which continue to position mothers as primary for children and paid work as primary full-stop (Miller, 2010; Dermott 2008).

Both gender and class relations are relevant to the diversity in the place of provision in fatherhood in this sample. Although participants in earning households recognise their partners as mothers and workers, and themselves as carers, their partners worked less and cared more when children were young, not counting maternity leave. The exceptions are one dual earner/carer household, one dual earner household, another where the mother was seriously unwell for an extended period, and a sole earner household in which the father was the caregiver. Whatever fathers lose by ceding primary parental status to the mother of their children in favour of a commitment to career, they retain the benefits of the worker alongside their part of the burden of provision. However, the diversity derived from inequalities in men's position in the labour market, means that the level of benefit varies greatly among workers, as does the weight of the burden of provision.

In discussions of the meaning of fatherhood, rather than the meaning of work, responsibility for provision was, often only implicitly, part of participants' sense of responsibility for children's well-being. It was consistently represented as less fundamental to fatherhood than relationship, which was understood as a personal, non-transferable responsibility. Financial provision was often characterised as, in principle, a joint parental responsibility, but some participants acknowledged or embraced the persistent, particular moral weight given to the responsibility for paternal provision by fathers and others. The force of this norm was most clearly conveyed in situations of breach, as in the case of voluntary or involuntary withdrawal from the labour market, where it is confounded by the linking of paid work to citizenship or masculinity (Dermott, 2008), or in the binding together of financial responsibility and fatherhood in non-resident fatherhood, an often contested (Wilson 2006) but potentially decisive contribution (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999).

In exploring issues of change and of gender in/equity, Chapter 1 reviewed important research into the elements of father's practice, and the interconnectedness with the practice of mothers in detail. It is also important to retain, in parallel, a broader concept of the sense of parental responsibility which figured so prominently in participants' discussions of the meaning of fatherhood. The responsibilities of which they spoke included everyday involvement but also large-scale, cumulative projects. These included raising children, securing housing and earning or securing financial provision, although no one means of providing for the family's well-being is a defining element of fatherhood, as the situation of lone or non-resident fathers in this sample demonstrates. Equally, it is important to recognise financial provision as a potential, although not defining, element of mothers' understandings and practices of parental responsibility. As noted in Chapter 3, an analytic focus which shifts between doing family and doing fatherhood facilitates a broader perspective on father's responsibility practices. I return to this argument in Chapter 7.

The relation between motherhood and fatherhood is constructed in the lived relationship with their partner, not only in terms of the division of labour and responsibilities but also in the, related but not dependent, negotiation of similarity and difference, commonality and complementarity, equality and authority in the practices of family life. The constitution of the relation of motherhood/fatherhood develops with ongoing reference to a sense of self, to doing fatherhood as well as doing family. Some participants had a sense of the dimensions of their lives being in balance, or not, and of positioning themselves in relation to certain constructions of fatherhood and masculinity. Balance and ambivalence in relation to fatherhood and masculinity is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 6   Balance/ambivalence: plural positions in relation to fatherhood and masculinity

Introduction

In this thesis I have conceived of fatherhood and of fathers' lives as multi-dimensional, examining diversity of practice within the sample in respect of different aspects of a broad acceptance of contemporary ideals of new, intimate and involved fatherhood.   I have also considered the inter-linking of responsibility and relationship in participants' understandings and practice of fatherhood. Responsibilities for the welfare of family members arise from, and are defined through understandings of, the parent-child relationship and the parenting partnership, so that in contemporary fatherhood, for example, the parent-child relationship itself is also understood as a responsibility. Fathers, too, are members of their family and their welfare included in the remit of family responsibility, if often more implicitly than explicitly in participants' accounts. Two further aspects of contemporary ideals, the necessary de-centring of self entailed in this child-centred model of fatherhood and the possibility for an alternative practice of masculinity (Henwood and Procter, 2003, pp.343-4), are relevant to the analysis in this chapter. Throughout the thesis I have attempted to move between a focus on father's place in family life and the place of family in fathers' lives, doing family and doing fatherhood. Here, the focus is primarily on fathers' reflections on the implications of how they do fatherhood for aspects of their sense of self, including their sense of self as gendered. I examine, first, participants' reflections on what is lost in the de-centring of aspects of the self in fatherhood, and, second, their reflections on how their practice of fatherhood positions them in relation to constructions of 'masculinity'.

Participants in couples and their partners attempt, in various ways and with varying success, to balance responsibilities between them, and to balance

commitments across the dimensions of their own lives. Participants who were parenting without contact with the mother of their children sought balance in performing the different aspects of parenting on their own. Given the practical and moral demands of contemporary life, inevitably limited resources and time, and the array of desires and aspirations of participants, there were also references to tension and imbalance, as considered in the previous chapter. Lack of balance was often linked to reflections on, or even enactments of, ambivalence: the co-existence of contradictory desires or orientations. Understanding subjectivity as capable of plural identifications, and at the intersection of multiple discursively constituted meanings, I will explore in this chapter the significance of ambivalence in relation to fatherhood and masculinity.

In the first part of this chapter I will consider references to tensions in sustaining a balance between life dimensions or to feelings which suggest moments of ambivalence in the everyday life of fatherhood. The focus is not on the tension between paid work and family work, as examined in the previous chapter, but on participants' talk about desire and regret in respect of the spaces, or rather the lack of space, between paid work and family work. I consider reflections on the implications of the intensification of responsibility and interconnectedness in family life, emphasised in contemporary discourses of 'good' fatherhood. I also consider the coexistence of an acceptance of responsibility and relationship with desire or regret for the freedoms of independence, and the 'spontaneity' of life before children, for individuals but also for couples. Fathers referred to loss of time with their partners outside of time spent with the family. Fathers in dual earner couples also referred to limited time spent with their children and partner together. I acknowledge but qualify the association between autonomy and masculinity within a brief discussion of subjectivity.

A form of ambivalence may also be seen in how participants relate to both traditional and alternative constructions of masculinity and manage contradictions between them. In the second section I examine instances where participants

construct or enact the relation between parenting practice and discursive constructions of masculinity relevant to their own or perceived societal ideals of fatherhood. Such constructions are for some a resource. For those whose practice positions them at the juncture of conflicting discursive constructions there are moments when their accounts are marked by the persistence of the normative power of dominant constructions. In addition, I consider participants' references to encounters with perceptions of men as marginal to children's lives or predatory upon them. Such perceptions invoke negative conceptions of 'masculinity', as a threat, for example and conflict with participants' sense of themselves as caring fathers. The third section of this chapter considers issues of perspective and context in relation to (de)gendered language and practice, critiques the limited pluralism of the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and considers the gender pluralism of Lister (2004) as an alternative understanding of gender and intersectionality.

Section 1   Self/fatherhood: balance and ambivalence

In discussions of the impact of parenthood on their lives, there were suggestions of tension and references to the need for balance between parts of one's life which echo some of the concerns about balancing the demands of work and family of the previous chapter. Bob, for example, spoke of the challenges of finding time: 'I'm bad for compartmentalising my life. […] there's no balance in terms of work and life'. By contrast Tom, who said 'work-life balance is so important to me', works a four-day shift pattern that allows him to build in dedicated time with the children one afternoon. What is significant here is that this also makes time for his own projects: 'I like having the one day of the week when I can go and do my own thing'. Similarly, making a space for something of their own between work and family, Toby said he had to have his darts on a Monday night, Peter needed to exercise, Michael needed to go to the studio: 'space for my own head is all I have ever really wanted during that time'. Sustaining a balance may be most difficult when children are very young. Robert, although in a very different position as a full-time primary caregiver, noted that 'it was a case of I could spend time on my own doing

something fun or I could get enough sleep and it was trying to get a balance'. The idea of inter-related balancing acts, the balance between partners and the balance between the dimensions of each partner's life, is encapsulated by Liam. Both partners were unwilling to stop working full-time but would not have been able to afford childcare for two children: 'we were both a bit hesitant about having another child because, as I say, things felt in balance and my worry was that it would unbalance things if that happened'.

This concern with balance confirms that some participants think of their life and self in terms of multiple dimensions the demands of which are potentially in conflict. However, there is a strong, normative, albeit contextualised, expectation that, in speaking of their children and about parenting, parents will be fundamentally positive. In addition, some participants may have wished to deflect any perception of fathers as less committed and less competent. Nevertheless, a few fathers were prepared to discuss ambivalent feelings in relation to aspects of their experience of fatherhood during the interview. Neither the absence nor presence of such feelings can be assumed for fathers who did not speak of them. Many of these feelings had a temporal dimension, comparing life before and after fatherhood, but they are also situated in the dynamics of partner relationships before and after partners become parents. Reflecting on the difference between life before and after children, one of two aspects of 'freedom' identified as both departed and desirable was a freedom to act independently, without accountability.

Independence/Interdependence

One aspect of the change brought by parenthood as discussed by some was the intensification of interdependence, a tighter interweaving of one's actions and options with the actions and options of a partner and the needs of a child or children. Liam and Deena, who were living apart together, bought a house together once they knew Deena was pregnant. Compressed in time and with the deadline of the birth, Liam spoke of the 'independence change' and compromises entailed in

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this process. The arrival of their daughter only intensified the change from operating relatively independently to operating as a unit.

> There are big decisions to be made, you have to make those decisions the two of you and so it changed from having so many decisions that were totally your own, what you did and when you did it, to suddenly having that.

Bob, whose youngest was only one and whose work developing his own business was also very demanding, reflected at greatest length on the coexistence of general contented commitment and occasional longing for the freedom to act independently. Bob was one of the participants who felt a degree of ambivalence about fatherhood in the period before his first child was born. He noted that 'once they're there and you have that emotional connection, do you know what I mean, then suddenly the other stuff dissipates in terms of its importance to you.' Nevertheless, Bob goes on to say 'but it doesn't mean that you don't crave [freedom], that you don't feel the need, I mean I'm still an individual'. He had already noted that his partner Amanda also feels this need build up: 'she needs a break every now and then, just to get away from the kids, to remember that she's Amanda, not just a mum, you know'. Bob says that he is happy, 'on the things that matter emotively, and happiness wise, then infinitely so, I really, really am'. Nevertheless, in terms that pick up on Liam's discussion of a rapid transition into partnership, Bob links the sense of being an individual with independence of action, saying 'I would just love to be an individual and make decisions as one person'. He used the image of a 'pause button', just for those rare times 'when you need it'. Bob goes on to say that 'genuine freedom' would have to have no impact on others 'because it's not that I want to run away from what I've got.' Thus, this desire to opt out for a time is not eliminated by, but can coexist with, contentment and commitment to family life.

Harry was also conscious of the continuity of a dimension of his sense of self which 'is a little bit outside the family' alongside his commitment to family life. Reflecting on his parents' marriage, Harry said that he had come to realise that 'my mum

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always had a little bit of her, one part of her was always outside the family and that for those reasons she found having children very hard'. For his mother, the alienation was exacerbated by lack of choice and his father's attitude which, as noted in Chapter 5, he characterised as 'we will have a 1950s relationship, so you will be at home and you will do the cleaning'. Harry remembers her happiness once the children were grown and she was able commute to a job in London.

> There's a bit of me, I think, that I have my mum's keeping a little bit outside the family. I don't know whether that's trying to escape the family or whatever it is, there's a little bit of me that's outside. I don't know really. I think there are choices I could make that would be more part of the family.

The example he gave of a choice he could, but does not often make, was to come home early from work. Nevertheless, he has been determined not to reproduce his mother's situation and, for all that there is something of holding back, his experience has been very different from that of his mother. 'I think in some ways, um, then, my life is much more with Liz and the kids, and I was saying to Liz last night it's really nice, we have a really nice time, really nice together'. Later, Harry measured and conveyed his own feelings through a contrast with other parents. One father he knows has a child at primary school and a baby.

> And he's just like "it's hell, I [go to work] to get away from it" and I don't know if he's parodying it sometimes. I think, on balance, that is what he thinks. And I find that really difficult, because I think the kids are part of my life and I really miss them when I'm not around them and I look forward to spending time with them.

At times, participants reflected on their own situation or feelings through drawing a contrast between themselves and other men. This move frames their own position as positive, but also, I think, reflects a sense of being located within a wide range of orientations to fatherhood, and among men who do not all think as the participant does. It also allows participants to provide examples in the interview of more ambivalent experiences of fatherhood. Dave, stepfather and father, described himself as 'not very good at planning' in contrast to some friends who 'overplan'.

And a big thing for both of them was, they like to plan things and they're very, very sort of masculine males and they like to plan things and have things as they are. And then suddenly, you can't. Along comes the baby, and it's like 'Shit!' And it's almost like it's an intrusion. And then I think there are problems later on. And I'm not saying they don't love their kids, and I'm not just talking about [my mates] here but other guys I've spoken with.

Dave was wrestling with less than perfect conditions for raising children when he spoke to me. This is likely to have intensified his awareness of the contrast between the aspirations of friends who 'want the perfect conditions' for having children and the uncertainties of life as a parent. The feelings Dave describes in his friends are more extreme than any expressed by Dave or other participants, and participants did not speak of control as such, but some did refer, as already noted, to a loss of independence and spontaneity, and all participants referred to a change in lifestyle.

Opposing orientations were not always presented as ambivalent but sometimes as one having given way to the other as part of the next stage in the life course. This acceptance can be seen in the accounts of Russell and Jason who, both fathers of very young children, spoke of missing and not missing the freedom to go out on their own. Russell said 'when I used to work for the [organisation] it was always Friday night was down the pub. I just wouldn't want to do that anymore. I sort of, at times I miss it.' Jason described a similar coexistence of nostalgia and contentment: 'I miss being able to just go and have ridiculous drinking sessions, but I also don't miss it, you know what I mean. I also don't miss it'. Jason misses the people but hopes to carry the friendship with these people forward into the future, saying 'I think some of them might be having kids soon and that will be the next stage'. The change in situation has, to some extent, changed what would be the meaning of an activity enjoyed in the past.

Splitting up/Time together
Another way in which some participants found it difficult to balance the dimensions of life was in relation to the partner relationship. While certain forms of

interdependence between partners increased, in respect of emotional investments, responsibilities, tasks and time, some spoke of a decrease in certain forms of togetherness. The loss of time with their partner to the mounting pressures of paid work and family life were mourned by some participants. Some fathers said that they missed the freedom of movement referred to by Bob and Jason for themselves and their partner as a couple. Liam, whose daughter is nine, noted that the change in how he participates in activities and socialising outside the home since becoming a father is even greater in respect of time with his partner outside the home.

> The spontaneity was changed, and also it changed that Deena and I couldn't do things spontaneously. That was much more of a change because you can still go out, one of you stays at home and one of you goes out, you can do that, but we couldn't do things together sometimes, yeah, that was a big change and that took a lot of getting used to in some ways.

Jeremy regretted the loss of freedom with his partner, Heidi, but also the loss of spontaneity itself.

> There are times I miss [Heidi and I] being able to just do things on a whim. The fact that everything needs to be planned. The fact that you can't even just disappear for the weekend. You need to plan it properly and spend two days packing the car.

Demands on parents' time and energy for some couples were structured in a way that led them to divide tasks and time with children between them, 'splitting up' the tasks and 'splitting up' to complete them. Liam pointed to this strategy and its side effects.

> It means a lot of splitting up of the childcare or other things, even things like one person goes shopping or the other one does, it's that kind of thing. And it's kind of, you don't do as many things together as you did before because you're trying to fit everything in.

Sam's account of limited time when the family is together is similar to Liam's.

> We have very little time just the three of us that isn't homework, school, running around. And actually the weekends, it's very often somebody's with Lucy and Catherine's off or I'm off.

For Liam and Sam, part of the busyness derives from their commitment to work, the heavy involvement of their children in activities such as dancing and karate, as well as their own involvement in community life. Other participants split up their working hours in order to split the time with the children. Dilhara works full time and his partner Gayesha is out at work three evenings a week until midnight and 'it's a bit of a struggle at the moment, yes'. The extreme case is Henry and Harriet who split the entire week between them, working four and three days respectively due to their privileging of parental care: 'holidays are important'. Their accounts confirm the argument made by Jacobs and Gerson (2001) that, rather than individual schedules, it is combined work schedules of family members that should be the focus of analysis of balance or conflict between paid work and family work demands. Sam and Liam, both fathers of one child, also emphasised the importance of holidays for the time the family is together. Sam said that 'it's really only on holiday that the three of us do things that are just pleasurable to do, you know.'

Lucien, who has two children, pointed out the potential for enhancing emotional intimacy between partners of time spent as a family.

> It's not just us, it's the family. If we were actually together a bit more, if there were more time as a family the opportunities increase for us to just rub shoulders even and I think that's partly to do with it. […] I think intimacy and interconnections can be woven into that family fabric, I don't think it need necessarily be separated out. But that means having more time to spend together.

The importance of family time sits alongside the value of one on one time with a child for Sam: 'I actually really enjoy the times when it's the two of us'. Whole family dynamics can be more volatile than those of dyads. For Sam, the volatility between his partner and daughter is more stressful for him than them and can encroach on the pleasure of family time. Family dynamics affect the potential for

couple intimacy within family time. Lucien, who values the moments of 'shared-ness' and 'togetherness' families sometimes feel together, sees it as powerful but fragile: 'it may be very fleeting, and then it dissipates and everybody goes off'. People need to be together for those moments to 'just happen'.

Two participants spoke of some of the detrimental effects of becoming parents on their relationship with their partner, not only in terms of time out together as a couple, but also in terms of intimacy and togetherness. One envisaged the new family going out together 'as a little troupe the three of us', and they did. What had been difficult to envisage was the extent of a change in focus: 'The focus changes, the focus is here, the third, which is the family, is us'. More than one participant felt the loss of intimacy, while they respected the change in focus by which it is displaced. The demands on the 'time and energy' of both partners at certain periods, such as when children are co-sleeping, for example, or when one partner is pursuing a particular project, can be a strain on resources. If, when resources are stretched, 'the kids get everything', parent-child relationships may be nurtured while the parents' relationship must endure awhile. It is the case that persistent patterns can develop within relationships which are then difficult to dismantle. Nevertheless, the demands of parenting are dynamic, changing when children's needs and capacities change as they grow. As Harry and Liz used to tell each other in tough times, 'it will pass, eventually'.

In this discussion of tension in some participants' accounts of the place of fatherhood in their life, and of their own and their partner's place in family life, I have suggested that there are coexisting strands of ambivalence and commitment in some accounts. There is also a co-existence of appreciation of intimate relationships with children (described in previous chapters) with a regret for loss of time or intimacy with partners or as a family. The interweaving of these strands corresponds to another recurrent interweaving wrought by participants, that of 'satisfactions' and 'challenges' (Dilhara) or 'positive things and negative things'

(Gabriel). In the quote below, Gabriel is formulating the advice he might give those deciding whether or not to have children.

> Everything in the world has positive things and negative things. So, I want to tell you the positive things, I'll tell you the things that are positive for me but if you want to know the reality, it's that there are negative things, that you have then to think what is more important to you, the positives or the negatives. For me, I know that I can't sleep, I don't have time to read a book, I don't have time to go to the cinema but I have a lot of things that for me are more important than this. It is difficult to, you can give advice, there are good things and bad things and then you choose, up to you.

Autonomy/Relationality

Some forms of freedom may be available to fathers to a greater extent than mothers through the division of labour in which mothers take primary responsibility for the care of children. My focus has not been on the opposition between home and the workplace, as in the previous chapter, but I acknowledge, too, the association of paid work with autonomy, in contrast to the dependence of unpaid work. However, I would argue this association is problematic as a blanket characterisation, rather than a relative one, given the hierarchies of power and the spectrum of positions in workplaces.

Autonomy has been appropriated as a characteristic of masculinity and critiqued as a privilege of the masculine subject, on the grounds, first, that it constructs the feminine subject as dependent and, second, that it is a poor conception of subjectivity. Feminist and feminist-inspired scholarship has critiqued the claim to the status of either universal standard or neutrality for those attributes associated with men, or 'masculinity', (diQuinzio, 1999; Lister, 2004; MacInnes, 1998). This critique is complemented by further critiques, whether in postmodern, post-structuralist or psychoanalytic terms, of the unitary rational individual which scholars have identified as a nearly universally accepted discursive product of Enlightenment thought (Hollway, 1989; Lawler, 2000; Whitehead, 2002). This conception of the subject is argued to be both 'masculine', premised on the exclusion of the 'feminine', and classed, in that not all persons stand in the same relation to

valued constructions of the autonomous, self-regulating self (Lawler, 2000, p.83; Lister, 2004). The binary autonomous/relational has historically been mapped on to the binary worker/mother. It locates difference between men and women to the extent that (male) autonomy has been constructed as normative and men have been able to enact that norm, however partially and dependent on the support of the paid and unpaid labour of others, very often women (Allen, 2005).

This exploration of the multi-dimensionality of fatherhood is conceptually framed as an analysis of some of the plural identifications enacting and constituting a non-unitary subjectivity. Hollway (1989) stresses the multiplicity of the sedimented meanings constitutive of subjectivity. Weedon places the individual at the intersection of multiple discourses and within a personal history out of which the interaction with any given discourse is lived (1992, p.102). Discursive resources, the capacity to speak, are both biographically built up and socially located. The distribution of material resources and legal and institutional power may affect which of the speaking positions within a discourse are accessible to a subject. Positions within discourses may be imposed on subjects as members of a category, as in media and legal constructions of lone mothers (see Wallbank, 2002), or the positioning of ex-partner mothers in fathers' rights' discourse (Collier, 2009). Nevertheless, a subject's location at a dynamic intersection of discourses allows for the potential to gain access to and take up an alternative discursive position as a resource for action and as constitutive of subjectivity.

Such conceptions of the subject, only briefly designated here, are neither definitive nor exhaustive. They are defined against a construction of the rational autonomous subject argued to be illusory, and indicate analytic attention to the perpetual oscillation and tension between autonomy and relationality, and the plural rather than unitary nature of subjectivity (Hollway, 1989; DiQuinzio, 1999). The latter is consistent with the coexistence and interconnectedness of contradictory emotions and desires in some participants' accounts analysed above, where ambivalence in the experience of fatherhood was linked by participants not only with loss of

independence but also with a loss, or lack, of connectedness. The positioning of family, and family relationships, as an object of desire for intimacy and 'togetherness', to quote Lucien, echoes the position of men as subjects of desire for relationship, as discussed in relation to becoming fathers in Chapter 3.

In parallel with the critique of the notion of the masculine autonomous subject, some scholars engaging with masculinity studies have critiqued 'masculinity' itself as illusory (MacInnes, 1998).   Whitehead (2002) writes of gender myths of 'illusory' masculinity which have 'ideological or discursive elements that appear to embed given "truths"', but also of the power of these myths and truths in relation to 'material consequences in terms of men's practices' (2002, p.38, p.34). As with subjectivity, the notion of a unitary masculinity has been rejected by theorists who have addressed plurality in relation to gender. I will discuss plural masculinities in the work of Connell and colleagues, and the framework of gender pluralism, proposed by Lister (2004), for example, further below. Lister's discussion of gender pluralism positions women and men as 'members of multiple groups and/or holders of multiple identities' (2004, p.327). Thus, the subject is constituted through occupying a range of subject positions at the intersections of categories of sexuality, class, religion, ethnic identification, for example.   The plural positions or identifications of subjectivity, or personal life, are not in free play. They are embedded in interpersonal relationships, in material circumstances and discursive resources. They entail moral commitments, emotional investments and reflexivity generated out of accountability in imagined and interpersonal conversations. Having touched on these in relation to doing fatherhood, I turn in the next section to participants' positioning as fathers in relation to discursive constructions of 'masculinity'.

Section 2   Gendered (dis)junctures: caring fatherhood and constructions of masculinity

I noted in the previous chapter that several fathers characterised their generation of fathers as living amidst a diversity which reflects a breaking down of the limiting

distinctions between men and women in relation to their part in family life. Some participants suggested that where, and because, stereotypes are recognised as such there is a decline in their constraining power, increased choice and more scope for these choices to reflect different personalities rather than normative constraints. Anthony, as quoted in Chapter 5, commented that 'I don't think a person has to fit within the gender stereotype, the gender role anymore'. I also discussed fathers who rejected any fundamental gender distinction between their own and their partner's parenting.

> I think it doesn't matter if you are a man or woman doing it, it's the same. The same things I do are the same things Caterina does. So I am not thinking I'm the father, the man, so this is for me and this is for you. No. (Gabriel)

However, others referred to the persistence of stereotypes in understandings of what fathers do, or what people believe fathers should do. Andrew linked this continuity in requirements for faithfulness and financial provision with the responsibility for children; 'stereotypes start to come into play when you have kids because ultimately there's a responsibility'. As part of the ongoing consideration of the connection between new possibilities of practice and diversity among the sample, I analyse aspects of narratives which suggest some of the ways in which norms in relation to fatherhood and gendered expectations are still in operation.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, personal choice was generally presented as interacting with a pragmatic response to circumstances. This diversity in mothers' and fathers' orientations and responsibilities was spoken of at greatest length by participants who were conscious they appeared to be following a more 'traditional' model in working full-time while their partner cared for the children full-time. In contrast, the tension of irreconcilable desires, the costs of not working full-time and the persistence of normative judgements in relation to roles were noted by those participants bearing them precisely because they were doing things differently. A further source of variation is that some parents may see social change creating a choice where others see the continuity of a duty. If Harry sees that his situation as

sole earner might have been different, Bruce, father of 5, endorsed a traditional organisation whereby the father as sole earner supports the mother as primary carer. Adrian and Andrew, two fathers born in the 1960s, both referred to uneven change in conceptualisations of family practices in the UK. Adrian noted that among Scottish men, 'there have been such changes, even in recognising how people are different and that that's not a bad thing, you know' although 'there's still a lot to do and a lot of things to change'. Andrew suspected there was residual discomfort with fathers taking on a caregiving role in place of an absent mother.

> We've kind of blurred those distinctions to some extent in the culture and I don't know to what extent there are people who still think in those traditional ways. […] In the past they would have said there was something wrong I think, to their face probably. Now they wouldn't say that, but they still might think it.

In this chapter I closely examine selected passages where fathers enact or reconstruct moments of reflection on their sense of themselves accounting for gender. These are enacted or reconstructed moments where they refer to a requirement to fulfil gendered scripts or to justify acting otherwise. Such moments qualify the more general claims made by some participants that diversity, preference and pragmatism demonstrate a decline in the pertinence of gender norms to contemporary fathering. Enactments of ambivalence within the interview, moments of a struggle to keep their balance, sometimes occurred as participants positioned their changing practice in relation to stereotypes of fatherhood and masculinity. I will discuss two such moments, as demonstrated in Daniel's and Peter's accounts later in this section. Participants' constructions of the positive and negative force of normative discursive constructions of fatherhood referred to reflections which began prior to the interview. As discussed below, for Andrew and Hugh an ideal of fathering was a resource, meaningfully connected with moral imperatives. For Robert, the enduring normative charge of stereotypes can connect with moments of vulnerability so that self-evaluation is read back through an abstracted, generalised other intolerant of alternative criteria of value.

Reflecting on relations to discursive constructions of fatherhood: moral resources and demoralising residues

To the extent that social discourses, local and global, make available subject positions, those subject positions can be drawn on as a resource. Andrew said of his practice as a father, 'I'm also influenced by those traditional ideas. I can't help being influenced by them'. In his case, traditional ideas of responsibility and authority are a resource in that they offer a position, and establish a remit, for him to provide the commitment and discipline not provided for him by his father, and so prevent his children experiencing the consequences of their lack he faced as a child. The subject position made available within a discourse is a resource to be taken up in a contextualised, customised form, to the extent that it is a tenable connection made with biography, as in Andrew's case, and situation.

Occupying that position may entail a set of implications and constraints. However, even where that position is located within or in relation to discourses of masculinity, it is not necessary to characterise what men, or women, do as a form of masculinity (Risman, 2009; Paechter, 2006; Hølter, 2007). Nevertheless, a means of recognising the variety and force of the links men and women doing gender make between a sense of self, or an understanding of practice, and discursive ideals and norms of masculinity is required. I would term the making of these links, rather than the practices linked, 'masculinity practices'. That is to say, it is necessary to avoid identifying an activity like DIY as an inherently masculine practice, but we do need to identify the 'masculinity practices' by which such activities are discursively constructed as masculine. Masculinity practices include the appropriation of characteristics or practices to masculinity in ways which allow men to account for themselves as, on balance, 'appropriately' masculine (see Doucet, 2006, for example) but also the disavowal of forms of masculinity, as in the case of Hugh below.

Some participants reflected on the concepts and constructions, such as stereotypes, with and against which they understand their understandings and actions. Hugh, who also said 'I don't think I'm necessarily a particularly macho father figure, you

know. I think I'm just who I am, you know', reflected on a specific moment of taking up a position.

> H: I remember feeling more like a dad, kind of, then, because the health visitor came, you know they come for the first couple of weeks, and she came and she said 'well, I'm not sure he's kind of feeding properly, maybe just go back in to have a look'. And, you know, Carrie was crying, worried and upset and everything. I remember my initial thought was 'Oh God' and I was quite upset and then I thought well, you know, 'I'm Dad. I've got to try and, ah, you know, man up, I've got to just take control of it and tell them everything'll be alright and deal with it, you know.' So there was that side of things. I'd say there was less kind of, you can't be self-indulgent, you maybe have to think of the bigger picture.

> I: Because you're supporting both Carrie and the baby?

> H: Yeah, I'd say that's maybe what the dad's position in the whole thing is. It's not always like that at all, particularly at that period I remember thinking this is where I've got to step in and do this, you know.

This form of masculinity practice recalls the construction of 'the virtuous father' as superior to mothers (Finn and Henwood, 2009), but needs to be understood in context. Hugh refers to deferring to Carrie throughout the interview. In this excerpt, he drew on the remit of masculine authoritative, responsible fatherhood in a moment of need, in order to be able to take care of his family, and in an exceptional rather than routine move.

From his vantage point as a long-time 'at home dad', living out a gender egalitarian position, Robert can see the persistent discursive elaboration and circulation of the stereotypes some others in the sample see as less insistent than they once were.

> So, our stereotypes, our symbolic picture of things are stuck with us from really quite an early age so there is no escaping those 'fathers are like this' 'mothers are like this' even if our own parents weren't necessarily like that – if things have gone really well or really badly, yes those stereotypes will be broken, but just in general.

As the participant whose practice is most consistently out of alignment with the norms prescribed and the validation offered, he testified to the tenacity of the normative charge in traditional representations of defining mothers primarily in terms of care and men primarily in terms of paid work. Aspects of this discourse persist in the media, in many social interactions and also in how he and his partner Margaret understand their contribution to family life. Robert reports what may be considered an upside, or at least a silver lining, in this residual influence of normative values in a situation of alternative practice.

> Um, things I do like doing the cleaning, Margaret feels very indebted to me for those things, 'cause I do all these different things like cleaning, and the laundry and looking after the kids and taking the kids to clubs and 'all she does is go out to work'. Whereas I feel indebted to her because she's doing what I really feel I should be doing which is going out and making money. […] But on the other hand we don't particularly mind each doing what we are doing and so, you know we don't feel that what we're doing is making up for what the other person is doing for us as well. We're indebted and we're not quite paying it back. [Laughing]

The influence of this residual typing is qualified by Robert's analysis of how the relation between positions is structured. At one point he commented: 'I think I still feel guilty I didn't read bedtime stories to the kids that much. I did it sometimes, if Margaret was still at work. Because that's the dad thing to do'. But in the next sentence, he situated that practice in the structure of the division of labour: 'but that's because the dad only just got home'. My impression is that Robert is referring to moments, even if recurrent, of feeling guilty rather than a constant tension; Robert sometimes feels the normative charge in conventional representations of fatherhood but is also able to defuse it. For a considerable period, Robert identified positively with his alternative practice of fatherhood. As noted in the previous chapter, when he told people he was a housedad: 'I knew that was the entire answer, that was satisfactory'. It seemed to me, however, that it was a greater challenge to sustain resistance against the pressure of normative expectations around paid work once that children, aged between 7 and 11 years, were all at

school: 'People would ask me, 'what do you do?' It's like 'I'm a housedad', and it just didn't feel quite as true anymore.' His next comments suggest that if there had been any sense of a temporary suspension of the demand to work while the children were young, it had expired, despite high levels of community involvement.

> Although it shouldn't matter and it's not necessary for our finances or stuff, the fact that I do lots of stuff that isn't paid for makes it seem less real when I'm telling it to other people in my own head. Um, I don't know exactly why because quite a lot of it's useful and good stuff and there are other outcomes from it, but because I'm not getting paid, surely I should be out – it may just be because I'm a man and that is the stereotype, the man being a breadwinner and it's seeped through to me. There are still things that society holds the man does and the woman does in parental roles that still get to us.

Robert's image of the norm of the breadwinner having 'seeped through to me' can be compared with Jeremy's image of the traditional image being 'deep-rooted', quoted in the discussion of provision and paid work in the previous chapter. These images suggest an effort to understand the tenacity of the moral, normative element in traditions, the dismissal of which would seem to be authorised by alternative understandings and actual practice. It also points, I think, to the place of dominance of the worker ideal in hierarchies of discourse (Dermott, 2008).

Enacting discursive contradictions: keeping one's balance on gender boundaries

Daniel and Peter were interviewed at a point only a few months into a new stage of their life. In both cases, although in very different ways, the circumstances in which they practise as fathers had altered. Within the flow of caring, they appeared to be adjusting to a change in their positioning which demanded a stretch in practices and in understandings of parenting and gender. With both Daniel and Peter, there were points in the interview where the tensions of stretch, resistance and recoil made for moments of uncertain balance.

Peter, the father of two school-age boys, was for many years employed in demanding positions at management level within large corporations. His partner

has worked four days a week during this period. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Peter had stepped down from his position shortly before the interview for reasons which included the resolve to organise work in a way which allowed him more time with his family, perhaps by pursuing an alternative career. In the meantime, he had increased both his contact with the boys and his contribution, already substantial, to caring for the family and home. I trace in Peter's account a back and forth movement and a moment's loss of balance.

In a discussion which began with raising girls and went on to the significance of pink, Peter says the meaning of pink has 'flipped' so that it is now powerful as women are now powerful: 'we're equal, in fact we're probably better, so what the heck, let's just wear pink again'. This reference to the possibility of reversal does - holding it lightly - resonate with a sense of Peter 'keeping his balance' as a man as his practice as a father expands further, but not too far. The passage below is continuous speech from a discussion of how his partner's evening routine has changed since he stopped work. I present it in segments to bring out the shifts in tone and direction in the passage.

1 Sometimes, if she comes home and doesn't want to exercise, I try and get us
2 to eat together and we do it at weekends anyway and I have breakfast with
3 them. She doesn't eat breakfast. I just get everything prepared.

4 I just feel like the bloody mother in that household, should get a pinny on.

5 You do wonder how she did it, when I was away at six, she had to do all
6 what I do at the moment with the boys, get them up, fed, washed, dressed,
7 bags packed in the car, drop them off, go to work whereas all I'm, well,

8 I'm doing all that, well, walking them to school and she gets off a lot better
9 on time.

10 So it's quite a different dynamic, a different family dynamic.

Peter remarked with satisfaction elsewhere that he is a 'hands-on' dad. However, there is a moment of reaction in this passage (l.4) provoked by Peter hearing himself

represented (by himself) as the one at home waiting for his partner to come home from work (ll.1-3). It is as if he had come too close to the edge for gender comfort. His reaction was to recoil and quickly distance himself from the passivity, waiting and serving, which are suddenly a step too far from masculine fatherhood, and re-classify them as belonging to motherhood (l.4). But then, he recovered his balance, pulling back from a negative characterisation of motherhood. He affirmed his partner's labour when he was working (ll.5-7) and his own labour now (ll.8-9). His closing words seem to indirectly acknowledge the challenge in the change in circumstances he faces, the 'different family dynamic' (l.10).

Peter was supportive of his wife working in paid employment, appreciative of the work she had done at home when he had been working and proud of his own contribution, including as cook. He also conveyed a strong sense of embodied difference in mothering and fathering which leads him to invoke gender stereotypes of ineffectual femininity and paternal authority.

> I always remember when Craig was a baby and she was trying to tell him to stop doing things and I said it's your curly hair and your high-pitched voice, he just finds it funny. So he won't take you seriously, you're the mother and you provide the food and change his nappy and he's there to run around and do what he likes. Whereas with me, which was obviously very frustrating for Julie, but obviously the way I comport myself whilst doing it, he just knew, maybe it was just a stronger grip whatever it was, he just knew he had to lie still or otherwise he was going to be in trouble and I think there's an element of that now.

One reading of these extracts is that Peter is attempting to balance commitments to gender equity and gender difference. It seems possible that his positive embrace of domestic as well as caring tasks, during a period when paid work does not provide a counter-balance, produces moments where the absence of a customary means of accounting for gender is experienced as disorienting. A suggestion that women 'want to have their cake and eat and be masculine in some of the ways that they do things' points to a wider ambivalence in respect of the breaking down of gender category boundaries.

Daniel is the father of two sons and a daughter. He had been a lone father for four months at the time of the interview but due to a number of issues, he had for four years assumed primary responsibility for the care of the children and has not been working. His extended response to my asking him about mothering and fathering seems to enact a debate between taken for granted assumptions and lived experience, which as he pointed out is also a movement between past and present. I have tried to bring out the back and forth between Daniel's affirmation of the traditional distinction in roles between discipline/affection (*formatted in italics*) and the lived experience of being the one who provides both (formatted in normal text). He acknowledges this back and forth as part of an on-going learning process in his new circumstances (ll.15-16). A story about helping his daughter realise 'girlness' affirms gender distinctions in relation to children. After a further statement of the distinction between what mothers and fathers do (ll.17, 19), Daniel, perhaps with some frustration with the question, dismisses the distinction in relation to parenting (ll. 20-24, **formatted in bold**).

1 *Definitely two different roles mother and father,*
2 but saying that I've also done the same role – not birth or breastfeeding –
3 but once they're born and as they're growing up I do think the roles are
4 pretty similar, I do think it's pretty similar.
5 *But we do have different jobs to do as a mum and as a dad. I tend to find with my*
6 *kids as they've been growing up over the years, Dad's the one with the authority*
7 *and Mum's the one gives the cuddles*
8 but it's not like that because okay I'm the one with the authority but every
9 night with my kids I get a kiss and a cuddle off each of them, even Josh the
10 ten year old. In the morning as well.
11 *And I suppose years ago that would sort of Mum's job I would*
12 *always see that as a woman's job to kiss and cuddle*
13 but I'm affectionate as possible with my kids and if they feel that from me
14 they're going to grow up a lot more confident, a lot closer as a family unit.
15 All these wee things, I'm learning, I learn every day and as a dad I tend to
16 jump back to, to I'm always jumping backwards and forwards.

Daniel then spoke of having recently bought some new clothes for his five year old daughter, whose mum was quite tomboyish, sandals dresses, flowery tops, hair in pigtails, saying 'and I see her flourishing as a girl now – my wee princess now flourishing'.

> 17 *I suppose being a dad the jobs are different for mum and dad.*
> 18 I: And how do you feel about that now, now that you are the only one?
> 19 *Eh, I still think the same way.*
> 20 **It's neither here nor there. As long as my kids are being looked after**
> 21 **that's what's important, it's not important if it's mum that's doing it or**
> 22 **dad who's doing it or if it's both mum and dad. I think the simple thing**
> 23 **to me is they're being looked after and with the best intention and the best**
> 24 **possible means coming from me as a parent**.

The debate was provisionally resolved through Daniel's appeal to the primary significance of the care that is given over who is giving it and the use of non-hierarchical, non-gendered, and personalised, language **'me as a parent'**. Analysis of Daniel's interview as a whole suggests this form of resolution, perhaps provisional, maps on to a form of resource that contemporary involved fathering offers Daniel as a lone parent who is not in paid employment. As an involved father, he is able to value his commitment to his children's well-being and caring for his family and take up and hold a place in his local social world as a man who privileges the work of parenting, and unpaid work in his community, as a valid alternative to paid work.

Peter and Daniel embrace gender equity as the modern freedom for mothers to work and fathers to care, alongside an ongoing sense of embodied gender difference played out within the parenting partnership. Their ambivalence, perhaps, suggests a potential instability where endorsement of concepts of equity and freedom, endorsed by many as characteristic of contemporary parenting, are not accompanied by the deconstruction of gendered difference in respect of motherhood and fatherhood. This deconstruction can be seen in the accounts of some fathers who emphasised commonality between themselves and their partners

in the parenting partnership in the previous chapter. In the next section, I consider how perceptions of the difference between fathers and mothers underlie the discrepancy some participants identified between their sense of their fatherhood and the response they sometimes encountered from others.

Contradictory perceptions: caring fatherhood and incompetent or unsafe masculinity

> There are clear differences about the way people see fatherhood, the way you're treated as a father from the minute of conception onwards. There seems to be different, you kind of, you're not important and then you're a threat. I'd like a middle ground of maybe not being either. (Henry)

Perceptions of a disjunction between how participants understood their fatherhood and how they felt others perceived them recurred across the data. As indicated by Henry, marginalisation and threat were the dominant themes where negative constructions of masculinity as incompetent or unsafe with children were explicitly or implicitly invoked in ways which withheld recognition of participants' desires for involvement with their children.

Schools offered some participants an opportunity to participate as fathers. Daniel volunteers in his children's school, for example, and others participate in fundraising and school events. In contrast to settings for older children, the roles expected by participants during their partner's pregnancy and the baby's birth, and the roles given to fathers by professionals, were sometimes poorly aligned. Participants' characterisation of their participation ranged from a satisfaction of expectations of limited involvement, on the one hand, to, on the other, disappointment of expectations of being recognised as highly involved in the project of having a child. Sam was as included as he wanted to be, Hugh did not think it was really about him. Harry felt fathers were side-lined in ante-natal classes and Henry felt side-lined by health visitors; 'It was all so exciting and it was kind of like, "yeah, yeah don't ask questions"'.

Participants' accounts of pregnancy and birth acknowledged the significance of mothers' very often difficult and sometimes dangerous, embodied experiences giving birth and then, where applicable, breastfeeding. However, Russell's situation offers a critical case of differential treatment of mothers and fathers in relation to newborns. Russell was not young, he had extensive experience in care work, he was confident that he was competent to care for the twins, and had access to family support. Furthermore, he was the person who would be assuming responsibility for their care whenever they went home, because his partner was too ill to do so and could not breastfeed.

> R: Carol was in the hospital for two weeks in total. I was quite happy to, and at that stage the boys were quite well and I thought they should just come home. And I was talking to the doctors and they said "well, they don't normally allow children to go home with the father".
>
> I: That's what they said to you?
>
> R: That's what they said. And I was just, shocked. And I said, "Look, Carol, even if she was at home, she can't do anything".
>
> I: And she wasn't breastfeeding
>
> R: Because of the medication, she couldn't breast feed. And eventually, they came to a compromise with Carol's doctor that she came home before the cardiac surgeon wanted her, to release her from the hospital. I mean, I was just…shocked.

It was the doctor responsible for the mother's health who compromised, rather than the doctor responsible for the babies' wellbeing. Russell may be rare in having the confidence to ask to take babies home. The doctors in the situation will have had their own perspective and been aware of institutional precedents and procedures. Russell's account shows that the doctors caring for his family within that institutional context did not, or were not able to, respond to his family's particular circumstances and his capacities and see the sole care of his newborn twins as falling within his remit. Rather, they applied a general rule which positioned

fathers as incompetent and untrustworthy while at the same time positioning motherhood as sacrificial.

The second perception of masculinity which contradicted participants' own sense of themselves as caring fathers was their own perception of residual unease about fathers linked to the knowledge that some men pose a sexual risk to children, and to women. Henry said,

> I still feel a threat at times. […] If it was a woman walking down the street by herself smiling at Amy we'd think that was perfectly fine. If it's a bloke doing it he's a paedophile. And it's something that taps into something that I've found even with having Amy, there's still kind of that problem.

On the other hand, Henry is part of a group of friends where the common ground between them reinforces his sense of himself as a parent. The persistence, perhaps even intensification, of a pervasive sense of risk (Gabb, 2013) and of men's consciousness of it, is demonstrated in Liam's perception that becoming a parent changed his sense of his status.

> You were a man with no children working with children. Then suddenly you're a man with a child so you seem like a much better – whether or not people did really perceive me in that way or not – I felt much more secure in that position.

However, when looking after his daughter in the school holidays, he says he still felt an awkwardness with mothers; 'it's a man, you don't want to invite the man round your house for a cup of tea in the same way'. Robert, too, felt that exchange between parents, organising play dates or babysitting, is 'just slightly more awkward when you're a bloke'. Neither Liam nor Robert elaborated on the source of awkwardness but there may be elements of caution in relation to women's vulnerability to sexual violence, in relation to sexual tension between men and women or in relation to how others might perceive friendship between men and women (Doucet, 2006). However, Robert also shared Henry's experience that, among mothers you know over a period of time, you can 'blend enough' for that awkwardness to dissipate; 'someone did ask me 'what does your husband do?' one

time at parent-toddlers, just because that is what you say. I'd obviously blended enough.'

Some fathers from less advantaged backgrounds reported positive evaluations of their parenting from those around them in the interview, perhaps to counter a default negative perception of fathers. Some evaluations participants were subject to were formal. Lewis reported that social workers, involved from his son's birth through their work with his son's mother until her death, had classified him as not a threat to his son. He said, 'I never even seen the social workers anyway, it was there in place in the background as a wee safety net'.

Some fathers reported encountering negative perceptions of men in contexts of conflict. Luke's son's mother, with whom he was never co-resident, made accusations that he had harmed her, Jack's partner also accused him of violence. Luke and Jack maintained that they have pursued their cases in a context of institutional prejudice against fathers (cf. Featherstone *et al*, 2007).

> This is what happens institutionally with men – they're viewed with inherent suspicion. And I know what it's like to have been utterly completely fallaciously alleged to have done things that were utterly removed from the truth. (Luke)

Jack was also profoundly critical of a bias against fathers in the legal system and social work services as he had encountered them. Jack's account of the struggle to gain contact with and, ultimately, the right to have William live with him is, in part, an account of contesting representations. As well as his efforts to have care professionals recognise the discrepancy between Miranda's account and his actions, Jack required formal recognition that he was a 'really good dad'. Jack recounted that he asked for a parenting assessment, which eventually led the social worker on the case to change her recommendation to the court in support of Jack having more contact with William. The amount of contact has been incrementally increased through more than thirty sessions in court. Now he has full custody and Miranda

sees William once a fortnight, supervised by her parents. Jack said that bringing William through the process of adjustment was a 'hard struggle'.

Russell and Jack encountered health and social care professionals within particular contexts with distinct remits and facing different risks. Some men are not involved in their children's lives, some men do not feel competent to care for newborns and some men do abuse women and/or children. Nevertheless, one aspect of their situations was that participants encountered perceptions of fathers which contradicted their sense of themselves as fathers, and which connected with certain historically-situated oppositional constructions of femininity and masculinity which position men as problematic. Featherstone *et al* found a 'general tendency' in practice settings to see masculinity as problematic, 'both in terms of the problems men cause and the problems they experience' (2007, p.33). Neale and Smart, in their work with parents post separation and divorce, argue against claims to equality between parents which proceed on the basis of 'all things else being equal', on the basis that between men and women they are so very often not (1997, p.214). Neither men nor fathers are a homogeneous group nor 'masculinity' or 'fatherhood' a given set of characteristics. The challenges entailed in opening up conceptual and social spaces for men's actual and desired practice as fathers, alongside and among mothers, include balancing recognition of fathers' potential to care alongside recognition of the variety in lived relationships between mothers and fathers, parent and child, and recognition of the structural inequalities, based in gender or class location for example, which are the context of those relationships (Featherstone *et al*, 2007, p.84).

Section 3   Perspective, context and intersections: language and gender

Contextualised meanings: 'parent' and 'father'

The question of the equality between mothers and fathers, and of the difference in their situations, is central to the academic consideration of the discursive

deployment of the term 'parent'. I asked participants if they thought of themselves more as fathers or more as parents, as I will discuss below. However, before considering the meanings attributed to the terms 'parent' or 'father' in response to that question, I emphasise that the usage and meanings of 'parent' were understood to be highly contextualised, as language use must be. As Andrew pointed out, identifying as a parent in an interaction 'depends who you are talking to' and, I would add, who you are talking about. 'Parent' was used by participants in cases applicable to either or both a mother and father. Bob spoke of understanding the anxiety his wanderings caused his mother, now that he is a parent. In the interview, Adrian affirmed shared territory with me by saying 'well, you know, you're a parent too.' Correspondingly, mum/dad and, less frequently, mother/father were used to distinguish between parents. Relatives were at once described and named specifically as 'my mother', 'her dad' and so on, unless in the plural form of my 'parents'. The use of the term 'parent' was also understood to position mothers and fathers from a range of family forms in a non-hierarchical and inclusive way, and as potentially responsible for and in relationship with children.

Nevertheless, many participants did find in the identification as 'parent' a means to position themselves in relation to the fatherhood of previous generations and within the present diversity of fathers' practice, through identification with contemporary discursive constructions of involved fatherhood which de-emphasise distinctions between mothers and fathers.

> I certainly wouldn't see myself as a typical father role or a typical mother role, I'm just a parent and really gender doesn't matter at all. I want to play with the children, I want to help them learn, I want to spend time with them, cuddle them. (Russell)

> I'd like to consider myself a parent above a father. I just find society, you're either a father or a mother. […] So the treating us differently that's more a society thing as opposed to what I've found with us ourselves. (Henry)

Using 'parent' in this way may signal an embrace or experience of gender equity, equivalence of roles or the equal status of fatherhood. It may be deployed with a

more limited purpose, to reject the idea of a difference between what they do and what mothers do, or to reject a stereotype of traditional, distant fatherhood and/or to embrace a caring, intimate and involved relationship with their child(ren). As I sought to show in the discussion of participants' relational construction of fatherhood and motherhood in the previous chapter, it was not necessarily associated with a disavowal of any kind of difference between mothers and fathers, but more often with a limiting of the implications of gendered embodiment for paternal roles and responsibilities.

However, even some who endorsed egalitarian gender politics chose to identify as fathers in the interview. 'Father' referred to their unique, specific relation to their child(ren). Its usage in formal communications led a participant who works with children to associate the term 'parent' with the parents of the children he works with. For him, 'father' was warmer, more personal. For a small number it bore specific meanings around the role and responsibilities they understood themselves to have been charged with within their culture. I discussed how elements of these interacted with discursive constructions of masculinity in relation to protection (Hugh), provision (Robert) and care (Daniel) earlier in this chapter. Andrew refers to a 'template there of things you can remember growing up that are kind of there I suppose and there are kind of stereotypical images of fatherhood that you do draw upon as well to some extent'. The template or images are of a fatherhood defined 'in terms of responsibilities and authority, all that kind of thing which are definitely rooted in the culture even now, especially in Scotland'. To this culturally rooted role, whereby a father is 'someone who's there to intervene and sort things out', as Andrew's father was not, is added the responsibility 'to be there for your kids and to help look after them and all of that'. Thus, for Andrew, the cultural 'template' of paternal authority, of the responsibility to be there as a role model, is imbued with a biographically-rooted moral significance, and conjoined with more contemporary elements of good fatherhood, in his identification as 'father'.

I do not take the selection of 'parent' in the interview to necessarily indicate that the term 'father' is not also personally meaningful, any more than the choice of father as indicating a lesser commitment to shared parenting and partnership. While the idea of 'father' included specific responsibilities for some, the meanings bound together in their conceptualisation of fatherhood also incorporated the close relationship and competent care which some in the sample associated with the move away from gendered language to the term 'parent'. Thus, I think participants are seeing and seeking a broadening of the meaning and experience of fatherhood, in some cases through embracing the inclusiveness of the term parent, and in all cases with an awareness that more fathers and mothers are seeing more of the territory of parenting as the ground of overlapping emotional and practical engagement with children.

Participants' usage of 'parent' does also reflect a perception of increasing, if uneven and incomplete, recognition of fathers as parents with responsibilities for and relationships with children in institutional settings and in public spaces. It has been argued that the adoption of the use of the term 'parent' in policy, advice literature and some media, while aiming for inclusiveness, simply masks the continuity in mothers' disproportionate responsibility for children (Stanley, 2005). The project of de-gendering, for example the inclusion of parents from different family types and different forms of relationship to a child, is a valid strategy in contexts where it addresses conceptions and practices inconsistent with a wider commitment to equity. It is not valid in situations where a premature de-gendering at the level of language fails to address the conditions which sustain inequality (Lorber, 2000, p.88). This argument is relevant in the context of globalisation and global inequalities, including the working conditions of women and the articulation of labour practices and specific cultural contexts. Concerns about gender neutral language masking inequalities is relevant in the UK in the context of social care provision (Stanley, 2005; Featherstone *et al*, 2007), in relation to disadvantaged or vulnerable women (Hearn, 2012), and in relation to claims of gender neutrality and egalitarianism mobilised around parental rights by fathers' rights movements

(Neale and Smart, 1997). I acknowledge the potential for aspirational language to become hollowed out where its intended meaning remains unrealised. Nevertheless, I would argue that the ways in which participants use 'parent' does confirm the value of sustaining a term which supports a positioning of parenting, albeit always contextualised, as inclusive of diversity and as outside the oppositional terms of the gender binary masculine/feminine.

I discussed in Chapter 1 Ranson's (2010) research, in which she identified among her sample couples who were parenting 'on equal terms' and had attained 'functional interchangeability'. Ranson argued that 'when mothering and fathering are degendered, parenting is the result' (2010, p.177) and I contested her proposal to restrict the term 'parenting' to such egalitarian practice. There are reasons for continuing to use the terms 'parents' and 'parenting' in ways which are inclusive of different forms of practice. The first is inclusiveness, on principle, of different parenting situations and family structures, as well as the possibility of speaking of a group likely to include a mix of parenting approaches. Indeed, only a portion of the couples Ranson interviewed qualified as 'parenting', as some couples retained a hierarchical relation despite an alternative arrangement of paid and unpaid work. The second is the avoidance of researcher judgement as to whether a person's practice in raising their children warrants the term 'parenting' or 'mothering'/'fathering' in situations where judgement is not possible or not required. Thirdly, the distinction between fathering and parenting may be too rigid to recognise the fluidity and variability within the practice of many contemporary fathers. Ranson suggests that 'parenting like a man' is different from "fathering" and 'parenting like a woman' is different from 'mothering'' (2010, p.179). The potential for de-gendered practice by gendered subjects informs my analysis throughout, but I would argue for a modification of the concept of 'parenting like a man' or like a woman to parenting *as* a man or *as* a woman. Ranson's formulation perhaps requires a problematic degree of definition of the 'man' and 'woman' that parents would parent 'like'. What it is to parent as a man or as a woman varies with context and with men's and women's embodied, biographical relation to discursive

constructions of masculinity and femininity. Finally, discussions of terms such as family (Morgan, 1996; Edwards and Gillies, 2012) argue convincingly for the need to work with the multi-valent and contextualised nature of a term such as 'parenting', of language, and engage with the range of ways it is used by people and positioned in discourses in a range of settings.

Nevertheless, among those usages and in specific contexts, the meaning of a practise may be shifted as it is articulated with different discourses (Shove *et al*, 2012). Those Ranson (2010) described as parenting 'on equal terms', for example, seem to have situated parenting practice outside the domain of gender construction, not as unmarked by gender, but as a site where practices (after birth and breastfeeding) are neither decided by sex category nor decide gender. De-gendered practices may become less available to be 'pressed into the service of doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.138), at least without conspicuous contradiction, in the setting or relationship within which they have been de-gendered.

Masculinities or gender pluralism

Given the appropriation of the positive to the masculine and the conversion of the masculine to the neutral in constructions of rational, autonomous subjectivity, as discussed above, the project 'to make gender visible' (Kimmel, 1993), and thus render masculine privilege problematic and challenge the mechanisms of its construction, is a necessary one. It is one much pursued in the masculinity studies that developed out of feminist critiques of patriarchy and, specifically, academic social science. As well as making gender visible, Kimmel writes of a project that

> seeks to deconstruct masculinity as a singular, monolithic category capable of being used against marginal groups, and to reconstruct masculinities as a set of possible gendered identities, each different, and all equal. (Kimmel, 1993, p.35)

Some of the other dimensions of the project outlined by Kimmel in this quote, such as deconstruction and pluralisation, as well as the undertaking 'to de-center hegemonic masculinity' (mentioned in the same passage from which this quote is

taken), are goals only partially realised in masculinity studies. Lorber (2000) noted the paradox by which feminists, in exposing and challenging the inequitable processes and effects of differentiation, 'produced' difference. The same paradox of 'production' through critique applies to masculinity, with the difference that critiques of hegemonic masculinity re-inscribe masculinity as powerful and central, not only in society but in the study of masculinities. In respect of pluralisation, Connell and colleagues, from 1985, developed a theory of plural masculinities and defined the relation between them as hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalisation (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (1995, p.77). Any aspect of the feminine is expelled through the subordination of certain groups of men, most importantly, gay men (1995, p.78). Complicit masculinities don't achieve but do affirm hegemonic masculinity and benefit from the patriarchal dividend (1995, p.79). The structural and symbolic intersections of gender with other categories such as race and class establishes relations of marginalisation/authorisation between some groups, such as working-class men and black men relative to dominant white men sustained through hegemonic masculinity (1995, p.80).

There has been considerable engagement with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, if not always with other elements of the theory of gender relations set out in Connell's (1995) formulation, *Masculinities*. Correspondingly, there has been considerable critical engagement with the concept, and the associated body of research. Aspects of the critique of particular relevance to this discussion include, first, the marginalisation of women's perspective in masculinity studies due to the conflation of gender relations and 'hegemonic masculinity' (Schippers, 2007). Second, there has also been a tendency to associate particular traits with hegemonic masculinity, and the hegemonic and other positions (complicit, subordinate, marginalised) with particular groups of men. It has been argued that to do so grants an exaggerated and/or undemonstrated legitimating function to a particular group (for example, trans-national business men, in Elias and Beasley's (2009) critique). Third, the persistent problem of the relation between a normative model

of masculinity which 'embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man' and 'ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832), on the one hand, and the practices of men, on the other, has led several scholars to re-conceptualise 'hegemonic masculinity' as a discursive ideal (Elias and Beasley, 2009). This re-categorisation, undoes the conflation between the non-discursive practices of unequal inter-gender and intra-gender relations and the discursive practices which make masculinity/femininity available as their rationale (Schippers, 2007). The initial formulation identified a global pattern of dominance, which was modified to recognise that gendered power relations operate at local, regional and global levels, in a partial reformulation which also addressed lack of attention to women and to agency among subordinated and marginalised groups (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Nevertheless, the objectivist perspective of the formulation (Moller, 2007, p.264) and the presumption that all types of relation are comprehended in it (Whitehead, 2002, p.91) provides too limited a conceptual space for the dynamic role of perspective, context and intersectionality in empirical engagement with gendered subjectivity. Wetherell and Edley also note 'that the realm of hegemonic masculinity cannot be sealed off from other hegemonic ways of being a person in western societies, such as demonstrating individuality or autonomy from social forces' (1999, p.351) On the other hand, some have claimed a focus on masculinity is too narrow, so Hearn (2004; 2012) has proposed focus on the hegemony of men, their power as a collective and as a category in power. Others have focused on contradictions in experiences of power (Kaufman, 1994).

I want to argue that a focus on masculinity is also too narrow when it subsumes other identifications. A more pluralistic understanding of the implications of intersectionality for gender, and the possibility of envisaging difference without inequality, is referred to in the work of Lister (2004). Intersectionality is addressed in the category of marginalised masculinity but the membership of different groups, according to race, gender, sexuality, for example, is located in too fixed a conceptual

hierarchy. The interconnection of gender, class and race presented by Schippers (2007) also retains a privileging of gender while recognising intersectionality.

Schippers cites the work of Bettie (2003) in the context of outlining intra-gender relations between 'hegemonic femininity', the complement of 'hegemonic masculinity', and 'pariah femininities'. Bettie (2003) found that teachers, administrators and middle class girls derided the performance of femininity by Las Chicas, working-class Mexican-American girls, as failing to qualify them as either good girls or good students. Schippers noted that although reliant on and supporting gender hierarchies, the function of the stigmatization and material sanction observed by Bettie was to establish 'hierarchies of value' on the basis of race and class difference (2007, p.100). Similarly, Gutmann (1996) found that working-class men in Mexico City often participated in childcare, in part in response to economic changes, without compromising their status as men. Men in the higher classes, however, maintain the association of the practice of childcare with femininity and ridicule men who care as not-men. These studies confirmed the intersection of gender with other categories but does not subsume other categories within the category of gender.

Gender pluralism

Thus, 'masculinity' is considered in this thesis as discursively constructed in contending, multiple ways, one of which may be hegemonic to some extent in a context, and the possibility of contestation determined by the power relations of the men and women in that context. As noted above, gender is, analytically, one dimension of subjectivity but lived in intersection with others. The concept of intersectionality refers to the simultaneous, interdependent and cumulative experience of multiple forms of disadvantage of those who live at the intersection of oppressive social categorisations such as gender, race, class, sexuality. While the power of the term to capture oppression must be retained, understanding that subjects are constituted in the simultaneous membership of multiple categories also offers a way of thinking about gender in plural rather than binary terms. Thus, for

example, intersectionality is key to the gender pluralism proposed by Lister (2004) in her discussion of re-gendering citizenship.

Lister critiques the claims to gender neutrality of a citizenship privileging attributes marked as masculine, and men's circumstances, making an explicit connection between citizenship and the issues of paid work and unpaid care work. The interplay of status and practice relevant to enabling participation as a citizen is also relevant to fathers and mothers, and is addressed in terms of the iterative development of rights and resources for participation. It is necessary to have both the legal right and the practical and cultural resources to take paternity leave for example (2004, pp.326-7). As noted above in the discussion of subjectivity, the framework of gender pluralism positions women and men as 'members of multiple groups and/or holders of multiple identities' (2004, p.327). Subjectivity is constituted at the intersection of sexuality, class, religion, ethnic identification, for example (p.332). However, Lister argues for an alliance of pluralism with an attention to equality and to difference and thus for the incorporation of care in the reconstruction of a citizenship in which practices may vary but status is equal and women's and men's participation in all spheres of life enabled.

The relation between context and intersectionality, of gender with other forms of social identity which position the subject within the interaction of a range of discourses, is also key to the importance of recognising a more diverse, flexible (or fluctuating) positioning in relation to constructions of gender than is recognised in Connell's formulation. Given that the meanings of the practice 'at' positions is determined by the relation – of complicity, marginalisation or subordination - to hegemonic masculinity, Connell's conceptualisation of plural masculinities is a plurality of partition rather than multiplicity. It is not one which facilitates, to use Kimmel's terms, the re-construction of masculinities in ways which open up 'a set of possible gendered identities, each different, each equal' (1993, p.35). Furthermore, analyses attentive to intertextuality call into question the usefulness of the terms 'femininity' or 'masculinity' for a performance or configuration of practice which is

always situated 'among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations' (McCall, 2005, p.1771) .

Conclusion to Chapter 6

Ideals of contemporary fatherhood could be understood to have expanded the remit of fathers' responsibilities. Many fathers seek to balance their commitments to the different dimensions of fatherhood and the different dimensions of their lives. In their longitudinal study of 'new fatherhood' Henwood and Procter described how men they interviewed through the transition to fatherhood were largely united in their embrace of the ideal of new fatherhood and the validation of desires to be caring fathers which it offered (2003, p.350). There was some division, however, in the extent to which they were able to realise it as some fathers came up against practical difficulties in combining intensive participation in family work with paid work, leading to feelings of frustration and disappointment. Another source of frustration or withdrawal was a reassertion of 'countervailing values', including an attachment to autonomy (2003, p.348). Henwood and Procter argued for analytic attention to the tensions and complexity in paternal subjectivity, while Finn and Henwood (2009) demonstrated attention to the contradictory positions and mix of identifications in relation to masculinity in men's talk about fatherhood. I have sought, throughout the thesis but particularly in this chapter, to be attentive to tension, complexity and multiple identifications, within a focus on diverse situations, in the accounts of a sample where most have been fathers for several years and the average age of the 63 biological children was 6 years old. Among participants where the passage of time may have brought acceptance of their role, reduced the degree of difference between mothers and fathers in the physical care of children and opened up a range of ways in which fathers might relate to children, there appears to be less frustration in respect of the realisation of an expectation or ideal than described by Henwood and Procter in their sample of fathers in transition to parenthood. Nevertheless, the 'shift from an independent to more relational identity' (2003, p.348) made in becoming fathers, and represented in the ideal of

new, intimate, involved fatherhood, was still a source, if not always of tension, then of ambivalent emotions. Henwood and Procter write of the need conveyed by their interviewees for

> some balancing arrangement whereby they continued to feel valued for family providing, able to maintain areas of psychological separation and difference (personal autonomy), or further erase male-female differences (in power and decision making) in the domestic sphere. (2003, p.351)

Having considered the 'balancing arrangement' between providing, involvement and difference in the parenting partnership in the previous chapter, in this analysis I have considered the balancing acts of fathers in respect of autonomy and gender difference.

Fatherhood, and in particular, involved fatherhood, brought an increased interdependence with partners in meeting the demands of family life and a reduced remit within which fathers, and mothers, feel free to act independently. While this freedom might be sometimes missed, it coexists in accounts with commitment and contentment. Furthermore, while independence and autonomy might have been appropriated to masculinity in accounting for ambivalence, the loss of independence for mothers was also recognised. Furthermore, understanding subjectivity as constituted not in terms of autonomy but through the movement between independence and interdependence (Hollway, 2007) is consistent with fathers' desires not only for autonomy but for connectedness with their partner and as a family.

But these are located in a context. Constraints on their time and freedom of action reflect the opportunities available to participants, their partners and their children, as well as their priorities. As noted in relation to decisions about childbearing, culturally-informed and biographically-inflected beliefs about family, and about the well-being of children and parents, inform the evaluation of resources including time. An understanding of time passing and of situations as dynamic is significant in managing ambivalence, for 'making do' emotionally as well as financially.

Desires for independence and interdependence and for time with children, partners and as a family may be held in tension, or they may be resolved one way or the other for participants. Sometimes the tension is untenable and commitments are re-configured. However, just as for some mothers the longing for freedom or simplicity or spontaneity are acknowledged in the context of commitment to motherhood, if with difficulty (Sevón, 2007; Miller, 2010), so regretted freedom and wished-for intimacy may represent a father's commitment to commitment. They coexist with and they are felt because of a present determination to endure what is hard, knowing 'it will pass' (Harry), and an appreciation of 'the things that matter' (Bob).

Correspondingly, for fathers whose practice of fatherhood crosses 'traditional' gender distinctions an embrace of caring fatherhood may co-exist with moments of disorientation in their relation to normative articulations of 'masculinity' and fatherhood. While ideals of fatherhood were connected by some fathers with resources for moral action, for a caregiver father the norms of fatherhood connecting masculinity and paid work were a demoralising residue. Two participants enacted ambivalence, moments where they seemed to struggle for balance and feel called to account by the contradiction between their representations of their practice, as blurring the boundaries between motherhood and fatherhood, and their commitment to gender difference. Other participants spoke of managing encounters, in public spaces and professional settings, with others' negative perceptions of masculine characteristics which conflicted with their sense of themselves as caring fathers. Situated at the intersection of multiple discourses as subjects of plural identifications, fathers draw on alternative discursive resources, according to the possibilities of the context and their plural orientations, to manage their position in relation to dominant constructions of fatherhood and masculinity and continue to act; the charge of normative constructions of masculinity and fatherhood is felt but, for these fathers, does not paralyse.

In reflecting on the difficulty of bringing into balance the different dimensions of their life, fathers' accounts could be understood to represent 'personal life' (Smart, 2007) and subjectivity as an embodied site of intersections, and of emotions, memory and desire, constituted out of multiple and sometimes contradictory identifications. Thus, this chapter has extended the consideration of participants' perspective on the implications of doing family for doing fatherhood and doing gender in the previous chapter to the implications of doing fatherhood for personal life, and for masculinity practices. The discussion and conclusion of the final chapter of the thesis reflects further on how a focus on doing and undoing gender, incorporated within the analytic framework of understanding doing fatherhood as also doing family, might contribute to the analysis of paternal perspectives on contemporary fatherhood.

Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusion: Doing fatherhood, doing family, un/doing gender

Introduction

Fatherhood is constituted through an array of relations to people, but also to socially circulating meanings. The preceding chapters have sought to represent aspects of the diversity of participants' experience and situations within an analytic framing of fatherhood as a relational practice. Concerns with diversity and relationality are integrated in a broadly conceived analysis of multi-dimensional fatherhood as practised in a range of circumstances. For the dimension discussed in each of the four preceding chapters, elements of fatherhood were identified which were both core to fatherhood and sites of diversity among fathers. These elements were orientations to relationship and responsibility, reflections on experience as a parent and as a child, positioning of practice of fatherhood as similar to or different from motherhood and the sense of balance or ambivalence at the intersection of, first, independence and interdependence and, second, of fatherhood and masculinity. Underpinning and linking the discussion of diversity within each dimension of fatherhood is an analysis of two aspects of relationality. The first of these is the significance of family relationships but with an awareness of the interplay of interconnection and independence in fathers' perspective. The second is relations to discursive constructions of family, fatherhood and motherhood, attentive to the interplay of different positionings within and against socially circulating discourses in fathers' reflexivity.

The significance of the relationships through which fatherhood is constituted is central to each dimension of fatherhood discussed, and a central theme of the thesis as a whole. How participants envisaged the relationship with the child, and the responsibilities entailed in that relationship, were core to men's orientations to fatherhood. Beliefs about children's relationship with others, especially siblings,

were central to the transition to having further children. Also, participants' expectations of the father-child relationship as a father and their evaluation of the father-child relationship as an (adult) child shaped their understanding of the significance of their childhood experience and their vision of their relationship with and responsibility for their own child. In addition, relationships with partners, their timing, character and duration, as well as partners' own orientations to having children were significant for men's transition to fatherhood and for further family formation. Partners were represented by many as very significant in how participants interpreted their childhood experience, by some as facilitating personal transformation through the love, care and mutuality of the relationship and by most as models for and partners – in a range of ways - in parenting. Participants and their partners negotiated what participants' role in family life would be, through discussions but also in the flow of family practices. Not only outcomes but aspirations as to participation in family life varied among participants, in part with their circumstances but also with what each partner in each couple, or former couple, was prepared to put on the table as negotiable.

At the same time, within that relationality participants spoke from specific embodied perspectives within relationships and in relation to meanings. Always conscious of their embeddedness in relationships, they were reflexive about the rewards and repercussions of fatherhood within the life course and for personal life. For example, they reflected on their sense of readiness and the repercussions of fatherhood for their life trajectories in terms of education, employment, the partner relationship or residence. While the significance of partners' to participants' engagement with their parenting heritage was noted, it is also the case that each partner brought their unique biography and unique location within a constellation of relationships to the parenting partnership, as well as to their ongoing sense of what it was to be a child and a parent. Among fathers in this sample, different configurations of practice were associated with different tensions as participants reflected on the balance or lack of it between the different dimensions of fatherhood in their lives. The combination of different situations and aspirations produced

different sources of pressure, such as working to provide or not being able to do so, or investing time in caregiving at the cost of deferring investment in career or vocation. Correspondingly, from their specific perspective and position, some fathers in the sample also spoke of a desire for balance and feelings of ambivalence not only in relation to the dimensions of their practice but in terms of relationships. Some regretted the extent to which the demands of family life reduced time for, and changed the nature of, the partner relationship even as they valued the new relationship with children. As noted, fathers' lives were lived, and desires or regrets felt, from a particular position but within a range of settings and relationships.

The second form of relationality relevant to fatherhood is that participants and their partners faced the different tensions specific to their configuration of practice and their gendered relation to normative constructions of parenthood, mother/fatherhood and femininity/masculinity. Various ways in which gender is done or undone have been described in discussions of the discursive constitution of similarity and difference, the consequences the division of labour, and participants' positioning in relation to masculinity and femininity when. Fathers and mothers whose practice and its meanings contest narrow stereotypes of motherhood and fatherhood are often conscious of gendered normative expectations against which their practice might be judged. Nevertheless, to the extent that there are fathers and mothers whose practice confounds those expectations and call into question such judgements, it is necessary and possible for researchers to recognise and reinforce a broader, as well as more dynamic, understanding of parental responsibility. Thus, in contrast to Doucet's conceptualisation of caregiving fathers' responsibility derived from Ruddick's conceptualisation of maternal responsibilities, fathers' (and mothers') responsibilities in this thesis are conceptualised as potentially incorporating provision but without accepting men's construction of their contribution as fathers which risks the denigration of the domestic. Close, caring relationship with their child is a defining dimension of parental responsibility for participants. But, for many fathers (and their partners) in this study, full-time

caregiving and financial provision are each only a potential dimension of the practice of mothers and fathers.

Participants' accounts suggest a mix of increased flexibility in how the fulfilment of family responsibilities is organised alongside the persistence of the normative charge of expectation around men as (paid) workers and anxieties around masculinity in terms of competence and safety. Equally, they demonstrate fathers' capacity to draw on alternative discursive resources, at least in certain contexts. Feelings of ambivalence prompted by tensions between their practice of fatherhood and representations of masculinity were raised by a few participants who were caregivers or unemployed, both in terms of the problematic 'femininity' of nurturing and domestic work and the failure to achieve 'masculinity' by failing to participate in paid work. Yet, these tensions were able to be addressed from positions available within discourses of new, intimate, involved fatherhood and, in some cases, gender equity. Access to discursive resources vary and the power relations of contexts in which they may be mobilised also vary. However, attention to the contextualised interplay of different positionings in fathers' reflections and a conceptualisation of men's subjectivity as relational and plural offers an alternative to the limited plurality of positions in the theory of hegemonic masculinity and related masculinities.

The significance of diversity, relationality and relations to meanings in participants' accounts points to the need for an analytic approach able to accommodate their significance in respect of the multiple dimensions of contemporary fatherhood. Such an approach would, first, recognise core aspects of fatherhood which are also sites of diversity. This diversity is seen in the variation in what fathers (are able to) do, what they desire to do and how they feel about what they do. Second, the approach would engage with the different forms of relationality relevant to fatherhood, including relationships with parents, children, mothers and others, but also the constitution of fatherhood with reference to the discursively constituted relations between terms parent/child, motherhood/fatherhood, and

masculinity/femininity. Thirdly, this would involve considering the interplay of interconnection and independence in relationality and how this interplay constructs difference between men and women. The interplay is between fathers' place in family life and their embodied perspective on it, as well as the place of family in a father's life and a man's reflexive sense of self both as father and beyond fatherhood. Another relevant form of interplay is that of the multiple positionings in fathers' relation to discourses of fatherhood and masculinity. Finally, such an approach would seek to conceptualise fatherhood in ways which are not dependent on either the presence or the subordination of mothers, and which do not rule out the potential for a symmetrical analysis of motherhood. It would remain open to the potential in parenting for de-gendering of practice, recognising gendered inequities without reinscribing difference as purely gendered or simply oppositional. I argue that the framework of doing family, doing fatherhood, un/doing gender developed in the course of this research offers one such approach and one that facilitates analytic attention to the complexity and the diversity of the relationality and multi-dimensionality of fatherhood.

In this chapter I elaborate further on the analytic framework for understanding fathers' practice that I developed during the process of producing my research findings. This framework analyses fathers' practice in terms of doing fatherhood and doing family, incorporating an analysis of doing and undoing gender. I highlight the significance of this framework in reviewing the arguments of Chapters 3-6, before arguing that this framework has generated a conceptualisation of fathers' practice, in terms of the interconnection between relationship and responsibility, which can contribute to the academic discussion of the de-gendering of parenting practice, and the contingent character of fatherhood.

It is a theme of much recent literature on fatherhood that neither fatherhood nor fathers' practice can be considered in isolation. Fathers are constituted as such through family relationships. Relationships among members of a family, whatever its structure, are reciprocal and the influence of one family member on another is

both direct and, through each member's impact on other members, indirect (Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004). Although relationship with and responsibility for children, independently or jointly with a partner, is only one form of doing family, it is in the context of that form that the fathers in this sample also do fatherhood. Neither family nor fatherhood is understood as fixed, unitary or definitively bounded. Relationships and relations between family members are dynamic, constituted through interaction and subject to ongoing evaluation and adjustment through time and in the face of changing conditions. However, it is necessary to make an analytic distinction between the perspectives of different members within a configuration of family relationships. Some research, on the benefits of father involvement, or time use, for example, examines fathers' part in family life but not necessarily fathers' perspective or experience. However, paternal perspectives on fathers' part in family life and the place of family in fathers' lives, are central to the concerns of this study. The framework first developed out of and then shaped the analysis presented in the thesis.

In concluding Chapter 3, I linked an analytic perspective which understood fathers' practice as simultaneously doing family and fatherhood with Morgan's (1996) re-conceptualisation of the object of study in the sociology of the family as 'family practices' and Smart's proposal of 'personal life' as a field of study. Exploring some of the theoretical implications of these positions, and engaging with theorisations of gender, I have developed in this thesis a tri-partite conceptualisation of 'doing fatherhood' as a framework for analysis. First, doing fatherhood is about fathers' perspectives on 'doing family' and participation in family life. Being a father is a relational status in that a man enacts fatherhood in relation to a particular child or children and, through their relationship to the same child(ren), to a mother. But being a father for participants in this study was also about actively 'doing family' in that it was about having children, establishing and sustaining relationships with children, and, where partnered, with partners as mothers. It was about, either as lone fathers or together with their partner, securing the well-being of those they understood to be family members through the relational, social, and economic

resources brought to the family by its members. Doing fatherhood is about fathers'
part in, but also their perspective on, these processes and the family they construct.
Thus, doing family and doing fatherhood are inextricably interconnected in their
relational and practical aspects, but fathers are both part of and reflecting on family
life, both connected and distinct. In thinking about the relation of doing fatherhood
to doing family, and of the dimensions of fatherhood to other life dimensions, I
draw on Smart's conceptualisation of 'personal life' as 'always already part of the
social'. She argues that 'the very possibility of personal life is predicated upon a
degree of self-reflection and also connectedness with others' (2007, p.28).

The second aspect of this conceptualisation of the analysis of fatherhood is attention
to the place of meanings and visions of family for men and the place of family in
fathers' lives and understandings of fatherhood. Fathers' part in family life has
implications for the configuration of their practice as fathers, but also for the relation
of dimensions of fatherhood, such as caregiving or paid work for the purposes of
financial provision, to other dimensions of personal life, such as leisure and career.
The interconnectedness of doing family and doing fatherhood is clear in that the
distribution of investments, responsibilities and labour between parents may affect,
but also reflect, the distribution of a father's investments and time between family-
related and other activities.

The third element of the framework is that the analytic focus is on the construction
of fatherhood rather than family. It is confined to fathers' perspective and the scope
of their perspective includes but is not confined to family life. As discussed in
Chapter 5, fatherhood is relational, not only in terms of the relation to other family
members, but always also in relation to dominant and alternative discursive
constructions, of parent/child, motherhood/fatherhood, and femininity/masculinity.
The nature of the relation discursively constituted between mothers and fathers, by
fathers and others, may be more, or less, oppositional, and more, or less,
hierarchical. For this reason, to do family and fatherhood is also to do, or undo,
gender. In the first section of this chapter, I will consider in further detail the

relevance of Morgan's theory of family practices (1996, 2011) and of Smart's conceptualisation of personal life (2007) for the analytic framework of doing family, doing fatherhood, before considering the connection with doing gender. In the second section, I highlight the significance of this framework in reviewing the arguments of Chapters 3-6. I conclude by arguing, in Section 3, that considering how fathers do fatherhood and do family offers a way of understanding the interconnections between relationship and responsibility in fatherhood which contributes to debates both in relation to the potential for and of de-gendering parenting practice, and in respect of the contingent character of fatherhood.

Section 1 Doing family, doing fatherhood: Family practices and personal life

Doing family and family practices.

Thinking about fatherhood in terms of doing family supports recognition of the located and particular practical, ethical, and motivational context in which participants understand their culturally-mediated visions and decisions about family life. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, family life with children was understood by many fathers to offer a place to realise the self within relationships in specific ways; fathers I interviewed spoke of giving and receiving unconditional love, and the fulfilment found in children's dependence on them, for example. Doing fatherhood may be more or less embedded in the relationships and power dynamics of a parenting couple, on the one hand, and the wider extended family on the other. The latter may be more salient for lone and non-resident fathers.

In an early response to the implications of social change for studying families, Morgan proposed that 'family was to be seen as less of a noun and more of an adjective, or, possibly, a verb' (1999, p.16). He sought to recognise the elements of the active ('doing' family), the everyday, the regularities alongside fluidity in the socially and historically located process of constituting family. From this perspective, family 'represents a constructed quality of human interaction or an

active process rather than a thing-like object of detached social investigation' (1999, p.16). Attention to the everyday in Morgan's conceptualisation resonates with participants' perspectives on the practicalities of family life at the intersection of multiple and not always compatible demands. I noted in Chapter 4 that family life is a flow of practice and that there were many references to what fathers *do*.

Morgan recently described family practices as reflexive practices which construct and reproduce family boundaries, family relationships as well as discursive notions of family in general (Morgan, 2011, p.163). Although I write predominantly in this thesis of the perspective of participants on their immediate family, participants' usage of the terms 'family' in the interview was flexible and contextualised, as was their use of 'parent' discussed in Chapter 6. They referred to having children with a partner as having or starting a family. Some implicitly, and others explicitly, indicated that it is children which convert a couple to a family. In addition, family was frequently used as an a adjective with reference to this period where children are young, in references to 'family person', 'family home', 'family dynamic' etc., or to an adult's family history or background. However, their usage also referred to extended family and intergenerational relationships. Participants constructed 'family' in a range of ways, incorporating stepchildren, inserting children into wider kin networks, including or excluding their own or others' new partners. Sometimes, friends were granted honorary status as family; sometimes family members were described as failing to behave like family.

The family practices approach links history and biography in that practices are shaped by societal and legal prescriptions, economic constraints and cultural definitions (Morgan, 2011, pp.5-7). There has been debate among scholars over the last two decades as to whether it is possible for the term 'family', with its associations with normative, gendered and exclusionary models of the nuclear family, to recognise the expansion in the way in which people live out family. One argument for retaining the concept of family is the discursive weight the term 'family' bears in policy and legal contexts. Political deployment of the term family

requires sociological critique where class differences are constructed in hierarchical terms and where justification of punitive measures stigmatise individuals rather than addressing systemic inequality (Gillies, 2009; Edwards and Gillies, 2012). Morgan argues for the retention of the term 'family' on the basis that it is generally meaningful to people, potentially inclusive, and often deployed flexibly and concretely, as noted of this sample above, so that it remains meaningful in the face of changes and diversity in family structures (1996, p.29). McCarthy, too, emphasises 'the importance of paying attention to everyday language and the topical concepts through which social actors construct their social worlds and give meanings to their experiences' (2012, p.69), while maintaining a critical orientation to the context and consequences of such constructions. This is a second argument for retaining the concept of family alongside those developed by scholars to broaden understandings of relational life, such as intimacy (see Jamieson, 1998), and kinship (Mason, 2008).

Morgan's conceptualisation does not, in principle, privilege understandings of practice as about family over other readings. Morgan wrote that 'family' 'is not a thing but a way of looking at, and describing, practices which might also be described in a variety of other ways' (Morgan, 1996, p.199). Family practices are always able to be viewed from an alternative perspective, in this thesis as fatherhood practices and also as gender practices. The conceptual potential for the doubling of perspectives on practice is central to the conceptualisation of doing fatherhood as incorporating doing family.

Doing fatherhood and 'personal life'

As noted above, I suggest that Smart's conceptualisation of 'personal life' offers a way of thinking about the relation of doing fatherhood to doing family, and of the dimensions of fatherhood to other life dimensions. Smart, in *Personal Life* (2007), proposes a conceptualisation of 'personal life' as an extension of 'family practices', conceived in opposition to the 'autonomous individual' of neo-liberal or individualisation theories, somewhat as the concept of 'family practices' seeks to

transcend structural functionalist conceptions of 'the family'. Smart sets out eight dimensions of her usage of the term 'personal life' (2007, pp.28-29). It is used in contradistinction to 'individual', invokes the embeddedness and connectedness of the subject in the social, and is predicated on a degree of self-reflection and connectedness with others. Secondly, it is an analytical statement. Third, the concept incorporates the 'life project' but subject to structure and history rather than individually crafted by free-floating, well-resourced agents. Fourthly, it does not hierarchise biological kin, or family, over friends. Fifth, personal life is in motion rather than static and is, sixthly, a site of interconnections between domains; it is cumulative and 'flows through systems of education, or work, or elsewhere'. Seventh, The concept recognises dimensions such as sexuality, bodies, emotions and intimacy. Finally, it does not invoke one dominant model of family and is attentive to difference through cultural tradition, habitus, memories and generational transmission (2007, pp.28-29).

There are specific elements of the embeddedness of fathers in the social: the distinctive emotional, psychological, social and legal bonds of the parent-child relation, whether biological or not; the significance of the mother's relation with both child and father for the practice and experience of fatherhood, and, as already noted, a father's positioning in relation to normative discourses of fatherhood and family. Nevertheless, Smart's delineation of the 'field' of personal life recognises the relationality and the multi-dimensionality within which fathers live and constitute fatherhood. I have noted already the relevance of attention to self-reflection and connectedness with others for understandings of fatherhood. In addition, 'personal life' as a site of interconnections between domains resonates with fathers' accounts of multi-dimensional fatherhood.

Personal life is lived in many different places and spaces, it is cumulative (through memory, history and the passage of time) and it forms a range of connections, thus making it flexible rather than brittle and breakable. So, personal life is not so concerned with boundary marking and provides the possibility of tracing its flows

through systems of education, or work, or elsewhere (2007, p.29). Men co-constitute fatherhood through relationships with children and partners and doing family at home, at school, on expeditions, for example. They may also represent themselves as fathers in other places and times of personal life, such as the work-place or during activities such as music or sport. They do so at the intersection of contesting, discursively constituted, meanings which are differently privileged in different places and times. As 'family practices' might be seen to intersect with 'personal life' without encompassing it (Morgan, 2011, pp.39, 176), 'doing fatherhood' can be understood to extend, to varying extents for different domains and different fathers, into other life domains, but without encompassing them.

Un/doing gender and de-gendering parenting

I noted in Chapter 1 the focus of feminist and feminist-inspired research on the ways in which, in doing family and fatherhood, men are also doing gender. In West and Zimmerman's (1987) formulation, gender is an 'emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements' (p.126) which seem 'natural' where behaviour, men's 'dominance' and women's 'deference', for example (p.146), is in accord with the normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Morgan defined social action as accountable: 'it is orientated to others, their expectations and our expectations of their expectations and […] it is accountable' (2011, p.163). Other family researchers have identified ways in which mothers and fathers are held accountable to (classed) normative conceptions of parenting (Lawler, 2000; Gillies, 2009). West and Zimmerman theorise subjects as 'managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category' (1987, p.127), arguing that '[t]o "do" gender is not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in behavior at the risk of gender assessment' (1987, p.137).

'Doing gender' and 'doing family' both sustain a sense of the active processes of construction through routine, everyday interaction, as well as institutional practices,

and locate the significance of taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life in 'wider systems of meaning' (Morgan, 1996, p.190). However, Morgan's conceptualisation of family practices incorporates recognition and facilitation of more inclusive understandings of family so that the term family is not inherently oppressive. In contrast, it has been argued that West and Zimmerman's analysis of how interaction enacts and sustains gender difference as gender inequality does not allow for recognition of interactions which are not oppressive, or of subsequent changes in understandings of gender which offer an alternative to the hierarchical and oppositional conceptions of gender difference (Deutsch, 2007).

One of the foci of theories of gender is the explanation of the logic of legitimation of persistent inequalities of power between men and women through the construction of hierarchised binaries, in the work of de Beauvoir (1993, orig. 1949) and subsequent French feminists, for example. This is also an element of theories of gender with a focus on masculinities (and femininities), such as that set out by Connell in *Masculinities* (1995) where intra-gender relations are primarily defined in relation to the opposition between genders. While West and Fenstermaker, in elaborating the conceptualisation of 'doing gender', represent gender difference as invariant (1993, p.159), another focus is theorising gender relations in ways which incorporate the possibility of contradictory energies, resistance, alternative perspectives or change.

I will discuss the undoing of gender and de-gendering further below, but set out here three aspects of the conceptualisation of 'doing gender' which have implications for understanding how alternative ways of doing gender might be recognised and facilitated: the discursive nature of normative conceptions, the potential for pluralism in intersectionality, and the uneven consequences of wider social change for accountability. First, as widely circulating ideas are an element of the process of doing gender, the development and acceptance of ideas about gender equality may affect the doing of gender as the production of inequality. This is acknowledged by West and Zimmerman in respect of changes in the law addressing

gender discrimination (2009, p.117). Discourses may interact to re-construct elements relevant to conceptions of gender, as in the case of rejection of the authoritarian father in both authoritative parenting and 'new' fatherhood'. There may also be clashes in normative expectations created by contradictions in social discourses which prompt changes in behaviour. For example, women's understandings of their participation in paid work affect women's expectations of fathers' practice (Williams, 2008). A range of ethical positions may be able to motivate and regulate conduct, such as men's primary caregiving, even with consciousness of other, more conventional or predominant norms (Doucet, 2006).

Second, the 'normative system' is not 'free-floating' as West and Zimmerman point out (2009, p.118), but neither is it unitary or uni-directional (Butler, 2004, p.217). As discussed in respect of the theorisation of masculinity by Connell and colleagues in the previous chapter, the doing of gender and the normative purchase of different representations of gender are mediated by intersectionality and the diversity in perspective and context it produces. West and Fenstermaker (1995), in line with others' developing recognition of intersectionality, acknowledge the simultaneity of gender, race, class and other divisions in experience and interactions and in generating difference and dominance, forms of inequality and their legitimation. Furthermore, Edwards *et al* (2009) point out that, for young fathers, separated and divorced fathers, fathers from minority ethnic and immigrant groups, working-class fathers, new fathers, gay fathers, and fathers of children with special needs, diversity in fathers' situations and practice is, in part, the product of conditions of adversity. Inequalities among fathers, and between more and less advantaged families, are both material and produced in the context of pervasive but contradictory discourses of fatherhood and family which construct positions to which fathers have different degrees of access (Gillies, 2009) and which have had an uneven impact on media and policy representations of fathers (Gregory and Milner, 2011). However, acknowledging the uneven distribution of discursive resources, Lister (2004), argues for the potential of intersectionality for gender pluralism as an alternative to gender binaries in her work on women's citizenship. She proposes a

multi-dimensional approach which is attentive to issues of equality and to difference within the framework of a gender pluralism which positions women and men as 'members of multiple groups and/or holders of multiple identities' (2004, p.327). Rather than de-gendering, however, Lister writes of re-gendering and the incorporation of care in the reconstruction of a citizenship in which practices may vary but status is equal, a goal which would also entail a reconstruction of the relationship between practise, power and status and address issues of the mobilisation of difference between social categories in the service of power.

A third potential source of change in gender accountability is the consequences of wider social changes for the relation of paid work and unpaid work in men's lives (Coltrane, 1995). Both women's widespread participation in the labour market and widely circulated ideals of participative fatherhood contribute to more egalitarian conceptions of gender and parenting (Hølter, 2007). Sullivan argues for attention to small changes, a long view on the potential of the "slow dripping of change" to dissolve existing structures (2004, p.209, see also Ranson, 2012) and for a multi-level analysis of change in gender consciousness and practices. An attention to the subtleties of incremental change offers a valuable alternative to (constant) characterisations of crisis, although the complex and contextualised interaction of factors may pull in different directions. Bianchi and Milkie (2010) noted that the rational use of resources was proposed as an explanation for the narrowing gap between men and women's family work and the persistence of traditional gendering of the division of labour for it not narrowing further. Coltrane argued that further shifts in the general sense of what behaviours were appropriate to men and women brought no guarantees of gender equality (1995, p.273). While the language of many contemporary fathers appears to be converging around the vocabulary of 'new', 'intimate' and 'involved' fatherhood, the diversity in understanding and practice found in the research reviewed in Chapter 1 confirms that the hallmark of slow change interacting with existing diversity is further diversification. Furthermore, in relation to fatherhood, the practices of intimate care of children, or the commitment to equal parenting may be valued in some settings if

not in others. When situations are pressed into doing gender, the relative power (and the form of power) of subjects in an interaction, a job interview, for example, is relevant (Hølter, 2007).

A key issue in the question of whether gender is ever undone is whether the construction of difference is always and only able to be mobilised for the production of inequality. Deutsch has argued for the possibility that gender is not omnirelevant in all contexts and for attention to be paid to social processes that underlie resistance against conventional gender relations' and to 'how we can undo gender' (2007, p.107). Risman (2009) advocates recognition of those attitudinal, legal, social changes which promote and support greater equality between men and women as an undoing of gender, albeit alongside recognition of continuing inequalities, and rejects the recuperation of de-gendered or less gendered practice into a catalogue of proliferating masculinities or femininities. Although widely circulating discursive constructions of masculinity/ femininity are material for normative conceptions mobilised in doing gender, I also reject the characterisation of a configuration of practice (Connell, 1995) as a form of masculinity. As noted in Chapter 6, I would term the making of the links between a sense of self and discursive representations of masculinity as 'masculinity practices', following Morgan's formulation of family practices as being those which are constructed as being about or constructing family. It is notable that Doucet (2006) found that the efforts of primary caregiver fathers to account for masculinity entailed offsetting less 'appropriate' practices by the appropriation to 'masculinity' of those which confirmed gender competence (Connell, 2002).

Some feminists have proposed the strategy of de-gendering with the end of gender as its goal (Lorber, 2000). However, the goal was situated by Lorber beyond a present in which feminists inhabit the tension between challenging the inequitable effects of differentiation, and thus 'producing' difference, and rejecting the causes of difference (2000, p.86). Connell wrote that the necessity to 'assert difference and degendering at the same time' was unavoidable (1995, pp.233-4). Processes

mentioned by Connell - degendering, recomposition, recombination and regendering - are now, in certain ways in certain places, already part of the practice of a postmodern, globalised society, although they do not necessarily contribute to social justice, and may be recuperated by dominant interests (see Demetriou, 2001, on hybridisation). The strategies set out by Lorber are of relevance to the possibility of de-gendering parenting practices: undermining binaries, attention to intersectionality, non-gendering of practices and de-gendering of 'instrumental tasks' (2000, p.88).

However, to envisage the de-gendering of a practice, or a cluster of practices such as parenting, is not to necessarily be able to envisage the unequivocal de-gendering of the men and women who engage in it in variously gendered ways. Practices and intersubjectivities are sites of intersection for a range of meanings 'sedimented over time' (Hollway, 1989). Furthermore, as noted in the literature review, the undoing of gender in one way coexists with, prompts, the doing of gender in other ways, or by others (Chesley, 2001; Ranson, 2010; Hochshild and Machung, 1989). Risman's reference to the possibility that 'it is perhaps often the case that at the same moment people are undoing some aspects of gender and doing others' (2009, p. 83) resonates with an understanding of subjects in interactions situated in context and also at the intersection of multiple related discourses.

Deutsch proposes the use of 'the phrase "undoing gender" to refer to social interactions that reduce gender difference' (2007, p.122). This formulation doesn't precisely address the detail of West and Zimmerman's conceptualisation of 'doing gender', it is not a symmetrical formulation, and raises the question of what is undone in undoing gender. Is what is undone, as might correspond to West and Zimmerman's formulation, the link between behaviour and sex category to the point that the availability of that practice to be deployed in the production of unequal gender is reduced? In such cases, other meanings of practices might be produced (Shove *et al*, 2012). How might the de-gendering of the practices of parenting shift the terms of accountability in respect of gender and, at the same

time, in respect of parenting and doing family, so that how mothers and fathers are able and required to account for themselves as good parents is changed? Studies with fathers who consider their parenting to be equivalent to that of their partners have examined how de-gendering of practice drives a re-gendering, or not, of the relation of fatherhood to motherhood and 'masculinity' to 'femininity' (Chesley, 2011; Ranson, 2010). If there is an undoing of the tie of a given practice to the production of inequality in a parenting partnership, the consequences for the practice and for gender depends on the nature of re-gendering, in the relationship and in relations with others and institutions. If doing gender as the production of inequality is the construction of hierarchical oppositional difference, a re-gendering which does not produce inequality requires the construction, advocated by Gutterman in the excerpt below, of alternative, non-hierarchical, non-oppositional relations of difference.

> I accept that identity is relational (i.e., what I am or claim to be is rooted in making distinctions from what I am not). However, I also believe that this recognition of difference does not need to be perceived as indicative of otherness […]. Indeed, the goal I am advocating is an intervention in the process where difference is transformed into otherness. (Gutterman, 1994, p.221)

In the case of an expanded repertoire for men's parenting and an increasing overlap in the possible responsibilities of mothers and fathers in family life, for example, a reinstatement of hierarchical binaries, through an appropriation of parental authority to an identification with 'masculinity', preserves the oppressive character of gender (Finn and Henwood, 2009). A reciprocal investment in an acceptance of commonality alongside an acceptance of differentiation which is not hierarchical might be the basis for a de-gendered parenting practised by father and mothers within a re-gendered relation. As with gender inequality, a re-gendered relation must be continually reproduced at an interactional and institutional level across diverse contexts. The capacity to do so will vary with the resources, emotional, discursive and material, available and required in the different social interactions and contexts in which fathers do fatherhood.

Section 2   Family/fatherhood: paternal perspectives

In reviewing the arguments of the thesis I will now bring out the shifting focus on doing family, doing fatherhood and un/doing gender in the analysis of accounts of becoming and being fathers. I noted in the Introduction to the thesis that, to the extent that there are extended repertoires for organising paid and unpaid work and for doing fatherhood notionally available in Western societies, participants worked through the meanings of their family practices in relation to change and continuity in family practices around them. In this thesis I have analysed how fathers account for their practice and negotiate potentially contending understandings of what is best for themselves, their partner, their children and the family as a whole. In doing so, they engage with contemporary ideals as reference points in relation to the different dimensions of fatherhood which have been arenas of 'slow' change (Sullivan, 2004) and diversification. In my analysis of data in each of these arenas I identified pairs of interconnected aspects of fathers' construction of fatherhood: relationship/responsibility in relation to becoming a father; parent/child in relation to intergenerational change and parent-child relationships; similarity/difference in relation to the parenting partnership and the multi-dimensionality of fathers' practice, and balance/ambivalence in considering the implications of changes in fatherhood for practices of masculinity.

These pairs of terms are not intended to map onto each other exactly, or each term to have the same relation to the other in each pair. They are intended to represent inter-related, even inseparable, aspects, both of which figure in all participants' accounts. For example, responsibility is generated in the context of relationship, but it is not identical with relationship. Furthermore, the first term could be said to represent a point of greater commonality through the sample, sometimes as a shared aspiration or model, and the second an area of greater diversity among the sample. For example, although there was overlap in the aspirations for their parenting, participants' accounts of childhood and their parenting heritage varied considerably. This approach to understanding the multi-dimensionality of

fatherhood, the complexity of participants' accounts and the commonality and diversity within them through an analytic movement between inter-related aspects of participants' construction of fatherhood is framed within a multi-dimensional focus on the interconnected pair, family/fatherhood.

Considering how doing family shapes the practice of fatherhood is consistent with the centrality of ideas of family to the aspirations and concerns of very many participants, but also allows for variation, according to situation or orientation, in their salience for fathers.   In this sample the variation includes participants' different situations in relation to the labour market and the different family structures within which they do fatherhood. Furthermore, both the aspirations of family life and the achievement of them are also affected by class differences in resources and education. A pragmatic approach, and the structural conditions which shape what is pragmatic, interact with emotional and moral commitments in the evaluation of available resources.

Relationship/responsibility

In Chapter 3 the focus is on orientations to fatherhood and the centrality of ideas of family relationships, envisaged and existing, in accounts of becoming a father. Partner relationships and partners' orientations to having children were the context and, in some cases, the motivation for participants' orientations to fatherhood. For some, becoming a father was a clear vision, for others an assumption about the future. For those for whom conception took time or was uncertain, the desire to have children was brought into sharper focus. For others, where conception was unanticipated, feelings about fatherhood may be suddenly and compellingly salient. The relation to building a career varied according to the timing of partner relationship and conception, and in relation to first and further children. However, whether or not they had been able or seeking to do so before becoming fathers, from the point of intended or apprehended conception, participants spoke of seeking to put in place and sustain the conditions of security for family life, financial provision, housing and caregiving, in whatever form or combination of forms. Fathers traced

the personal history of their orientation to fatherhood and considered family responsibilities both in terms of their own part in meeting them and how they would do fatherhood within the collective doing of family.

However actively sought, having a child inaugurated a new parent-child relationship, re-configured a father's relationship with the child's mother, and established new responsibilities. Responsibilities as well as the relationships in which they were generated were sometimes embraced by participants who liked to be depended on or, as reported by participants, by couples as a development of their life together. The association of relationship and responsibility in fatherhood is demonstrated by participants whose response to unanticipated conception outside of an established partnership was to identify the need to become financial providers and role models. It is also demonstrated by those participants who had resisted the responsibilities of family life, and the incursion into their personal life as it existed, but who described a transition to seeing a child in terms of a 'person' with whom they would be in relationship as well as for whom they would be (jointly) responsible.

Discussions of becoming a father and having further children were filled with envisaged family relationships, understandings of family responsibilities and of family resources, including the practical and financial support of wider family available to some participants but not able to be addressed in detail in the thesis. The evaluation of resources varied both with access to resources, anticipated access to resources in the future and classed expectations of lifestyle and childrearing. Hence, some chose not to 'make do', some 'made do' in the meantime in order to have the family they desire, and some appeared to expect to always 'get by' on limited resources.

Evaluations of resources for having children or further children, and for family life, were informed by visions of desired family life which included understandings of relational needs, such as the benefit to children of siblings or the pleasures of a rich, vibrant family dynamic. Smart's conceptualisation of personal life as 'embedded in

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both sedimented structures and the imaginary' (2007, p.28) resonates with elements of fantasy and desire, for a 'natural' or 'fateful' conception and for the financial freedom to give oneself up to family life with lots of children, which invoke cultural idealisations of family as untouched by instrumentalism (Gillis, 2004, p.990). These desires positioned full-time participants as relational beings and as family-oriented but also reflected tensions between ideals of family and the pressures of the practical demands of family life. They reflect personal motivations and emotions but are also visions of experience shared with partners and visions of family.

Parent/child

The construction of personal history, of the narrative links between past and future in the present and intergenerational relations between parents and children, was the principal focus of Chapter 4. The personal, cumulative biographical dimension of subjectivity and personal life in participants' representations of fatherhood are foregrounded, but in the context of reflections on family practice. The interplay of the positions of parent and child were analysed in considering fathers' perspectives on the family practices of their families of origin and on the family in which they are a father. Participants reflected on the nature of the parent-child relationship, their personal responsibilities as parents or fathers to their children and the implications of their reflections for how they configure the different dimensions, such as caregiving and financial provision, of fatherhood.

Some fathers referred to taking on a child's perspective in order to understand how to act or not act in accordance with their ideals for parent-child interaction. Memories and remembered emotions, a sense of their family and family stories and myths as formative but not determinative, as significant but also subject to evaluation and revision. Consistent with Morgan's theorisation of family practices, and in an example of an active process of constructing the meanings of family life, participants re-contextualised the elements of the heritage they wished to take up and spoke of transforming those which they rejected. Many understood transformation to be possible through a substitution of positive for negative

elements drawn from contemporary ideals of new, intimate and involved fatherhood, and personal relationships, to build close, nurturing parent-child relationships in which fathers are protectors but also companions to children. Both the dynamism of the life course, and the inter-relation of memory, generation and cultural transmission, noted by Smart (2007, pp.29-30) are relevant to how the doubled perspective of parent and child engaged with generational difference but also historical as well as personal change.

Similarity/difference, mother/father

In Chapter 5, I considered how fathers' accounts might be said to construct the conceptual relation between motherhood and fatherhood in characterising the parenting partnership in the interview. One participant identified a division in the areas for which mothers and fathers are fundamentally, respectively, accountable which reflects the gendered 'moral' responsibilities noted by Doucet (2006, pp.91-2). They are derived from a culturally-rooted construction of the division of responsibilities for care and for financial provision between women and men as complementary, a construction which occludes the inequality in power and rewards between paid and unpaid work. By contrast, potential in (although not entailed in) 'new' fatherhood are the premises – shared commitment, shared responsibility and equal capacity – for egalitarian parenting. These premises were linked to understandings of justice and equality of opportunity in relation to the demands and rewards of parenting mentioned by participants who emphasised the similarity of approach between partners.

The terms in which some fathers in complementary partnerships represented gender suggest that understandings of justice and equality of opportunity which underpin gender egalitarian approaches may shape the relation of motherhood to fatherhood even where the distribution of responsibilities is more traditionally gendered. Some participants represented what was distinctive in their partner's practice as a contribution which they admired and might emulate without describing it in gendered terms. Others referred to stereotypical attributes or

commonly found practices of mothers in ways which constructed difference as gendered, sometimes with reference to the effect of different roles but sometimes to innate or entrenched difference between men and women.

However, while recognising gendered differences in the consequences of the division of labour, most participants (with two exceptions) only implicitly presented the division of labour as the consequence of gender per se, in that the desire to have children or to care full-time for their children might be part of their partner's cumulative, culturally-embedded, biography. Some participants denied that apparently traditionally gendered organisation of family life reflected traditional values or assumptions about gender roles. By contrast, in two cases, I noted the persistence of traditionally gendered moral commitments which drive complementarity in partnerships, even where one partner might desire greater commonality.

Gender is done, or undone, in respect of the consequences of fathers' and mothers' involvement in family work for their participation in other activities, and in paid work in particular (Doucet, 2006, p.233). The second focus of Chapter 5 was to examine the interconnectedness of the parenting partnership, in terms of the organisation of paid and unpaid labour, the configuration of participants' practice and the consequences for participants' personal lives at the intersection of the different dimensions of family life, paid work and vocation. Financial provision was represented as less fundamental to fatherhood than personal relationships. With the important exception of some non-earning fathers, it was generally positioned within the broad scope of participants' parental responsibility, as, in principle, a joint parental responsibility. I argued in Chapter 5 for discussions of fatherhood to incorporate recognition of the place of financial provision in mothers' practice. However, the persistence of the normative requirement on citizens to work (Dermott, 2008) and for fathers to earn was conveyed by participants who did not satisfy them but whose partners did. The meanings of such norms are contextualised, and their force may vary across situations and settings. For

participants in employment the responsibility for financial provision was a source of meaning in paid work for some, where it was not subsumed in existing commitment to career; for lone fathers in this sample it was replaced by a vocation of solo care, drawing on the ideals of nurturing, involved fatherhood where responsibility is located in sustaining close, strong family relationships.

Balance/ambivalence, fatherhood/masculinity

In Chapter 6 the consideration of participants' perspective on the implications of doing family for doing fatherhood and doing gender, summarised above, was extended to a consideration of the implications of doing fatherhood for personal life, and for masculinity practices. Speaking of the impact of an increased interdependence of their lives with their partners' in sustaining the relationships and fulfilling the related responsibilities of family life, some participants expressed regret at the reduced remit within which to act independently or spontaneously, for themselves or with their partners. Expressions of regret extended to loss, or lack, of connection, and were represented as coexisting with commitment and contentment to fatherhood. I note here the contrasting experience of non-resident fathers who had sought or were seeking to take on the financial and/or caregiving responsibilities of fatherhood. I also suggested that while independence and autonomy have been associated with the masculine poles of gender binaries and thus might have been appropriated to masculinity in accounting for ambivalence (and may be in other contexts), this link was not made in the interviews, and the loss of independence, and narrowing of life dimensions, was acknowledged to also affect mothers.

Nevertheless, in respect of 'masculine' fatherhood (or fatherhood as distinct from motherhood), there were references to the ways in which contemporary and 'traditional' constructions of fatherhood align with or diverge from discursive associations of masculinity with authority or paid work. The analysis traced the persistence of the normative conceptions of gender referred to by West and Zimmerman, but also the diversification of discursive resources which, in some

contexts, allow fathers to take up alternative positions in relation to them. Fathers whose practice of fatherhood led to moments of disorientation in their relation to normative articulations of 'masculinity' and fatherhood recovered it, in the interview, through reference to elements of other discourses, such as valuing of caregiving, the inclusiveness of a potentially de-gendered parenting or a de-naturalising of stereotypes. Also, even those deploying identifications with masculinity as a resource in constructing a paternal remit for action did so in specific ways and alongside egalitarian orientations to caregiving and domestic labour already articulated in the interview. Alternative discursive resources may provide, if not a nullification of normative conceptions of the 'traditionally' gendered link between fatherhood and financial provision, and between masculinity and authority, then a counterweight to them through the possibility of accounting for behaviour according to alternative moral claims, such as gender equity and an ethic of care.

Just as not all participants referred to tension between paid work and family work (or paid work and vocation), as discussed in Chapter 5, only some referred to conflict or ambivalent feelings in respect of responsibilities of fatherhood and other dimensions of personal life, or their practice of fatherhood and constructions of masculinity. Some whose practice was alternative did not reflect on or enact ambivalence in relation to 'masculinity' but emphasised, rather, the dismantling of difference. Nevertheless, the persistence of perceptions of masculine threat, on the one hand, and of perceptions of incompetence or lack of involvement on the other, remain part of the social context within which involved fathers do fatherhood and seek to, in respect of the responsibilities and relationships of parenthood, undo gender. Associations with sexual risk in perceptions of fathers, noted in Chapter 6, echoed participants' perceptions of the risks from men faced by daughters noted in Chapter 4.

Section 3   De/gendered parenting and non/contingent fatherhood

De-gendered practices, de-gendered parenting?

Participant accounts point to a dynamic and complex mix of change and continuity and the relation between paid work and caregiving was not constructed in the interview as either oppositional or hierarchical.   However, in relation to questions of gendered moral accountability, the diversity in participants' account, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, again suggests recourse to a diverse set of normative conceptions. I referred in Chapter 1 to the question of whether fathers' endorsement of contemporary ideals of fatherhood noted by Henwood and Procter (2003) indicated a change in 'the normative system involved in gender accountability' for fatherhood through 'changes in persons' orientation to these norms and changes in social relations' (West and Zimmerman, 2009:118). This endorsement was confirmed in this sample, if with more consistency in respect of involvement in children's lives than shared responsibility with mothers.   As discussed in Chapter 5, in relation to financial provision and fatherhood, and in Chapter 6, in respect of fatherhood and masculinity, the co-existence of references to egalitarian alternative practice and understandings and traditionally gendered normative conceptions indicates a shifting combination of continuity and change. This mix was seen in the case of the primary caregiver father's feelings about paid work and in the case of fathers who found the scope of their practice gave them moments of imbalance.   However, the combination of continuity and change was also seen in the co-existence of references to the shortcomings or disappointments of traditionally gendered practice from the perspective of contemporary ideals of 'being there' among some sole earners. Nevertheless, I also noted a third experience of balance, where fathers balanced their participation at work and in family life in ways which brought them closer to, although they did not reach parity with, their partners' involvement in family life.

In one sense, many of the instrumental tasks (Lorber, 2000) of parenting were de-gendered in participant accounts. Fathers' practice, at least in comparison with the stereotypes of traditional fatherhood or macho masculinity with which participants

occasionally contrasted themselves or contemporary fatherhood, was, in terms of its components, re-gendered so that their repertoire of practice as parents was expanded and overlapped with that of motherhood. Some enacted ideals of new, intimate and involved fatherhood in ways which offered alternatives to traditional conceptions of fatherhood and deployed them in accounting for behaviour, acknowledging that accountability occurs within interactions where there may be a difference in the power of actors in specific contexts where discourses are recognised to different degrees.

However, even where many of the practices of parenting are de-gendered, the question of allocation of the responsibility for and labour of parenting practices remains. In response to the argument that gender can be undone, West and Zimmerman link the differentiation in doing gender to issues of allocation according to sex category.

> Let us return to the question: Can we avoid doing gender? Earlier, we proposed that insofar as sex category is used as a fundamental criterion for differentiation, doing gender is unavoidable. It is unavoidable because of the social consequences of sex-category membership: the allocation of power and resources not only in the domestic, economic, and political domains but also in the broad arena of interpersonal relations (2009, pp.145-6).

However, this statement returns us to the arguments of Deutsch (2007) and Risman (2009) that exposing and dismantling the systems by which power and resources are allocated on the basis of sex-category has been central to feminist activism and achievements (Risman, 2009). If the consequences of sex-category membership are altered, the significance of doing gender in sustaining differentiation by sex-category is altered. In principle, in certain contexts, difference might be constructed on terms other than opposition and hierarchy. Nevertheless, change in practice is incomplete and the movement between doing and undoing gender makes for slow and uneven progress, and even more so from a global perspective. Men and women's different relation to opportunities for paid work and responsibilities for care has been central to inequalities as citizens (Lister, 2004) and gendered allocation

of responsibilities for care and paid work remains (Miller, 2010) as do the risks for subsequent discrepancies in economic power and independence for caregivers (Coltrane *et al*, 2013).

In light of the diverse practice in this sample, and of change and diversification in the normative conceptions relevant to fatherhood and masculinity, the question is raised of how necessary is the link between the division of labour and the construction of, first, difference, and, second, inequality? Fathers whose practice overlapped considerably with their partner's practice did not speak about their partners in the conventional terms, of maternal ideals or stereotypical practices, used by some fathers whose role was more distinct from partner's role. Yet this distinction was not determinate. As noted, a sole earner father was among those who emphasised fairness and equivalence and a father who shared earning and caring emphasised differences in socialisation and preference alongside equality of opportunity in respect of career. Participants positioned family as a site of children's, partners' and their own needs and investments, not all of which are reconcilable and not all of which are met. Participants referred to personal fulfilment, to desires to care, to commitment to career as well as to recognising partners' commitment to career or desire to care. My reading of participants' accounts suggests that egalitarian understandings of gender and egalitarian practices of fatherhood, which combine together to produce new ways of doing family, also combine with, respectively, aspects of 'traditional' organisation, or, with less progressive consequences, more 'traditional' understandings of gender.

In the allocation of resources and privileging of commitments, doing fatherhood may involve doing family in ways which invoke or enact taken for granted 'masculine' privilege, in particular in relation to participation in the labour market at the expense of participation in domestic labour (Miller, 2010), or 'masculine' authority (as Harry suggested of his father). I discussed some of the contextualised references to the latter in Chapter 6; and the former is often implicit but sometimes disavowed. The disavowal of power, in accounts of negotiation, agreement or

concession in respect of partners, was characteristic of participants' accounts. Without access to partner accounts or ethnographic observation, what can be suggested is that these men's accounts as a whole did not represent them as making unilateral decisions, or their circumstances as the outcome of the exercise of 'masculine' rights or power. Participants' accounts of negotiation, agreement or concession in partner relationships are not implausible, but they are inevitably incomplete.

Analysis of the responsibility practices (Walker, 2008) of fathers, in ceding, sharing, accepting, evading and appropriating various family responsibilities, may call for the analysis of debilitative and coercive power in partner or ex-partner relationships (Smart and Neale, 1999; Gatrell, 2007). However, some responsibility practises among fathers may also call for attention to respect for desires and investments in caregiving and career in partner relationships, and attention to whether and how these are situated against a wider orientation to respect, recognition and rights for women. Given that different personal investments in childcare and paid work may translate into differences in power between care and money, this wider orientation to respect and recognition is generally only able to be sustained when supported by wider societal, policy and legal support of participation in caregiving, by men and women, and women's participation in all domains.

Contingency, relationship and responsibility

Responsibility practices are also relevant to how a broad conceptualisation of fathers' practice, facilitated by the framework of doing fatherhood and doing family, might contribute to debates in respect of the contingent nature of fatherhood relative to motherhood through a more nuanced understanding of relationship and responsibility in fatherhood. I noted, in Chapter 4, Andrew's commitment to his family: 'you have to stand by the family and so on, as well. Even if you have the possibility to not do that'. Although legislation and social norms are changing in relation to the permanency of the bond between children and their fathers (Smart and Neale, 1999), Andrew spoke out of a sense that men are not, or have not been,

bound to children by the powerful normative understandings that bind their mothers (Miller, 2010).

Hobson, noted that the title of the book, *Making Men Into Fathers,* 'suggests the weak bonds between men and fatherhood. Men father but do not necessarily assume the responsibilities of fatherhood' (2002, p.1). Men's commitment to family and their relationship with their children has been understood as contingent, both in the sense of discretionary and dependent on mothers, or other women (Doherty, *et al,* 1998; Townsend, 2002). This contingency is the product of gendered social structures which shape 'choices' and constraints 'which converge on the domains of the home and paid work' (Miller, 2010, p.7). For some scholars, what is produced for men is a choice about whether to participate in the labour of family life: 'not all fathers choose to be involved' in the 'less valued activity' of women's work (Walker and McGraw, 2000, p.567). More recent research with highly involved fathers has found that, in respect of the nature of their participation, fathers' and mothers' choices have interacted to shape involvement (Doucet, 2006; Ranson, 2010). I would like to consider briefly two aspects of the idea of contingency in participants' accounts before critiquing its adequacy in the light of the findings of this thesis.

Some accounts invoked ideas of contingency as choice, seen as a consequence of the diversity in positions and diverse repertoire of practice available to men. Some accounts referred to issues around contingency in terms of men's (for some, problematic) dependence on women to bring them into fatherhood and care. The different choices fathers make were noted by some less advantaged participants such as Daniel and Barry, who referred to a widespread perception of fathers as uninvolved and uninterested.

> I suppose most dads get the black mark against them – we're always in the background, we don't really care about our kids' schooling and things like that. But I know myself being with these guys and seeing some of them on a daily basis in the school playground, the majority of dads like nothing better than taking their kids to school in the morning, going along to parents evening or, going along to sports day and really enjoying it. And I think

now in the wider society you see more and more dads doing that sort of thing. And more and more dads are happy to stay at home and be the parent that comes back and forward to school and takes them to appointments and that, and we don't get a lot of credit… I know a lot of dads who deserve a good pat on the back for the job that they're doing and that as well. (Daniel)

Daniel does extend his endorsement to mothers, rather than privileging fathers. However, Barry is a non-resident father who feels that neither fathers' rights nor their contribution are sufficiently recognised. His ex-partner, with whom he was in dispute over access arrangements, 'should be appreciating that I'm interested in my son' when others might have withdrawn from their child's life. Barry's comments touch on two elements relevant to scholarly discussion of contingency: the characterisation of fatherhood as dependent on the will and work of mothers (Doherty *et al,* 1998), but also the problematic alternative of defining fatherhood in terms of rights (Collier, 2009).

Walker and McGraw (2000) contested a positioning of mothers as determining father's involvement, given fathers' power to choose. Miller argues that, while not a question of pure choice, this is because paternal identities are not as defined as maternal identities are, for mothers and others, the combination of barriers to caring and avenues for withdrawal make it easier to 'opt out' (2010, p.6) of aspects of new, intimate, involved fatherhood. Some academics have sympathised with the 'confusion' of men given the greater 'latitude' they are given in exercising their role and their 'less clear job description' (Doherty *et al*, 1998). I would suggest that mothers' job description is only more clear insofar as it is assumed, as it has so often been, that mothers do everything. 'Stricter' cultural norms do not guarantee or necessarily ease the process of on-the-job learning for mothers (Miller, 2010; Sevon, 2007). Once fatherhood is negotiated with reference to mothers, motherhood is negotiated with reference to fathers. Trinder (2008) showed how much of mothers' 'gatework' for non-resident fathers was supportive of their involvement. Furthermore, research with both co-resident and post-separation couples, has identified the impact on women where men's claims to a father's rights have been

an exercise of power (Smart and Neale, 1999; Gatrell, 2007; Natalier and Hewitt, 2010).

Acknowledging the greater discretion men may consider themselves, or be considered by others, to have in respect of making themselves available to participate in caring, I would argue that evidence of the contingency of fatherhood understood in terms of a deficit in taking responsibility should also be considered in the light of the negative alternative of disregard for women's investments in motherhood (Doucet, 2006). This is not to deny the tension in situations where partners grapple with the conflict between a 'new' model of fatherhood and fathers' financial contribution to family or a lack of alignment between change in the repertoire of 'good' fatherhood and the persistence or even intensification of demands on 'good' mothers (Hays, 1996; Wall, 2004). As confirmed in the analysis in Chapter 5 where an expansion in the practice of fathers has not been oppressive of mothers, it has been a negotiated re-configuration of the interweaving of relationship and responsibility for both, according to a principle of mutual recognition rather than equal authority (Smart and Neale 1999; Doucet, 2006; Gatrell, 2007). At the same time, those participants who had sought through the courts to be able to see or care for their child would argue that it is not always in a child's welfare for fathers to only have what mothers choose to give.

As accountability may be associated with authority, 'equal' responsibility may be understood in terms of conferring (or withholding) power in the inter-parental relationship, rather than reciprocity and sharing. As discussed in Chapter 1, research has explored the deployment of claims to authority in parenting in the power dynamics between mothers and fathers, both partners and ex-partners (Gatrell, 2007; Natalier and Hewitt, 2010). Some feminist researchers have expressed caution in the face of political commitment to the reinforcement, alongside responsibilities, of the social status and legal rights of biological fathers (Doucet, 2006; Segal, 1990; Jamieson, 1998). That legal and institutional powers, as well as social norms, shape the responsibilities given and the accountability

required of mothers and fathers in ways which both dismantle and reinforce differentiation and inequality between men and women is particularly clear in studies of lone mothers (Wallbank, 2001) and post-separation conflict (Wallbank, 2001; Smart and Neale, 1999).

The hierarchy in status and rewards of paid and unpaid work, which underpin men's greater power to choose and their choice of paid work (exemplified in the attitudes of the exponents of 'the traditional male role' interviewed by Riley, 2003), is challenged by the valuing of care and of sharing of responsibilities endorsed in the ideal of 'new', intimate, involved fatherhood. Furthermore, the terms of the ideal bind together relationship and responsibility in understandings of fatherhood in that caring and sharing care are not discretionary, although the principle of co-operative sharing positions fathers' involvement as not independent of mothers' practice.

The binding together of relationship and responsibility is consistent with feminist understandings of ethics: 'special relationships are specially obligating' because the particularity in both respects 'is rooted in the nature of the connections in which these relationships consist' (Walker, 2008, p.88). It is the nature of the connections in which the father-child relationship, and the father-mother relationship, consist which is re-conceived in 'new' fatherhood. Tronto links caring and responsibility, defining caring as 'necessarily relational' (1989, p.173), but distinguishing, analytically, caring for from caring about according to whether the relation to the object of care is direct or indirect. Arguably, fathers' position in respect of the contemporary ideals of fatherhood is a matter of the extent to which they desire and achieve direct care, and thus the integration of direct and indirect care. However, while 'responsibilities for caretaking or caring labor are indeed fundamental ones' (Walker, 2008, p.84), as noted above, 'practices of responsibility are not only ones of assignment. They also include ones of accepting or refusing, deflecting or negotiating, specific assignments of responsibility' (Walker, 2008, p.100).

Gilmore noted of the multiple factors in a separation situation involving a child or children, that 'this complexity does not advocate a form of legal decision-making which relies on generalizations' (2006, pp.358-9), such as a presumption in favour of contact, but rather the assessment of the particular factors in each case informed by an awareness of the research literature. Understandings of the interconnection between relationship and responsibility is central to debates about the ways in which fathers and fatherhood have changed between generations and over time, to theories and studies of the (changing) differences between the practice of mothers and fathers and constructions of motherhood and fatherhood, and to fathers' own understandings of the relation between different life dimensions, such as partnership, employment, career, family and leisure, in their practice of fatherhood. I would argue that a father's relation to contingency has a personal, ethical element. If some fathers are able to not commit, many, many fathers feel bound by their personal commitment, to their children, to their family, and to their understandings of fatherhood, in ways in which contingency has a place only in casting their commitment in higher relief. Thus, according to the paternal perspectives analysed in this thesis, relationships engender responsibilities and condition what counts as freedom.

Section 4   Limitations and further research

A limitation of the research design is that it engages only with the perspective of fathers, although the significance both of the partner relationship and of understandings of family is central to the analysis. Although participants referred frequently to their partners and their partners' point of view, if often with qualifications or disclaimers as to their capacity to speak on their partners' behalf, the points of view of mothers themselves are not heard. However, alongside a rich body of research with couples, and with mothers, it is useful to have research on the experience and perspective of fathers, in their own right and as a reference point in the ways in which research with mothers is a point of reference in the context of interpretation of this thesis.

A further, already noted, implication of the sample for limitations of this research is that, although the sample is diverse in many respects, there are important elements of diversity among fathers not represented. Although the significance of understandings of family for fathers is attested in post-separation co-parenting families (Wilson, 2006) and non-heterosexual (Berkowitz and Marsiglio, 2007) families, this research was not able to explore the relation of doing fatherhood, doing family and doing gender in relation to these groups. This thesis is limited as an exemplar of the framework for understanding multi-dimensional fatherhood discussed above by limits to the attention paid to fathers' perspective on the place of wider family, kin and kin-like relationships in family life and their own place as a father in wider kin and friendship networks. Although their significance is noted in the thesis, the limited analysis is of particular relevance to the extent to which the thesis addresses the multi-dimensional fatherhood of fathers outside of heterosexual couples.

Few analyses exhaust the data in interaction with which they are produced and two lines of analysis which were explored but unable to be incorporated into the thesis suggest further lines of research which would provide this necessary extension of the analysis of how fathers do fatherhood and family. The first is fathers' perspectives on parental care, informal and formal childcare. These are relevant in relation to practices which constitute interconnected meanings of care and family, and of relationship and responsibility, but also to how fathers, and couples, evaluate and manage the resources for family life, and, in particular, for balancing partners' participation in and beyond family life. A, second, related line is how fathers position themselves doing family and fatherhood within other family relationships and kin networks. Such research might draw on existing approaches which examine flows of support and the operation of social networks in relation to fertility (Bernardi, 2003 and Heim, 2011, for example) and family life (Charles *et al,* 2008) but incorporate attention to the implications of fathers', and others', perspective and practice for fathers' constitution of fatherhood and personal life.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1   Participants
2. Appendix 2   Sample Graph
3. Appendix 3   Information Leaflet
4. Appendix 4   Interview Resources
   a. Interview Guide
   b. Life Grid
   c. Review Cards

Appendix 1 Participants

For the sake of ease of reading, the present tense is used for any aspect of the situation at the time of the interview, in 2012. Ages are based on calculations using full years where exact dates were not recorded.

Adrian became a father when he was 41. He has one son, Jonathon, aged 10. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Sarah, who works for an employer part-time and pursues her own creative projects. They own their flat. He is employed by a large retail corporation.

Andrew became a father when he was 37. He has one son, Aaron, aged 7, and a daughter, Belinda, aged 3. He lives in dual carer/earner household with his partner, Deborah, whom he married when he was 35 and who works for an employer part-time. They own their flat. He is educated to postgraduate level and is employed for three days a week by an educational institution.

Anthony became a father when he was 33. He has two sons, Mark and Dylan, aged 6 and 1. He lives in a sole earner household with his partner, Helen, whom he married when he was 32. They rent their flat. He is educated to postgraduate level and is employed by an educational institution.

Barry became a father when he was 27. He has one son, Daly, aged 8. He is a non-resident father who lives in a non-earning household with his disabled mother for whom he is a carer.

Bob became a father when he was 25. He has two sons, Zach and Reuben, aged 5 and 1. He lives with his partner Amanda. They own their flat. He is a sole earner and self-employed in his own business. He is educated to postgraduate level. His partner bought a flat.

Bruce became a father when he was 42. He has four daughters, Andrea, Deborah, Maria and Meg, aged 9, 8, 4 and 8 months, and a son, Lachlan, aged 5. He lives in a sole earner household with his partner, Glenys, to whom he is married. They rent

their house. After secondary school he trained in a skilled profession through a large institution and is now employed in the transport sector.

Colin became a father when he was 32. He has two daughters, Karen and Ailsa, aged eight and four. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner Jennifer, whom he married in when he was 26 and who worked for an employer for three days a week when the children were little. She is currently studying. They own their house. He is educated to graduate level and holds a management position in a large financial corporation.

Daniel became a father when he was 31. He has two sons, Caleb and Ken, aged 10 and 7, and one daughter, Holly, aged 5. He is a lone dad in a non-earning household. His partner was asked to leave the home by social workers. He has completed apprenticeships and was regularly employed in the catering and building industries in an earlier period of his life.

Dave became a father to a stepdaughter, Sophie, now aged 12, when he was 31, and to his son, Jack, aged 5, when he was 33. He lived in a sole earner household, when his son was young, with his partner, Penelope, who subsequently started her own catering business. They own their flat. He is educated to graduate level but is currently unemployed after the failure of a business partnership.

Dilhara became a father when he was He has two daughters, Lakmini and Amanthi, aged 8 and 2. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Gayesha who works part-time for an employer. They rented their accommodation when their children were born but now own their flat. He is educated to postgraduate level and is employed by a large financial institution.

Gabriel became a father when he was 29. He has one daughter, Anna, aged 8, and two sons, Josep and Miquel, aged 5 and 3. He lives in a sole earner household with his partner, Caterina, whom he married when he was 29. They own property in their country of origin but rent their flat in Scotland. He is educated to graduate level and is runs his own business in the tourist accommodation industry.

Gerry became a stepfather when he was 23 and father to the first of his biological children when he was 25. He has three sons, Simon, Philip and Brendan aged 10, 4 and 2, one daughter, Chrissie, aged 6, and is expecting another child. He lives in a non-earning household with his partner, Linda, to whom he is married. They rent their house. He has been unemployed for several years.

Harry became a father when he was 37. He has two sons, Robert and Scott, aged 5 and 3. He lives in a sole earner household with his partner, Liz, whom he married when he was 34. They own their home. He is educated to graduate level and is employed in a senior position in the third sector.

Henry became a father when he was 36. He has one daughter, Amy, aged 19 months. He lives in a dual earner/carer household with his partner, Harriet, who is in funded postgraduate study. They rent their flat. He is educated to postgraduate level in a creative field. He is employed as a retail assistant by a large corporation.

Hugh became a father when he was 36. He has one son, Rowan, aged 2. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Carrie, whom he married when he was 33, and who works three days for an employer. They own their house. He is educated to graduate level and is employed with a research organisation.

Jack became a father when he was about 18. He has a son and daughter from his long-term relationship with his former partner, Celia. He has a son, William, aged 2, from a subsequent relationship with Miranda. He is now a lone father in a non-earning household, having sought residential care of William through the courts. When William is older, Jack intends to resume the business he built up when he lived in a household with his older children and Celia.

Jason became a father when he was 32. He has one daughter, Helena, aged 11 months. He lives in a dual earner/carer household with his partner, Ada, whom he married when he was 24 and who works for an employer two days a week. He combines self-employment and part-time employment in work which draws on his skills as a musician.

Jeremy became a father when he was 32. He has a daughter, Clara, aged 8 and a son, Jerome, aged 4. He lives in a sole earner household with his partner, Heidi, whom he married when he was 25. They own their home. He is self-employed as a consultant.

Lewis became a father when he was 30. He has one son, Gavin, aged 8, whose mother died in the period subsequent to the separation from Lewis and to Gavin's later moving to be resident with Lewis. Lewis is a lone dad and lives in a non-earning household, with his mother.

Liam became a father when he was 38. He has one daughter, Rosa, aged 8. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Deena, who works for an employer full-time. They own their house. He is educated to postgraduate level and is employed in the education sector.

Lucien became a father when he was 33. He has one daughter, Isabella, aged 8 and one son, Felix, aged 4. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Anna, to whom he is married. Anna is employed part-time by local government, but took an extended period of leave to be a caregiver after her son's birth. They own their home. He is educated to postgraduate level and is self-employed as a health professional.

Luke became a father when he was 26, outside of a partner relationship. He has one son, Giles, aged 11, whom he supports financially and who stays with him for one weekend a month in the home he shares with his current partner. They would like to have a child together. He is educated to postgraduate level and is employed in the third sector.

Michael became a father when he was 28. He has two sons, Daniel, Joshua, aged 9 and 7, and one daughter, Juliette, aged, 5. He lives in a dual earner/carer household with his partner, Joan. They are each employed for three days a week. They own their home. He is educated to graduate level and works part-time in education but is about to resume his creative work alongside paid work.

Murray became a father of stepchildren when he was 23 and of the first of his biological children when he was 30. He has three adult stepdaughters, three sons, Tom, Jack, and Donald, aged 12, 9 and 5, and a daughter, Kelly, aged 4. He lives in a non-earning household with his partner, Heather, to whom he is married. He left school when 14, but has participated in training schemes since.

Peter became a father when he was forty. He has two sons, Angus and Craig, aged 8 and 4. When his children were young, he lived in a dual earner household with his partner, Julie. Julie and Peter were married when he was 40 and Julie who works for an employer four days a week. They own their house. He is educated to graduate level and is currently unemployed, having held a senior management position in a large service company.

Robert became a father when he was 27. He has two sons, Ken and Johnny, aged 12 and 10, and a daughter, Rachael, aged 8. He is the primary caregiver in a sole earner household with his partner, Margaret, whom he married when he was 22. Margaret is employed by an educational institution. They own their house. He is educated to graduate level.

Russell became a father, following IVF, when he was 40. He has twin sons aged 2. He lives in a dual earner/carer household with his partner, Carol, whom he married when he was 36 and who works for an employer three days a week. They own their house. He is educated to postgraduate level and is moving into employment in research.

Sam became a father when he was 34. He has one daughter, Lucy, aged 8. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Catherine, who works for an employer four days a week. They own their home. He is educated to graduate level and is self-employed.

Tim became a father when he was He has one son, Riley, aged nine weeks. He lives in a dual earner household with his partner, Rachael, to whom he is married and who is intending to return after maternity leave to work for an employer four days

a week. They own their flat. He is educated to postgraduate level and is employed by a large professional services company.

Toby became a father to his stepsons when he was 21 and father to his biological son when he was 23. His sons, Campbell, Miles and Oliver, are aged 9,6 and 4. He lives in a sole earner household with his former partner. They rent their flat and move often. He has completed apprenticeships and is employed in the retail sector.

Tom became a father when he was 21. He has two daughters, Caroline and Lottie, aged 9 and 4. When his eldest daughter was a pre-schooler, he lived in a sole earner household with his partner Angela, to whom he is engaged and who now works for an employer part-time. They own their flat. He is educated to graduate level and is employed in a management position in a large service company.

Appendix 2 Sample Graph

Name	Age of children						Notes
Dual Earner Households (FT and 3+ days)							
Adrian	10						
Sam	8						
Liam	8						
Tim	9w	Intend 2nd					
Hugh	19m	Intend 2nd					
Colin	8	5					
Peter	8	4					
Lucien	8	4					
Dilhara	9	4					
Shared Earner/Carer							
Henry	19m	?					
Jason	11m	?					
Russell	2	2					
Andrew	7	3					
Michael	9	7	5				
Sole earner Households							
Gabriel	8	5	2				
Robert	11	9	7				Mother sole earner
Bob	5	1					
Anthony	6	1					
Harry	5	3					
Dave	12	5					
Tom	9	4					
Jeremy	8	4					
Toby	9	6	4				
Bruce	9	8	5	4	8m		
Gerry	10	6	4	2	Due		
Non-working HH							
Murray	24	23	20	12	9	5	4
Daniel	10	7	5				Lone Dads
Jack	16	15	2				
Lewis	8						
Barry	8						Non-Res
Luke	11						

Graduate or postgraduate education

PG

Appendix 3 Information Leaflet

(In electronic version see associated PDF of information leaflet.)

Appendix 4 Interview Resources

Interview Guide

Introduction, Information and Consent

Life Grid – timeline with categories

Do you think about the future much? Would you say you are someone who plans for the future?

Now I would like to talk in more detail about becoming a father

Do you feel that you have always wanted to have children or have there been periods when you weren't sure that you wanted to be a father?

What is it that we want when we want to have children?

Could you take […] as a starting point and tell me about how you came to be a father?

What did you expect fatherhood to be like? Had you had experience of young children before you became a father?

> Did you have a sense of what would be the impact on the different parts of your life of becoming a father?

> How has your experience of fatherhood compared with your expectations of it?

How do you think you would have felt if you had not been able to have children?

Fathering: What does it mean to you to be a father?

> How do you know what to do as a father?

> What are some of the hardest things about being a father?

How would you describe yourself as a parent?

When you were answering these questions, were you thinking of yourself as a father or as a parent?

Could you tell me (more) about your partner as a parent?

Are there differences between mothering and fathering, acknowledging the variety among mother and fathers, in your experience?

Are there differences between being a father to a son and being a father to a daughter?

Can you tell me (more) about your work?

Has becoming a parent affected work and has work affected how you do parenthood?

Could you tell me about how you organise the different aspects of your life such as work, childcare, household responsibilities, leisure etc.

Intergenerational: Could you tell me about your birth family – beginning with when in their lives your parents had children and how many children they had? *Life Grid 2*

Could you tell me about your own father and mother, as parents?

When you were thinking about having children or expecting your first child, were people around you, friends or family, having children at that time?

Support: Has support with childcare been important for you? Who has provided childcare support?

Do you have people who you turn to for emotional support, or for reassurance or advice about children or parenting?

Have you received financial support, small-scale or more substantial, which has been significant in having children or how you manage family life? How would you characterise your financial situation?

Have you received practical support (house repairs, errands, cooking etc.)?

What support do you feel you have given or give others?

Do you ever think of yourself as either optimistic or pessimistic in general and in respect of your life in the future?

Further Children: Do you think that you will try to have another child? (How many more?)

Would you like to have another child?

How many children, ideally? constant over time or has it changed?

Do you think your partner would like to have another child?

Can you imagine a change in your circumstances which would change your orientation?

Are there any (other) differences in thinking about having a second or third child from when you were thinking about having a first child?

Has being a father had an effect on your ideas and feelings, in the past or now, about having another child?

Do you or your partner use any form of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancy?

Have you ever, at any point, worried about infertility?

Thinking about people you know, do you have any ideas about what other people think about or talk about when making decisions about having further children?

Factors
I'd like to ask your opinion, based on your own experience, about some things that researchers have thought can be important in people's decision-making about having children.

For each of these cards could we just confirm and maybe add to what you've already said about what was happening in the year or so before each child was conceived?

What do you think is missing? (blank cards)

Is there anything you think your partner might add to what you have said?

Thought experiment: your partner tells you tomorrow that she is 9 weeks pregnant. What happens next? What would be the impact of having another child?

Thinking back over what we've discussed, are you happy enough with what's been said? Is there anything you'd like to say that I haven't made space for? Is there any you think I should think about doing differently, add in or leave out in future interviews?

You don't know at the beginning of research what is going to be most important in what people say to you. Would you be happy for me to contact you if there was anything I wanted to clarify or follow up – briefly - later?

Can I confirm that you still consent for your anonymised data to eventually go into a data archive?

Would you like a copy of the transcript of the interview? I will send you a summary of the research, but that's some time away.

Thank you.

Life Grid

Year	Residence	Family Extended family	Education Work	Partner(s)	DOB, Work, Age p'ship & p'hood, no. children	Partner
Pre-school					Father	Father
Primary School					Mother	Mother
Secondary School					Other	Other
Up to 20					Sibling	Sibling
21-25					Sibling	Sibling
25+					Sibling	Sibling

	Residence	Family Extended family	Education Work	Partner(s)	Child(ren)
2001					
2002 -10 yrs					
2003					
2004					
2005					
2006					
2007 -5 yrs					
2008					
2009					
2010					
2011					
2012					

Desire for a child

Work/career

Housing

Finances

Existing children

Childcare

Lifestyle / Freedom

Family/ Friends

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