
NAVIGATING FATHERHOOD ONLINE: A SCOPING REVIEW

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BACKGROUND

- Transitioning into fatherhood can be a risk period for mental ill-health (Baldwin et al., 2018)
 - Shifts in relationships, identities, and daily routines
- Men use online communities for information, support, and connection (Das & Hodgkinson, 2019; Watkins et al., 2024)
- Engaging in platforms like Reddit, social media pages, and parenting blogs, websites, and podcasts related to fatherhood



WHAT MIGHT ONLINE COMMUNITIES OFFER NEW FATHERS?

- Accessibility, immediacy, anonymity
- Asking questions, exploring roles, sharing experiences, connection

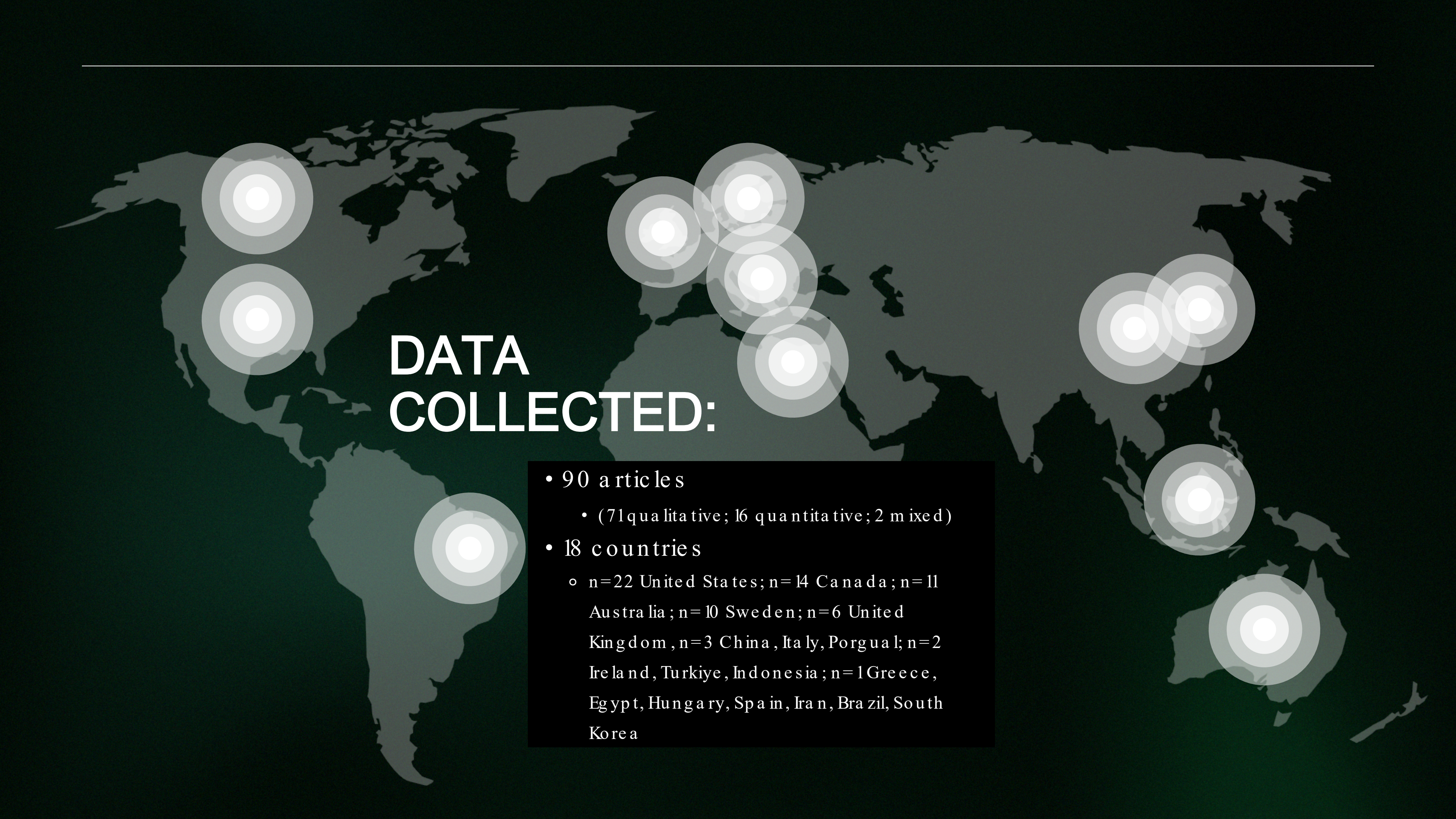


**RQ: HOW DO MEN USE
ONLINE
PLATFORMS TO
NAVIGATE
FATHERHOOD?**

INCLUDED STUDIES

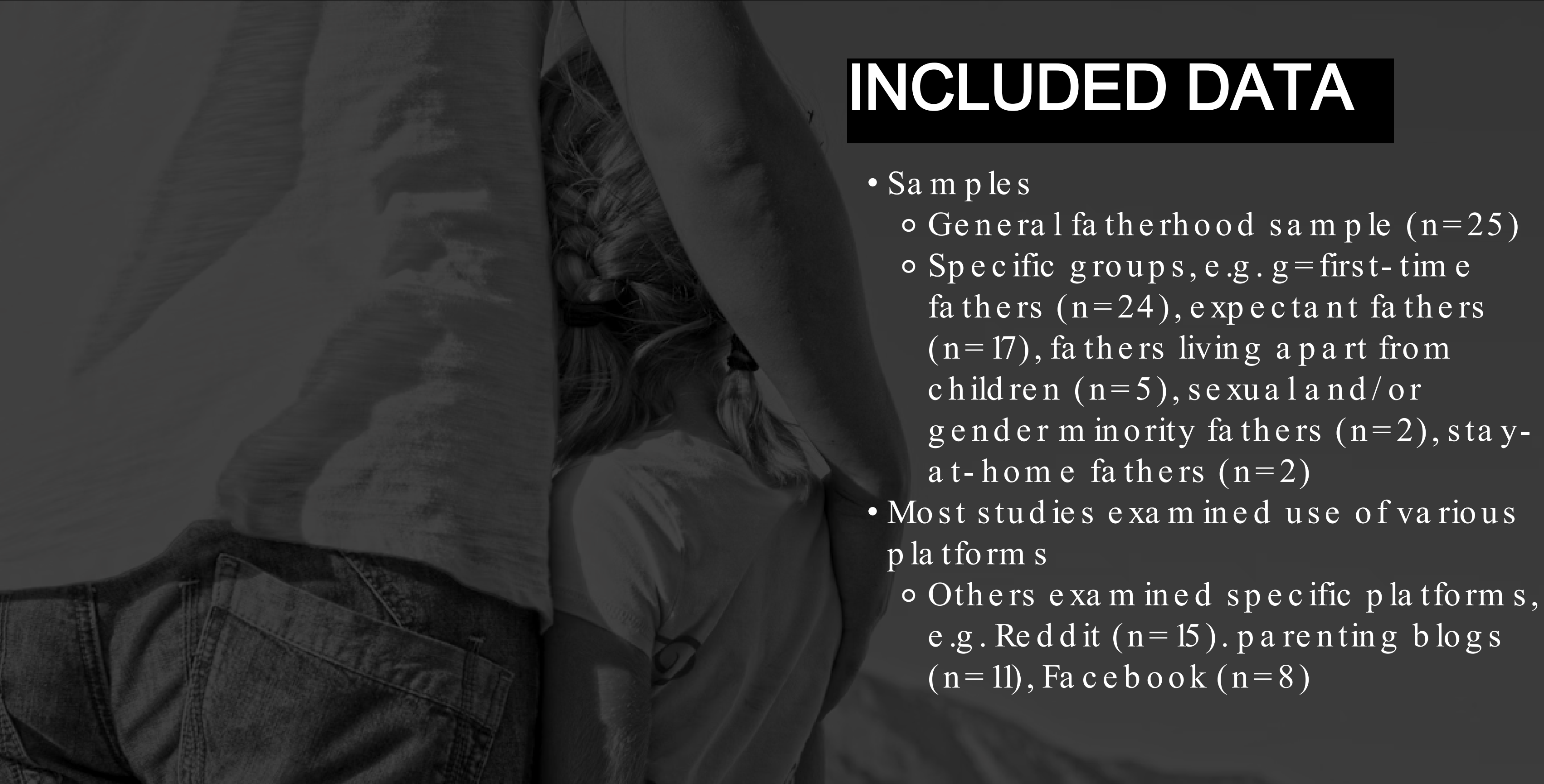
- Qualitative and quantitative
- Examined use of social media sites (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Instagram), blogs, online forums/chatrooms
- Provided results specifically for fathers
- Peer-reviewed
- 2000-2025



A dark-themed world map with several circular markers indicating data collection locations. The markers are concentrated in North America, Europe, and East Asia. The text 'DATA COLLECTED:' is overlaid on the map.

DATA COLLECTED:

- 90 articles
 - (71 qualitative; 16 quantitative; 2 mixed)
- 18 countries
 - n=22 United States; n=14 Canada; n=11 Australia; n=10 Sweden; n=6 United Kingdom, n=3 China, Italy, Portugal; n=2 Ireland, Türkiye, Indonesia; n=1 Greece, Egypt, Hungary, Spain, Iran, Brazil, South Korea



INCLUDED DATA

- Samples
 - General fatherhood sample (n=25)
 - Specific groups, e.g. first-time fathers (n=24), expectant fathers (n=17), fathers living apart from children (n=5), sexual and/or gender minority fathers (n=2), stay-at-home fathers (n=2)
- Most studies examined use of various platforms
 - Others examined specific platforms, e.g. Reddit (n=15), parenting blogs (n=11), Facebook (n=8)

THEME 1: SEEKING AND SHARING PRACTICAL INFORMATION

SEEKING AND SHARING INFORMATION

- Evidence largely in anonymous (non-identifiable) online spaces, with fathers seeking/sharing information across the transition to fatherhood.
- Desire for practical advice for supporting partners and children
 - Caring for children; supporting partners; health-related; recommended products
- Desire for reliable, practical advice for supporting partners and children
 - Hearing from men who had 'been there'

"Original post: I am worried about.. cerebral palsy. I want to talk to anyone who has experienced low muscle tone with feeding problems and has come through ok."

Reply: My son had low mouth and upper trunk muscle tone and feeding problems. He stayed in the NICU 3 weeks past term. Try not to worry about the big issues - basically you can only control a small portion right now!"
(Kim et al. 2016)

THEME 2: SHARING AND NORMALISING CHALLENGES OF FATHERHOOD

SHARING CHALLENGES OF FATHERHOOD

- Finding solidarity with other fathers in shared challenges across both identifiable and anonymous platforms
- Postnatal depression and anxiety
- Disconnection and loss (e.g. miscarriage, death, relationship changes/breakdown)
- Also discussed struggles of daily parenting (e.g., lifestyle changes, financial strain, difficulties balancing work and caring)

"I shared it [an article on mental health] on Facebook, and maybe I think selfishly thought I might get a bit of a response, there was a ... not necessarily cry for help, but I kind of was hoping for someone of my, any of my friends to see that and go ... hold on a minute, why is he sharing that?" - Das & Hodgkinson (2019)

THEME 3. RECONFIGURING IDENTITIES

RECONFIGURING IDENTITIES

- Reflecting on relationships with masculinity and what it meant to be a 'good father'
- Considering roles, identities, and intersecting parts of the self
- Desires for active involvement
 - Emphasising nature and presence
 - Desire to be recognised as equal caregivers
 - Parental leave sometimes limited the level of involvement fathers wanted

"I'm going to be the father I never had ...Rather than getting more pissed off about what my father wasn't, and using that as an excuse to feel lost, I decided to do something more"(Sheibling, 2019)

THEME 4. SHARING PRIDE AND JOY

SHARING PRIDE AND JOY

- Sharing meaningful, positive moments surrounding fatherhood
 - Key milestones and updates shared in real-time
- Pride, gratitude, and gratefulness surrounding their roles as fathers
- Awe and wonder at their developing children
- Inviting others in to witness and celebrate the joys of fatherhood

*“I love the morning and
afternoons when my little
man is up and greets me.
There is nothing more
special than this.”*

(StGeorge & Fletcher, 2011)

KEY TAKE-AWAYS



Fathers actively seek and produce online spaces that meet their fathering-related needs



Some feel undermined as equal caregivers, and uncomfortable engaging in parent groups where men feel under-represented



Online engagement can foster connection and support among men who are fathers, rather than only isolation and radicalisation

THANK YOU

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