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# **#dadtribe: Performing Sharenting Labour to Commercialise Involved Fatherhood**

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## **#dadtribe: Performing Sharenting Labour to Commercialise Involved Fatherhood**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at commercial representations of fatherhood within macromarketing. We base our study on ‘Instadads,’ a group of father influencers who use Instagram to document their family lives, and foster a following that is attractive to brand sponsorship. Through a netnography of 21 Instadad accounts and 10 in-depth interviews, we investigate how these influencers perform *sharenting labour*, which is the labour involved in commodifying and monetising the sharing of parental experiences. We posit that through this labour, father influencers contribute to early attempts at translating the new discursive territory of involved fatherhood into mainstream commercial representations. Sharenting labour has the potential to shift discourses on masculinities, lending more legitimacy to male parental caregiving activities.

### **KEYWORDS**

Influencer, fatherhood, sharenting, representation, parenting

## INTRODUCTION

“I guess [that starting an Instagram account] was to give confidence to dads, to show that this should be a way of parenting that you should also adopt.” (Lance)

Orchestrating the school run, undergoing a vasectomy, testing a baby monitor, reflecting on depression—these are all topics that come up in a group of fathers who use Instagram to broadcast their family lives. These fathers are known as “Instadads” (cf. Ramsden 2016; White 2018): parent influencers who labour in the attention economy (Goldhaber 1997) to monetize audience engagement through commercial promotions and endorsements (Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2018). They do so by producing narratives and imagery that celebrate the involved father (Dermott 2014), a figure more nurturing and domestic than a stereotypical male breadwinner (Coltrane 1996; Wall and Arnold 2007). The new discursive territory of involved fatherhood has only recently found expression in the marketplace (Leader 2019; Molander 2019; Molander, Kleppe, and Ostberg 2019), and we posit that these influencers are contributing to early attempts at translating this new discursive territory into mainstream commercial representations.

Marketing literature has documented the case of mother influencers finding empowering enclaves in social media by laying bare the challenges of motherhood, while also generating income through these platforms (e.g., Blum-Ross and Livingstone 2017; Brady and Guerin 2010; Campana and Doern 2018; Hughes, Swaminathan, and Brooks 2019). But we have yet to articulate a) the forms of labour involved in packaging private family experiences into shareable materials, and b) how it relates to representations of parenthood in the marketplace. To this end, we conduct a netnographic study of 21 Instadads in the United Kingdom, together with 10 in-depth interviews. The Instadads are considered as a cross-over phenomenon between parenting practices and influencer labour. We ask: How do father influencers operationalise the new discursive territory of involved fatherhood into commercially viable representations?

We find that as influencers, the Instadads perform the expected relational, connective, and emotional labour to maintain their audiences (Baym 2015a; Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2018; Mardon, Molesworth, and Grigore 2018; O’Meara 2019). As institutional entrepreneurs (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013), they perform cultural work in producing commercial imagery of fatherhood for the brands that they partner with. But to gain the ascendance necessary to be effective, they must engage in what we coin as *sharenting labour*. Sharenting labour points to the work that goes into sharing parenting experiences for monetary gain. As a form of labour unique to influencer parents, its key movement is in the interplay between market-facing and family-facing activities. Facing the marketplace, sharenting for profit consists of connecting, emoting, and reframing. Facing the family, sharenting labour consists of collaborating, staging, and protecting.

Through their sharenting labour, we show how influencer fathers leverage the nascent discursive territory of involved fatherhood to carve out a commercially viable platform in the attention economy. We therefore contribute to the literature on the ideologies and representation of fatherhood within marketing (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Haase et al. 2016; Leader 2019; Marshall et al. 2014; Molander 2019; Molander, Kleppe, and Ostberg 2019) by showing how a new market actor, the influencer, works to shift the boundaries of commercially viable representations, and culturally legitimate forms of caregiving masculinity.

## **FATHERHOOD AND ITS REPRESENTATION**

### **Involved Fatherhood and Intensive Mothering**

Involved fatherhood is a parenting ideology that has gained traction during the last three decades (Faircloth 2014; Wall and Arnold 2007). The social ideal of the ‘involved father’ (Dermott 2003, 2014) is characterised “by a close relationship with the child and a

bodily/corporal alertness responsive to the needs of the child” (Molander, Kleppe, and Ostberg 2019, p. 5). In other words, involved fathers practice a form of parenting that is compared to mothering: they take responsibility for the protection and care of the children (Doucet 2018). For some, but not all (Craig 2006), this includes partaking in the domestic work that supports childcare, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, planning ahead, and other household management tasks.

Involved fatherhood goes against the grain of hegemonically prescribed male identities such as the absent breadwinner, which is assumed and sustained by the ideology of intensive mothering (Hays 1996). In this ideology, a ‘good’ mother is measured by her full and continuous attention to the child’s need and wishes, her ability to rear the child in ‘appropriate’ ways, and to relegate every other personal or professional need to a secondary status (Cappellini et al. 2019; Davies et al. 2010; Hays 1996). Predicated on a patriarchal separation of the public and private spheres, intensive mothering places childrearing in the home, where mothers labour as the managers of the entrepreneurial household (e.g., Thompson, Henry, and Bardhi 2018) even if they are in employment outside the home (Thompson 1996). By implication, fathers belong to the public sphere as “strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control” breadwinners (Kimmel, cited in Molander 2019, p. 4; also see Coltrane 1996), thus relegating them to playing “second fiddle” as carers (Molander 2019, p. 4). In other words, the ideology of intensive motherhood and the norms set by hegemonic masculinity perpetuate a strict division of labour between parents that doubles the burden on mothers while narrowing the involvement of fathers.

These ideologies have come under pressure as the realities of parenting and working lives make it increasingly difficult to sustain. Scholars have, for example, documented how some fathers knowingly trespass intensive mothering stereotypes as they prioritise the running of their households (Harrison, Gentry, and Commuri 2012; Molander, 2019), while

stay-at-home fathers move beyond current conceptions of either masculinity or femininity (Doucet 2018; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2014). Some fathers have stopped referring to gendered roles altogether by preferring the appellation of “parent,” thus denying that gender should have any import on the provision of care (Elliott et al. 2018). Furthermore, mothers and fathers can alternate between the role of breadwinner and caregiver at different stages of the family life cycle, thus rendering the distinction moot (Doucet 2018). These increasingly complex constellations of labour and care mean that parental roles are subject to continuous negotiation within the household.

However, scholars have argued that even as parenting roles are being reshaped, they continue to preserve male privileges (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Hanke 1992; Patterson and Elliott 2002). For example, where fathers are involved in domestic work and caregiving activities, they do not experience the same anxieties and pressure as mothers do (Shirani, Henwood, and Coltart 2012). They draw on masculine values such as autonomy and espouse an attitude of ‘good enough’ to keep such anxieties at bay (Molander 2019). Furthermore, mothers still tend to be responsible for high-level household planning and coordination (“caring about”; Hodkinson and Brooks 2018; Hogg, Curasi, and Maclaran 2004; Miller 2017; Shirani, Henwood, and Coltart 2012; Cappellini et al. 2019). Despite policy efforts to promote the role of the involved father (Faircloth 2014), government and NGO data in the United Kingdom show that the burden of childcare still overwhelmingly lands on the mother’s shoulders (Olchawski 2016), that women are more likely to change their employment conditions for parenting reasons (ONS 2018), and that extended paternal leave is still uncommon (Kaufman 2018).

As such, these shifts in parental roles do not necessarily translate in the societal and economic changes that would remove gender inequalities. Even within the involved father ideal, men can be competent and involved parents while still showing traits of hegemonic

masculinity that devalorises domestic work (Coltrane 1996). It is therefore helpful to think about the organisation of caregiving labour as multipronged: gender frames and therefore gives rise to specific modes of parenting, whilst institutional and societal legacies sustain these gendered distinctions. That said, involved fatherhood has received only limited attention in marketing research, and especially in the macro intersection between market structures, society, family, and the “material conditions of life” (Peterson 2020, p. 5).

### **Fatherhood and the Marketplace**

Macromarketing research on gender, family, and the marketplace have investigated how intensive mothering and male breadwinner ideologies structure household labour, household relationships to the marketplace, and governmental family policies (Davies et al. 2010; Haase et al. 2016; Nill and Shultz 2010). It has been shown that the scrutiny and self-sacrifice ensuing from involved motherhood create vulnerabilities that are reified by a marketplace that both provides solutions and exacerbates these pressures (Davies et al. 2010). Similarly, insecurities engendered by perceived ‘threats to manhood,’ including economic decline and the erosion of the breadwinner figure, have been shown to drive compensatory male consumption (Witkowski 2020; also see Moisiso, Arnould, and Gentry 2013). Having invested in subordinate forms of cultural capital, stay-at-home fathers seek to strengthen the socioeconomic standing of their caregiving roles by reframing their marketplace interactions into activities with higher conversion rates, such as valuing thriftiness as a way to boost the household’s economic capital (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013).

Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) also found that fathers monitored mainstream representations of involved fatherhood to assess whether their positions were being recognized by the market, therefore indicating the centrality of representations as an “engine of consumption” (Schroeder and Zwick 2004, p. 21). Magazines (Wall and Arnold 2007), online communities (Brady and Guerin 2010), and parenting apps (Thomas, Lupton, and

Pedersen 2018) typically depict a one-sided parenting story where fathers are often part of a background narrative alluded to by mothers or the reporter, as opposed to taking an active role in the familial setup. In advertising, the historical depiction of fatherhood has seen them go from the breadwinner, (1950s), to emotionally engaged (1980s) and subsequently participating in domestic labour (1990), to absent (2000s) and finally invisible but implied (2010s) (Marshall et al. 2014). Stuck between “the stoically macho man and the horse’s ass [...] who is immature [and] incompetent” (Gentry and Harrison 2010, p. 88), fathers are typically shown in ‘masculine’ activities that are peripheral to core parenting responsibilities, such as captaining a sports team, or ‘roughhousing’ with their children (Gregory and Milner 2011).

In line with Schroeder and Zwick’s observation that by depicting masculinities, “advertising imagery helps provide consumer solutions to gender tensions,” (Schroeder and Zwick 2004, p. 23) more recent studies suggest that images of fatherhood are changing again, developing a new discursive territory for the involved father (Molander, Kleppe, and Ostberg 2019). The commercial corollary of this discursive territory sees brands such as laundry detergent Tide commoditizing the image of the involved father to promote their goods as progressive and informed of new family dynamics (Leader 2019). While these studies acknowledge the emergence of involved fatherhood within marketing representations, they study the representations of fatherhood from the marketer, advertiser, or publisher’s perspective. However, within the attention economy, influencers are also active and powerful contributors to marketplace representations (Eckhardt and Bardhi 2019).

Marketing research has identified influencers as entrepreneurs in the attention economy (cf. Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2018; Mardon, Molesworth, and Grigore 2018). Influencers have market power because they can seek social and market change when they are dissatisfied with the status quo (Dolbec and Fischer 2015; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013).

For example, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) show how Fatshionista bloggers seek greater inclusion for consumers who wear plus-sized clothing in mainstream fashion, and they do so in part by crafting body-positive fashion imagery and narratives. Similarly, mothers have found internet forums, blogs, and social networking sites conducive spaces to share the hardship that derive from intensive mothering, to cultivate a sense of belonging, and to find expression for new forms of femininity (e.g., Archer 2019b; Brady and Guerin 2010; Mackenzie 2017; Pedersen 2016; Pedersen and Lupton 2018; Pedersen and Smithson 2013). As Blum-Ross and Livingstone have argued, parents can use blogging to “assert their subjectivity in response to critical erasures” produced by constrictive parenting ideologies (2017, p. 212).

Seeing how audiences readily identify with this kind of content, mumpreneur influencers use this to increase their appeal and influence (Abidin 2017; Archer 2019a). They therefore engage in work that differs from the various forms of digital labour (Scholz 2013) documented in the literature (see Table 1 for an overview of forms of labour relevant here). While parent influencers are likely to engage in these forms of labour to sustain engagement with their content in the attention economy, we argue that we are missing an understanding of how the influencer’s activities change when the appeal of their content depends on the existence of other actors in their private lives, such as children and co-parents. Furthermore, it is unclear how influencers’ labour contributes to the representation of parenthood, and fatherhood in particular, within the marketplace.

[INSERT Table 1 HERE]

## **METHODOLOGY**

We conducted a non-participatory netnography (Kozinets 2019) of twenty-one Instadad accounts, and we supplemented the analysis of archival data with ten one-to-one interviews. We selected the participants based on a purposive sampling (Bryman 2016) of

influencers involved with the ‘digital public’ of Instadads. Digital publics are “mediated associations [through a hashtag] among strangers, who are united by a temporary focus of attention directed towards a common object, be it an event, a political issue or a brand” (Caliandro and Gandini 2017, p. 86; see also Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016). Having followed a few well-known parent influencers throughout the project’s initiation and investigation stages (Kozinets 2019), we chose the #dadtribe hashtag to scope out more precise sampling criteria. The hashtag was created by one of our respondents to formalise, encourage, and promote the community forming around these Instagram accounts; its usage is therefore an expression of an unfolding sense of belonging (Laestadius 2017), and exemplifies the connective labour that these influencers perform (Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2018). From the pool of hashtag users, we filtered users who matched the following criteria: a) They are UK-based male parents who focus their content on documenting family life; and b) They conform to the definition of a micro- or meso-influencer (Boerman 2020), understood in this case as regularly partnering with brands to produce sponsored content and having a base of more than 4,000 followers.

The Instadads ranged from being micro-influencers, “normal people” who have achieved ‘Instafame’ and have up to 10,000 followers, and meso-influencers who have “national visibility” and 10,000 to 1 million followers (Boerman 2020, p. 201). All respondents live in dual-parent households, with two same-sex couples. Three fathers are of Black, Asian, ethnic minority, or mixed-race descent. The sample included stay-at-home dads, work-at-home dads, and working dads. They usually started writing about their experiences early in their parenting journeys, when the children were expected, babies, or infants. Details about the sample are provided in Table 2.

[INSERT Table 2 HERE]

## **Netnography**

The netnography was divided into two stages. In the first stage, one of the authors immersed themselves and collected fieldnotes about the posts and comments of the Instadads. In the second stage, we systematically collected posts from the beginning of each Instadad's feed up until 25 June 2019. This totals to 18,683 posts, including each posts' visual (photographs and videos), textual (captions and comments), and numeric data (number of comments and likes). We then selected the posts that gathered the highest engagement for each Instagrammer, measured by the number of likes (top 10 posts each) and by the number of comments (another 10 posts each). Given that some of these overlapped, we examined a total of 350 posts. This is both to avoid data overload (Kozinets, Dolbec, and Earley 2014) and to acknowledge that the purpose of these accounts is to foster an active community: the most popular posts give an indication of the content that appeals to the Instadads' audiences and are likely to be emulated in the future. The themes that emerge are therefore themes that were highlighted by their appeal to each Instadad's audience.

Each of these profiles and posts are public, searchable, and made for the purpose of media consumption. However, in an effort to protect the anonymity and privacy of the social actors, and in particular the children (Caliandro and Gandini 2017), we pseudonymised all names and handles, and visually manipulated the images reproduced here to mask the original (see Gurrieri and Drenten 2019).

## **Interviews**

Ten in-depth interviews were conducted between June and August 2018. The participants were 31- to 41-years-old, self-identified as middle-class, and were resident in the North, South, East and West of the UK, either in larger cities or smaller towns. The interview length ranged from 37 minutes to one hour and 43 minutes. All but one were conducted via Skype because the respondents were spread across the UK and had limited time to dedicate to

the interview. The interviews began with ‘grand tour’ questions that enquired about the participants’ backgrounds and families, and subsequently focused on their reasons for using the platform, their experiences, and the brands that they worked with.

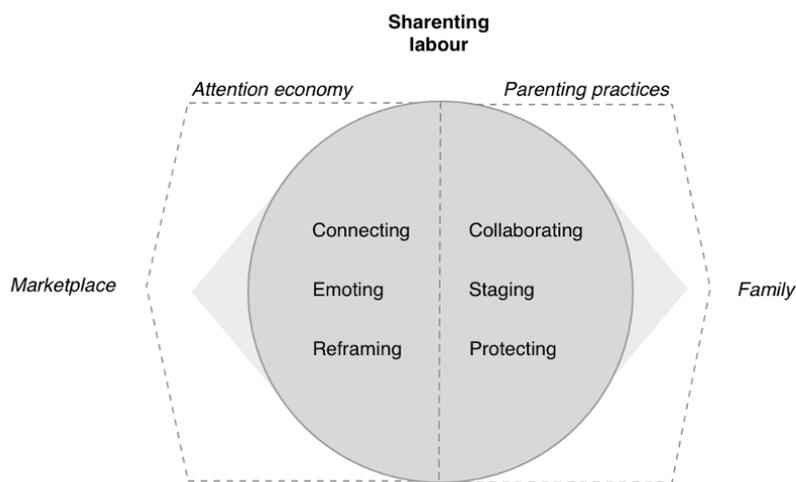
## **Analysis**

We conducted a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) inspired by the insights that emerged from the fieldnotes in the first phase of the netnography. We open-coded (Saldaña 2015) the Instagram posts captions, images, and the interviews, whilst also making more general notes on follower comments. Following a hermeneutic approach (Thompson 1997), we consolidated these initial codes into broader categories that connected back to themes from the literature. Through this iterative coding process, we identified a set of activities that we coded as both parenting- and marketplace-oriented: together, they form what we call sharenting labour.

## **FINDINGS**

As documented in the literature, Instadads perform a variety of immaterial forms of labour to sustain their influencer income. We extend this by highlighting that they also engage in *sharenting labour*—the labour performed by parents when they share their family life online for profit. Sharenting has been identified as “a means through which the logic of intensive parenting is perpetuated and paradoxically also a means of coping with it” (Blum-Ross and Livingstone 2017, p. 121), a way to articulate the beleaguered parent’s extended and relational selves (Blum-Ross and Livingstone 2017; Damkjaer 2018; Holiday, Norman, and Densley 2020; Lazard et al. 2019). For non-influencers, research shows that considerable work is involved in disclosure management work (Ammari et al. 2015). For influencer mothers, sharenting often provides ‘fillers’ for their feed (Abidin 2017), with commercial imperatives overriding privacy concerns (Archer 2019a).

Here, we propose that sharenting adds a dimension to known influencer labour because the influencer is wholly dependent on drawing on and negotiating with their parental life. Sharenting is a necessary condition for the Instadads' appeal as influencers because they are putting forward a profile of involved fatherhood that does not yet have a clear articulation in the space of commercial representations of parenting. We disambiguate the various forms of sharenting labour by separating the domains in which they operate: the marketplace and the family. **Figure 1** summarises our findings.



**Figure 1. Marketplace- and family-facing sharenting labour.**

## Marketplace

Although small in comparison with influencer mothers, the Instadads' reach, measured in terms of follower numbers, has risen dramatically over the past two years, with one well-known account rising to one million followers in August 2019. Brands have acknowledged this and now use the Instadads as a channel to reach parental audiences. Marketplace-facing sharenting labour is performed to generate and sustain these audiences. We argue that an important part of this work is creating a commercial space for involved

fatherhood by both leveraging and fighting the stereotypes coming from the traditional forms of masculinity. To this end, the Instadads perform three types of labour: connecting, emoting, and reframing.

### *Connecting*

One of the Instadads' main activities is connecting with other influencers, and especially father influencers. Fathers have been noted to be less likely to engage on social media (Dunnart et al. 2015), and to be less present or feel excluded in online communities formed around parenting websites (Ammari, Schoenebeck, and Lindtner 2017; Brady and Guerin 2010; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Pedersen 2015). As torchbearers for an unapologetically involved form of fatherhood, the Instadads congregate, share advice, and provide support to each other, as well as a growing audience of male and female parents on Instagram.

The men that we interviewed felt that communal engagement and support for caregiving fathers had been lacking in their immediate environments. Daniel, for example, quit his job when he and his wife decided that they wanted at least one parent to be more present in their children's lives. As a stay-at-home dad, however, he found himself ill-prepared and with little support at hand:

I was actually asked a while back about what my "village" was like when I was the primary carer for my kids. I replied that it was more like a hamlet with running water and electricity... because I felt very alone. I can only remember once being invited round for coffee. If I have a problem getting the kids to and from school, I am on my own. Whereas [mums] have their networks that come through the National Childbirth Trust, they would have been socialising before their kids were even born... so there is years of this. The thing about stay at home dads is that they are parachuted in [...] You are very much thrown into it. [...] I never really had that chance to build up that network (Daniel).

Daniel felt isolated because he had not been prepared to perform caregiving tasks (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013). While involved forms of fatherhood have been emerging since the eighties (Coltrane 1996), the norms set by hegemonic masculinity and intensive mothering ideologies constrain opportunities for connection (Molander 2019); as another

father reported to us, his “mates do not want to talk about kids” (Carl). The fathers are thus forming bonds along shared experiences of social isolation (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013), but in doing so they also attract followers, and ultimately brand sponsorships.



**Figure 2. @dad3 on 20 December 2018 (566 likes; 43 comments):** [...] Seven years worth of wading through the 🤢 of infertility were somewhat washed away by [first child’s] arrival 😊 but we still carry the scars of those years, when the intimacy and fun became replaced by monthly anxiety, sadness and then the trauma of multiple unsuccessful ivf attempts. [...] It was a terrible path that led us to where we are...but we made it 🙌 #family #ivf #ivfsuccess #bigbrother #triplets #fatherhood #motherhood #infertility #journey #prouddaddy #newborn #son #happiness @dadscomm @thedadsnet #igparentlife #dreamscancometrue

In other words, the Instadads speak to this yearning for social connection and recognition to create a following on Instagram by performing connective, relational, and emotional labour (Baym 2015a; Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2018; Mardon, Molesworth, and Grigore 2018). Entangling his identity as an involved father in the process, @dad13 sought to promote his post about struggling with infertility (Figure 2) to the right audiences, for example, by tagging two aggregator accounts (@dadscomm and @thedadsnet) and making extensive use of tags such as #fatherhood, #motherhood, and #igparentlife. Though the Instadads’ technical proficiency in performing connective labour varies, they are all aware of

the need to vie with Instagram's algorithms:

The way that the algorithm works is that the more time someone stays on your post, the longer, the more people see it. So, you want people to not only look at your photo, but to like it and comment, the whole thing and to linger on it for a while (Paul).

The more experienced Instadads dedicate substantial time to this, working hard to ensure that their spectators become interlocutors and thus deepen their connection (Baym 2015a). Some, for example, spot commentators who tag other Instagram users and draw them both into a conversation, and others make sure to end posts on a question:

It is a call to action. People have an opinion and they will want to voice it. People love talking about themselves, so when they have that opportunity, they will do it. It helps to drives my engagement up, helps my posts be successful what with the algorithm (Carl).

Our interviews show that the fathers were also clearly aware and generally supportive of each other, which is confirmed by our archival data. This might indicate the existence of an engagement pod, which is a “grassroots tactical response [...] by which influencers attempt to regain some control over their working conditions within the Instagram ecosystem [...] to protect their own interests” (O’Meara 2019, p. 6). One of the functions of the pod is to help raise the visibility of content, but also to share information about the platform and how to manage brand collaborations:

[With Instagram friends, we say things like,] “have you worked with this brand or that,” you know, helping each other out. [...] We share] a lot of advice, brands that didn’t pay well and things (Ross).

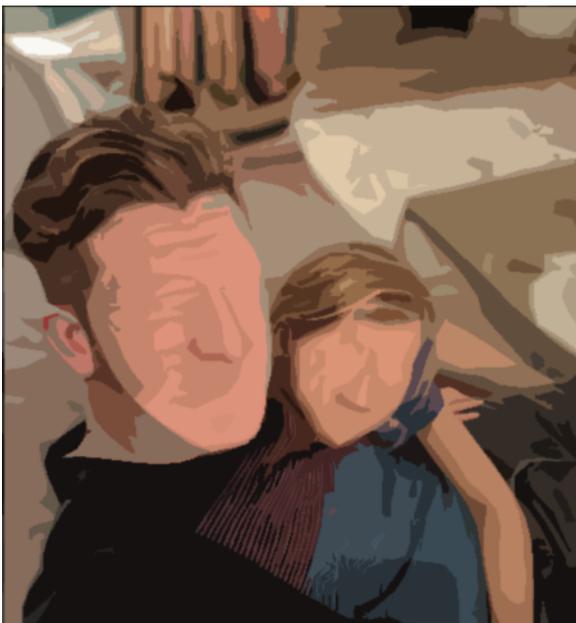
Finding comfort, advice, and friendship in this group, the Instadads have also begun organising brand-sponsored events such as the ‘Dadventure’ getaways to further their commercial visibility and appeal. Lance articulated that it was not only an opportunity for the Instadads to physically get together, but also to put them on the map of big brands:

... We are doing some scrambling, climbing, etc... and I got L’Oréal to provide all the sun cream. I just said, look this event will have a reach of over 10 mill, and they thought it was a great idea.

Having identified a segment left unattended by the marketplace, the Instadads seek out brand collaborations both to buttress their connective efforts and to promote the commercial appeal of their audiences.

## Emoting

Emoting is the work performed by influencers in portraying their emotions to harness attention. Emotions have always been central to social media marketing because content that evokes strong emotions is shared more (e.g., Berger and Milkman 2012). Paul, a full-time London influencer, confirms that this is common knowledge: “Someone told me when I started the Instagram account that if you can make someone, laugh, angry, or cry then they are more likely to share it.” Eliciting this range of emotions through sharenting typically means finding emotion-laden family moments and sharing those with a meta-comment on parenting. Such content can vary from more humorous posts, in which fathers are depicted playing with their children, to posts that evoke and foreground their sensitivity as fathers.



**Figure 3. @dad12 on 21 October 2018 (84,413 likes, 1185 comments):** To make up for [her being excluded from her sister’s playdate], we’ve binging on films together & eating our body weight in snacks - no big girls allowed. They may not care but I know it means the world to [her] as she’s smiling again which is priceless.



**Figure 4. @dad11 on 27 May 2019 (1596 likes, 185 comments):** Not even going to sugar coat it. It’s hard work at the minute. I’m beyond bored of my own voice, asking for kind hands and for kind words [...] I’m this 🥰 close to packing a wash bag and booking a last minute spa day for myself tomorrow 😊 [...] But then this afternoon [he] climbs into nanny’s bed with his baby cousin, rubs his head and kisses him on the lips saying “It’s okay, night night” and just like that my heart is restored to full capacity ❤️ #therealityofparenting

Describing how his middle child had been left out of her elder sister's playdate, @dad12's posts that he organised a "no big girls allowed" father-and-daughter movie night (Figure 3). The photo, itself an example of a 'good parenting' selfie (Le Moignan et al. 2017), shows them cuddled up together on the couch, beaming at the camera. This post rose to be amongst his top 10 most popular pieces of content to date. While it represents an emotional intimate family event that would traditionally belong to the private sphere of family life (Hays 1996), the Instadad's sharenting means that he is translating the moment into a shareable piece of content.

One emoting strategy is to leverage multi-modal storytelling to bring out the joys and turmoils of parenthood. In @dad11's post, he juxtaposes a family photograph with a frank account of flitting between weariness and unexpected, heart-melting tenderness (Figure 4). The children are adorable—and even more so against the backdrop of @dad11's story—but the image also reinforces the duality of parental involvement and the Instadad's sensitivity to it. Indicating that the message is not lost on the followers, the comments blend commiserations with personal anecdotes and encouragement, casting the conflicting feelings as normal parenting experiences:

[@commenter] I know how you feel. Our two are being particularly 'challenging' of late, resulting in the eldest getting a massive telling off the other day. [...]

[@commenter] Parenting is a total rollercoaster - as you say one minute they are the cutest angels and your heart is bursting and the next they are the spawn of Satan! [...]

[@commenter] But look how gorgeous he is!!!!

These tensions can be a cause for personal struggle for fathers (Pedersen 2015), which is compounded by a reluctance to open up to family and friends. As such, Instadads counter a "culture of silencing" around men's mental health (Das and Hodkinson 2019, p. 1) by providing a space for other fathers to disclose intimate information on their own terms.

In their emoting labour, some Instadads also draw on humour. Although the Instadads

are keenly aware of the ‘playful but incompetent and undomesticated dad’ stereotypes traditionally associated with fatherhood (Gentry and Harrison 2010; Marshall et al. 2014), some of our participants declared it important not to obfuscate their personal brands with too much “lovey dovey stuff” (Ross). They therefore reproduce parts of the hegemonic stereotypes so as not to alienate their followers. @dad20’s account in particular jumps out for the tone of voice that he uses to describe family responsibilities, which often clash with his family-oriented snapshots (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. @dad20 on 1 May 2019 (908 likes, 35 comments):** This is me, taking the kids out on my own and having endless fun 🐼. They’re always so well behaved 😊👉 can’t wait to do it again this weekend and give mommy a well deserved rest 😊 [...] #instafamsham #icallbullshit

The content is humorous, using the stereotype of undomesticated dad (Gentry and Harrison 2010), and it implies that the main care responsibilities still rest on the shoulders of the mother (Cappellini et al. 2019). As one of his commenters engaged him on another post, he seems to take such topics in jest:

[@mum\_follower:] “Who run the world - BOYS” - a bold statement to make when we all know that 90% of your followers are females.. #girlpower #spiceupyourlife

@dad20: 🤔🤔🤔👉

This particular account highlighted other posts from less ‘laddish’ fathers that picked up, played on, and reproduced gender stereotypes without challenging them, indicating that equal

parenting and involved fatherhood does not necessarily mean questioning notions that essentialise gender (Molander 2019; Shirani, Henwood, and Coltart 2012). Emoting therefore aims to strike a careful balance between opening up a space for a *more* involved fatherhood, while retaining forms of masculinity (Klasson and Ulver 2015) to avoid alienating their audiences.

### *Reframing*

Reframing is the work that influencers perform by critiquing a status quo, and presenting alternative discursive spaces (Molander, Kleppe, and Ostberg 2019) that are ultimately aimed at creating greater inclusion in the marketplace (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). Instadads critique mainstream depictions of fatherhood and argue for fairer representation within the marketplace by offering new contours for the role, actively fighting stigmatising media messages, and articulating a market space for them to claim. Several participants expressed their frustration with the failure of society, expressed in part through the marketplace, to recognise fathers as co-parents:

I remember Lidl had a range of baby products and the ads in store were “these nappies are great, it’ll make baby happy and mum happy.” That left a bad taste in my mouth. It was discrimination. I think it is a shame that dads aren’t thought of as carers (Carl).

The Instadads’ first challenge is to demonstrate how they are hands-on parents who are competent at caregiving. For example, having come across an A-level psychology handbook, @dad6 was astounded to find fathers described as “important secondary attachment figures” who are “generally better at providing challenging situations for their children.” The text continues to claim that “a father is an exciting playmate while mothers are more conventional and tend to read stories for their children.” In his accompanying comment, @dad6 questions whether it is an accurate portrayal:

... there’s masses of research showing that fathers are capable of being much more than “playmates.” [...] It also sends out a bizarre message that fathers should be insensitive as it’s character building. As for mums, well, just remember it’s your job to be “conventional” and read to your offspring! Don’t try being fun and engaging!

Pointing out that mothers are just as pigeonholed as fathers by such assertions, @dad6 displays an awareness that parenting stereotypes based on intensive mothering (Hays 1996) are a site of struggle that these parents actively feel they need to engage with. Some try to turn this into an explicit advantage for their influencer activities because they believe that breaking out of the mould attracts brand interest:

It's still deemed surprising by a majority of the UK population when a dad is a participant [...] we try to use it to our advantage in the content that we produce. If you do something that is deemed outside the normal role of the male parent in the child's life then people will really engage with it and therefore it is really good for the brand... just by showing something that we do normally, but so many people are surprised that we do it (Will).

Reframing also happens by challenging the social stigma attached to involved fatherhood (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013). For example, Instadads actively critique those who shame them for being emotionally involved with their children, as occurred during #beckhamgate when TV presenter Piers Morgan criticised David Beckham for kissing his daughter on the lips (e.g., Nutburn 2019). At least five out of our 20 Instadads expressed their outrage, often posting pictures of themselves kissing their children. @dad14's striking image of him holding and kissing his daughter on the beach stands out against his usual black-and-white compositions and epitomises the type of representations that can be produced through reframing labour (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. @dad14 on 8 June 2017 (5605 likes; 195 comments):** This photo is meant as a great big f you to all of those who feel that parents kissing their children is wrong. I kiss and hug my little girl and little boy so much, it's all done out of affection and love. We need more love in this world. If you don't agree or don't approve of the picture, you [*sic*] comments are not wanted, their [*sic*] is a great big button that says unfollow in my profile and I suggest you go press it.

In the caption, @dad14 gives clear instructions to those who took offence, challenging them to unfollow him and thereby relinquish their connection to the Instadad community.

Reclaiming media space is also done by generating content beyond their Instagram accounts, such as broadcasting their mental health experiences on podcasts. Pushing this agenda further, some of the Instadads have become spokespeople for specific causes, and have been invited to speak at conferences (e.g., the Equality and Human Rights Commission) and television broadcasts, from the BBC's Good Morning Britain to the Channel 5 news. Topics have ranged from generally increasing the visibility of stay-at-home-fathers to more specific aims, such as challenging Pierce Morgan's comments on the unmanliness of baby carriers, debating Andrea Leadsom's wish to ban LGBT education in schools, and discussing Shared Parental Leave.

These appearances reinforce the Instadads' statuses as media personalities, unfurling positions from which they can credibly create content that will resonate with specific family needs. @dad19, for example, has paired up with brands such as Alpro and ASDA to campaign for greater awareness around lactose intolerance, turning his child's dietary

requirements into material for sponsored content (“The sigh of being inconvenienced,” August 30, 2018; “Under the Nursery Milk Scheme,” October 3, 2018). Not only are these Instadads entrepreneurial (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013), they become mouthpieces for mainstream brands that seek an alternative connection to this segment than is afforded to them through ‘dadvertisements’ (Leader 2019).

## **Family**

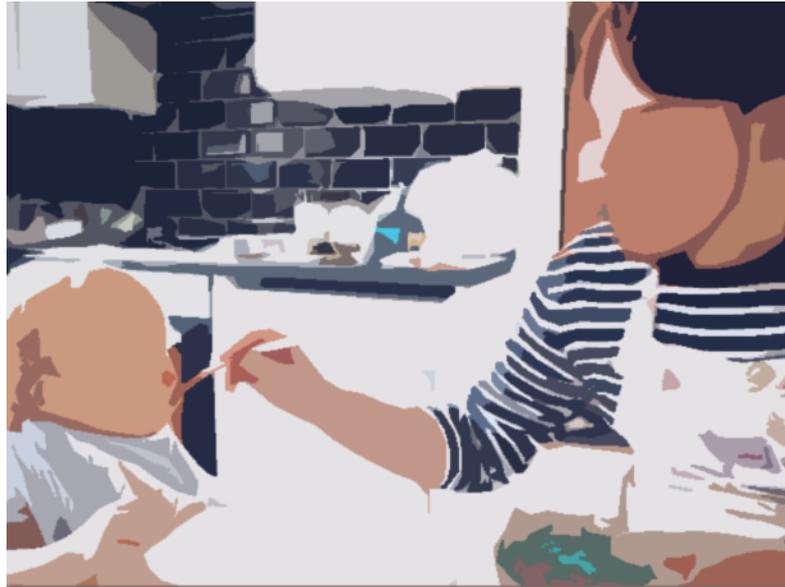
Besides its marketplace-facing dimension, sharenting also operates within the family unit, influencing and changing the fathers’ parenting practices. While parental tensions, doubts, and stressors engendered by sharenting are well documented (Blum-Ross and Livingstone 2017; Damkjaer 2018; Holiday, Norman, and Densley 2020), sharenting for profit further crystallises the ethical, moral, and familial negotiations that need to take place as parental and commercial goals conflate:

Your children grow up. There are a few Instagram feeds which I think are exploiting their children, and they are not allowing their children to grow up. They are doing the same stuff they did on Instagram a couple of years ago. Whilst they are getting thousands of likes, which I don’t, it does not look remotely authentic (Daniel).

In this damning assessment of how some Instadads balance their family responsibilities with their influencer careers, Daniel summarises the tensions that are inherent to family-facing aspects of sharenting labour. Below, we focus on unpacking three of its components: collaborating, staging, and protecting.

### *Collaborating*

‘Behind the scenes’ of the Instagram feed, Instadads operate in a constellation of family actors (Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Zelizer 2011) who each contribute to the production of the household vignettes. In other words, even when the father is the focus of attention, the influencers do not work alone, and their roles and activities as fathers develop in concert with their co-parent and child relationships.



**Figure 7. @dad7 on April 3, 2018 (50 comments, 100 likes):** “As the main cook in our house I am trying to cook [my child’s] meals at the same time as ours but finding inspiration of what to make him low. Does anyone have an app or book they swear by when making kids dinners?”

Demonstrating “how doing household chores are an immanent part of their practices” (Molander 2018, p. 165), @dad7 posted an image of himself feeding his infant whilst wearing a cutesy Cath Kidston apron against the backdrop of a messy kitchen (Figure 7). In the caption, @dad7 fleshes out this everyday moment by articulating a pragmatic need for expedience by cooking meals that are both child and adult friendly. As a reference to the household’s domestic arrangements, the post highlights the fluidity of roles between the parents, but also their awareness and reconfiguration of the atypical division of labour (Klasson and Ulver 2015). Reacting to this post, @dad7’s partner teased him on his implication that there is another cook in the household:

[@dad7’s partner:] “‘Main cook’ 😂😂😂”

@dad7: “sorry... only cook”

Calling @dad7 out on his understatement, his partner thus underscores their division of labour for humoristic effect, in a similar way to the visual humour of the slightly ill-fitting apron. This is different from the stay-at-home dads portrayed by Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) who unwillingly engaged in domestic chores, especially cooking. The Instadads do not shy away from this type of labour, but they also do not let it go

unrecognised.

Shifting in and out of visibility depending on their level of public engagement, partners are consistently crucial collaborators in the selection and *mise en scène* of the family pictures:

[My partner] is my biggest critic, it is something I need to keep my feet on the ground. [... They are] the creative director [...] Every post, every major ad we talk about it, we discuss scenes (Carl).

The reference to “creative director” adds a complementary hue to previous research highlighting the mother’s role as the “Executive Director of the children” (Russell, cited in Harrison, Gentry, and Commuri 2012, p. 339); here, the partner co-directs in the curation and construction of the private family moments. As the other parent, their approval is implicit: none of the participants reported disputes or the need to negotiate within the family over the influencer work, (contrary to what was observed in Ammari et al. 2015), though the following sections will articulate how sharenting labour is not straightforward.

The implicit buy-in of co-parents is hinted at through the public displays of gratitude and praise, which serve to emphasise that behind every great Instadad, there is a great co-parent. Weddings and anniversaries are often marked with a ‘throwback’ photo (reposting a picture taken years ago) and a love note. These make for remarkably popular posts, which do as well with the Instadads’ followers as baby pictures, thereby indicating how the relationship between the parents is of interest to their audience. When @dad14 found his very pregnant partner asleep on the floor between the cots of their two children (Figure 8), he took one of his characteristically stunning black-and-white snapshots, which became his most popular post to date.



**Figure 8. @dad14 on August 14, 2018 (11,530 likes and 487 comments):** I was going to post something completely different tonight all on queue to try and be witty or the like. Then I realise [@spouse] was taking her time putting the kids to sleep and all was quiet on the baby monitor so down I go and these three little ones are all snoring away mama included. Fatherhood is great but motherhood is just crazy. Mamas I salute you, [@spouse] you amaze me every day keeping this family together, your kids adore you.

Posts such as these reveal a relational stance that refuses to isolate fatherhood from the co-parent (and in some instances, other caregivers), thereby diverging from the insistence on autonomy in hegemonic masculine norms (Coltrane 1996).

The children themselves play a critical role in this portrayal of family life. In the early days of sharenting, pictures of babies and toddlers as in (Figure 4) are known to be popular (Le Moignan et al. 2017) and often serve as the entry point into building up a following with less established influencers:

So when [my daughter] was a baby, there were a lot more likes and comments compared to now. Whether or not that is the algorithm, or the fact that [she] isn't a baby anymore[, I don't know... She] is getting older so there will be less interest in her. People don't want to see pictures of six-or seven-year-olds (Carl).

As the children get older, however, their value shifts from being a source of cuteness and diaper war stories, to co-creators in their own right, as Bernard articulates below:

Our children really are the best comedians, they make up things that are just so funny, and I guess I just thought, "hey, I can use this."

Bernard refers to them as his source of inspiration, the impetus for putting together his

Instagram profile in the first place.

Beyond providing inspiration, children also contribute to brand collaborations given that many of the products that the fathers promote are child-oriented. As the actual users, the children's opinions and experiences will therefore influence the father's review. Will speaks of his four-year-old daughter both as fully entitled to an opinion, and as a one-person focus group standing in for 'all four-year-olds':

[She] is a little four-year-old taste maker. If she doesn't want to wear something, then she won't, and then we won't do [the post] because 1) it doesn't represent us very well; and 2) because if our four-year-old little girl doesn't like something, then other four-year-old girls probably won't. Yeah, her opinion is really important. As a family, we try to really listen to our children and their opinion really counts.

The children are, in other words, seen as collaborators in the production of Instagrammable content. This is an notable diversion from the intensive mothering ideology, where children do not have a productive role within the household (Hays 1996). The Instadads' children, by contrast, are producers within the entrepreneurial household; as they age, they transition from dependants to collaborators.

### *Staging*

To produce commissioned content, Instadads make staging decisions (cf. staged authenticity: Abidin 2017; Le Moignan et al. 2017) that conflate with the planning of everyday family life. While some content is crafted by reflecting on parenthood in mundane situations (e.g., feeding, sleeping, caring for), others focus on the family's leisure time activities. In reference to the continuous need for new content, Ross describes how this planning adds some zest to their daily lives:

**Interviewer:** So when you go for shoots, will you do that especially to create content?

**Ross:** [W]e will go out later today, to just get the kids out the house, but it will also be to create something original. It really drives us to do something we wouldn't normally do. You know if we have a deadline, but we are feeling lazy, it will force us to go out and do something.

Beholden to his deadlines, Ross's family outings are planned to be doubly productive:

they give the family something unusual to do, and give Ross original content for his feed. He subsequently qualifies that there is a common-sensical limit to this planning: “Not to the extent that we will take changes of clothes, of course. It shouldn’t dictate your life, but if it can drive you to do more things, then that is great!”

Because the activities are staged, there is a perceived temptation to run them in a business-like manner by privileging expedience and effectiveness, which does not always sit well with the Instadads. Echoing the reference to packing a change of clothes for the children, Bernard offered that:

Rumour has it... That [this famous Instadad] will go to London and take his kids to different museums and different parks in one day, and will take a change of clothes. He will go and take loads of photos and that is two weeks of content. He has a big account, he must make a lot of money, fair enough, but we don’t need the money as such so we can just have fun.

For both Bernard and Ross, comparing their practices to well-known and more instrumental competitors allows them to disambiguate which staging practices are permissible, and which are not. Packing a change of clothes takes staging one step too far. For Bernard, content needs to grow organically from the children:

All the content we try to create... is very much real. We don’t try to stage it. Mostly it is stuff that just happens, hence why my photos are just from my phone. It is not a professional camera, which a lot of these mum and dad bloggers carry with them now. I think it must be hard to capture a funny moment, and must feel staged...

Similar to the packing of clothes, Bernard’s reference to the use of camera equipment draws a line between co-opted and authentic family moments. Yet Bernard’s feed is popular for his ‘trick’ photos that aren’t spontaneous, but carefully directed and sophisticated visual jokes that he produces together with his children. The definition of what kind of staging is permitted therefore emerges from the perceived relationship between parent and child while they produce the content. Operating in a mode of ‘playbour’ (Archer 2019b), Bernard “has fun” with his children, whilst others “stage.”

Besides defining and directing family moments, staging takes yet another dimension in deciding which brands the influencer will collaborate with and thereby introduce to his

family. Fathers have previously been documented as largely uninterested in performing the emotional labour that comes with selecting domestic brands (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Harrison, Gentry, and Commuri 2012), and as scornful of a perceived hyper-materialist one-upmanship of parental consumption (Shirani, Henwood, and Coltart 2012). Our Instadads, however, actively contemplate which collaborations can synergise with their family lives. Together with his spouse, Will strategizes on how best to secure the income:

It's about balance, you can't save the world without funding yourself, I think. *We do follow the money* to be completely honest, but it's great that we are approached by so many people that we can choose [who to collaborate with].

While Will and his partner are selective of the brands that they work with, one of the criteria is how lucrative the collaboration will be. The Instadads generally confirmed that a successful feed leads to more choice, but the range of that choice set will depend on who can pay. Working with smaller brands alongside the bigger ones is justified as a quasi-pro-bono endeavor: “We also worked with a small lollipop business, I like to support them as they are [small] like ourselves” (John). Otherwise, the family’s consumption choice depicted on the Instagram feed is very much guided by the collaborations available to them, rather than their unprompted consumption patterns:

A lot of people say, “I only work with brands that I use.” Well, they are lying! That would really limit what people would work with. I only use brands which I *could* use (Carl).

It is only a matter of time, however, before an Instadad is approached for content that they see as too far removed from their parenting focus, too unauthentic, as in Lance’s example:

She didn't want to eat it. I told them this, and [Sainsbury's] were like, “well you have a contract, you have to do it.” [...] I just said look, she's not eating it, I am not going to post and lie that she is. [...] if we can't find a compromise you have your first bit of content for free and then I will walk away.

Lance has faced moments where he needed to revise the agreement with a big brand, such as Sainsbury, so as not to transgress a line of staging that he holds himself to, which is that his children did not like the food he was supposed to promote. Lance had drawn a clear line: he

would not stage and misrepresent his child's approval, so the compromise was that he produced a different post to honour his contract.

### *Protecting*

The vignette above also points to a continuous negotiation between profit motives and protecting the child, whether this is conceptualised as shielding them from violations of privacy and data ownership (Bessant 2018; Donovan 2020; Steinberg 2016) or the moral threat of being involved in economic activity (Zelizer 2002). While the former is a growing concern with sharenting, the latter is specific to influencers whose children become collateral micro-celebrities. Aware of the backlash experienced by Instamums (e.g., Rose 2018), Instadads tread carefully where accusations of exploitation could arise, if not for the sake of their children, then for the sake of their profiles. The degree and range of concerns that they vocalise thus vary, but most Instadads deploy strategies to synchronise parenting with the generation of sharenting income: they edit their posts, they make tactical financial decisions, and they monitor their children's understanding and assent.

The involvement of child actors prompts parents to reflect on the need to shield the child's most intimate moments, as Daniel discussed below:

If you look back at my blog, you'll see I posted about my daughter breaking her two front teeth. She snapped them in two. I have photographs of it, and it could be very easy for me to post it, but for me that is too invasive. I try to safeguard them (Daniel).

Parents thus actively select what is and is not appropriate for public consumption (Ammari et al. 2015), which may include editing the way the story is portrayed. In this and other moments of familial disharmony (Le Moignan et al. 2017), Daniel chose to use stock imagery to illustrate his post, even though he had "no doubt that that has cost me money." Daniel is a veteran blogger, and as the father of a pre-teen, he is very aware of the need for his child's consent. Unlike many other Instadads, his influencer platform is neither native nor confined to Instagram, which also means that he is less dependent on catering to the

platform's visuality (Laestadius 2017)—using stand-in imagery is therefore a viable strategy.

By comparison, those who are more beholden to Instagram can struggle to find the right tonality in photographing their families and work to striking a comfortable balance.

Reflecting on work that had been approved by a client and posted, Barney backtracked when he realised that the photograph did not sit well with him:

I didn't feel comfortable, it felt like [my daughter] was a child model or something. I asked [the brand] if I could crop the image out and they said "yeah." Brands don't want to exploit children, or at least I hope... so if it doesn't feel right, I won't post it.

Seeing his daughter potentially emulating or being associated with child models was crossing a line for Barney. Where this line is to be drawn is a continuous negotiation in which Barney was carving out a route that he felt was not exploitative. Reflecting on common Instadad practices, Barney insinuated that the reason the big accounts are lucrative is because they take advantage of their children:

Now I don't really care about [the tips that big account holders give] anymore. I am getting enough brands to work with me, I like the look of my feed. The fact that I don't exploit my children. Some may argue that I do... but I don't try and make it obvious.

Resonant with the staging labour outlined above, Barney's yardstick for exploitation seemed to be whether the family is "too obvious" in pursuing influencer income, rather than the current and future wellbeing of the child.

Another strategy that is employed to keep a sense of exploitation at bay is how the influencers handle remuneration: some Instadads have a clear plan for the income they generate, especially when their influencer activities are 'top-ups' on other sources of income. For some, the money is earmarked (Zelizer 2011) for activities that benefit the children: "Any money that we get goes into an account for the kids. I don't touch it at all. It goes towards any extras they may need" (Lance), such as "an annual pass to the zoo or a holiday" (Bernard). For others, they make sure that the children receive a fee: "I also pay them, as I am running the blog as a limited company these days, I pay them from my company" (Daniel). Finally, some would occasionally agree to gifts instead of a fee because they knew their children

would enjoy them: “Generally, I would say no [to gifts in return for a post] as I do paid things, but she loves the product, and so I wanted to get them for her as it would make her happy” (Carl). In these accounts, the children are acknowledged as economic agents and beneficiaries, with a right to enjoy the fruit of their labour.

Finally, whilst monitoring their understanding and consent, the Instadads expand their children’s role as decision makers as they grow older. By way of example, Bernard indicated how his three-year-old daughter’s understanding of Instagram is shallower than that of his six-year-old son:

**Interviewer:** You mentioned that your son is aware of Instagram... does he understand what you do?

**Bernard:** Yeah, he very much understands it, he just thinks it’s really funny. [...] I think my daughter understands a little bit, but she is only 3. My boy though knows more about it through school.

Age and socialisation are seen as contextualising factors for a child’s perceived understanding, as well as the impact that their appearance on Instagram has on the rest of their lives. Implicitly, the youngest children are not believed to be capable of sufficient understanding, and are therefore protected through measures such as not using them to promote products that they do not enjoy (see Lance’s example with Sainsbury’s above). But as Paul indicates, this can only be a temporary arrangement in the face of the child’s emerging agency:

I try to stay away from posting stuff that [could be] really embarrassing for my son when he gets older. I think as my children get older, I will give them more freedom to choose what goes on there (Paul).

The Instadads therefore anticipate these changing dynamics, imagining how their children might relate to the work in the future (Blum-Ross and Livingstone 2017) and how they might find some posts embarrassing. Sharenting labour is thus predicated on the possibility of the child’s assent: as the toddler’s innocence gives way to the schoolchild’s comprehension, so does the perception that commodifying their lives is unproblematic.

## DISCUSSION

In a recent editorial, Peterson calls for macromarketing research to illuminate how marketing and society shape each other, giving particular attention to how marketing systems materially condition life, as well as to their ethical implications and historical trajectories (2020). Following this lead, in this paper we aimed to understand the intersection between involved fatherhood, market representations, and the family as a site for entrepreneurial activity. We unpacked how Instadads operationalise the new discursive territory of involved fatherhood into commercial representations. We achieved this by articulating the notion of sharenting labour, which refers to the labour that parents perform in showcasing their family life online for a commercial return.

The dimensions of sharenting labour are disambiguated into activities that face the marketplace, and activities that face the family. Facing the marketplace, we show that Instadads *connect* by reaching out to fellow Instadads and potential collaborators; they *emote* to attract the attention and engagement of different audiences; and they *reframe* by critiquing mainstream representations of fatherhood and argue for greater inclusion within the marketplace. Connecting, emoting and reframing are strategies through which the discursive territory of involved fatherhood is showcased and transformed into commercial representations.

Within the family, Instadads *collaborate* by involving other family members in their influencer activities; they *stage* family life to derive shareable content from it; and they *protect* the children by attempting to shield them from the moral threat of being involved in economic activity. While we differentiate the sharenting labour across these different dimensions, these types of labour are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they build and draw on each other. For example, in order to emote, Instadads need to collaborate with their family members to stage effective family scenes.

With these findings, we contribute to the literature about fatherhood, parenting ideologies, and its commercial representations (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Haase et al. 2016; Leader 2019; Marshall et al. 2014; Molander 2019; Molander, Kleppe, and Ostberg 2019). Molander et al. argue that representations of involved fatherhood have the power to open up a “highly contested discursive territory by drawing new boundaries that challenge the previous conceptions of [fatherhood]” (2019, p. 449). Extending this work, we show how a new market actor, the influencer, is shifting these boundaries through sharenting labour. By *connecting*, Instadads are able to reach a wide audience of other involved fathers and mothers to create a community. By *emoting*, the Instadads elicit active engagement from their followers, which is a sign of market power within the attention economy (Eckhardt and Bardhi 2019). By *reframing* the representation of fatherhood and challenging existing stigmatisation, they claim greater market attention and push the boundaries of masculine representations. They act like the Fatshionistas described by Scaraboto and Fischer (2013), as they endeavour to shift representations of fatherhood in the market.

Part of the labour performed by Instadads recalls the activities performed by the stay-at-home-dads described by Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) such as building a community and claiming space within the marketplace. Instadads do not shy away from showcasing and valorising domestic and emotional work performed in the service of their children, precisely because it gives them content that will appeal to their audiences. By exhibiting it, the investment in domestic cultural capital is converted to attention capital on social media (Eckhardt and Bardhi 2019), which in turn is transformed into economic and symbolic capital previously inaccessible to stay-at-home fathers.

Finally, the Instadads use their gendered parental identity to carve out a market space that is lucrative for themselves, as well as affirming for those audiences that otherwise feel overlooked by the market. It is noteworthy that the Instadads were conscious that their

followers consisted of both men and women, thus suggesting that the desire to see greater male involvement in childcare is sought out by both genders. By offering their narratives of involved fathering, they therefore contribute to the adoption of caregiving activities as legitimately male.

As a phenomenon, sharenting is still in its infancy and its full ramifications are likely to unfurl as it matures. Our findings suggest a number of productive avenues for further research. For example, in the knowledge that the children's tractability is temporary and that public concern over the child's data ownership is unlikely to subside, we observed that the influencers were contemplating shifts that would primarily capitalise on their personalities as parents. Though some worried that removing the child from the spotlight would jeopardise their income, others reported that they had done so successfully. Future research could examine the limits and opportunities of sharenting labour without involving the child.

Addressing family relations in more detail, further research could also address the negotiations between parenting couples of which one or both are sharenting for profit. Though our participants did not report tensions with their spouses over the influencer work, one did acknowledge that his partner was unhappy with the time he spent sustaining the feed. Likewise, in a recent Insta-couple scandal that led to the Instamum's retirement, her influencer husband was critiqued for continuing business as usual with no mention of her (Dunbar 2019). These two examples show again the two-sidedness of sharenting labour: private relationships that are commodified for profit means that they can be subjected to intense public scrutiny, and must therefore be carefully managed.

Finally, we only briefly covered the tensions inherent in the Instadads' self-representations as men, husbands, and parents. Some content suggests that a degree of hegemonic masculine norms prevail or were changed just enough to sustain a privileged position (Patterson and Elliott 2002). After all, hegemonic masculinity can be understood as a

set of practices that continuously change to sustain patriarchal power structures (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), and it may be the case that broadening the commercial representation of parenting to include involved fatherhood will help sustain inequitable divisions of labour elsewhere. Remarkably, fathers who were more conscious of gender equality intermingled with those who held more stereotypically gendered views, indicating that they are at the very least tolerant of each other's existence. The strength of their ties, the way in which these 'lad' dads construct their profiles, and how these relate to the ideal of involved fatherhood will be subject to further research.

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Table 1: Forms of digital labour

<b>Form of labour</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Connective labour	Labour to maximize attention for monetization purposes by using the affordances of the platform, such as using hashtags and tagging (Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2018).
Emotional labour	Commodification of the management of feelings and emotions (Hochschild 2003), including the management of anger, guilt, and praise (Mardon, Molesworth, and Grigore 2018), and the display of anxiety (Bishop 2018).
Relational labour	The ongoing, everyday sustenance of communication between influencer and follower to build social relationships over time (Baym 2015b).
Platform labour	Labour that seeks to game, resist, or subvert the algorithms that govern social media platforms, such as the creation of engagement pods (O’Meara 2019)

Table 2. Participant details

@dad #	Age	Instadad Occupation	Occupation of the partner	Marital Status	# Kids	Followers	IG Couple
1	33	Full time employment	SAHM	Married	1 Boy and 1 on the way	13.1k	No
2	34	Full time employment	Full time employment	Married	2 Boys	5.3K	No
3	N/A	N/A	N/A	Married	3 Girls and 1 Boy	8.6K	Yes
4	40	SAHD/Influencer	N/A	Long-term partner	3 Kids	35.4K	Yes
5	N/A	SAHD/Writer	N/A	Married	1 Girl	49.2K	No
6	40	SAHD/Influencer	Full time employment	Married	2 Girls	8.7k	No
7	31	Full time employment	SAHM	Long-term partner	1 Girl and 1 Boy	4.1k	No
8	36	Full time employment	Part time employment	Married	1 Boy and 1 Girl	16.9k	No
9	35	SAHD/Influencer	Full time employment	Long-term partner	1 Girl	30.9k	Yes
10	38	SAHD/Writer/ Podcaster	Influencer/Presenter/ Columnist	Married	2 Girls	47.2K	Yes
11	35	Full time employment	SAHD and artist	Married	1Boy	21K	No
12	35	Full time employment	Part time employment/SAHM	Married	4 Girls	1M	Yes
13	36	SAHD/Freelance Journalist	Journalist	Married	1 Girl and 1 Boy	11.3k	No
14	36	SAHD/ Influencer	Influencer business w/partner	Married	1 Boy 1 Girl	65.7k	No
15	41	Firefighter/Influencer	Journalist and SAHM	Married	1 Boy and 1 Girl	36.2k	Yes
16	N/A	Full time employment	SAHM	Married	1 Boy and 1 Girl	11K	Yes
17	39	SAHD/Author	N/A	Married	1 Boy and 1 Girl	7.3k	No
18	N/A	Full time employment	SAHM/Influencer	Married	2 Boys	7K	Yes
19	31	Full time employment	SAHM/ Influencer	Married	2 Girls and 1 Boy	14.1	Yes
20	25	Full time employment	Influencer/ Family business	Married	3 Boys	16K	Yes
21	32	SAHD/Working part time	N/A	Married	2 Boys	16.3K	No