Consuming Parenthood:
negotiating the trajectories of a new-born

by

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Abstract

Entering a new stage in life is often associated with a transaction in the marketplace; arguably, this is most relevant, when becoming a parent for the first time. The transition to parenthood is not only a personal transition, but also a time to understand and negotiate all the 'stuff' that comes with a new-born baby. New parents must, in a short space of time, acquire, understand, store, put together, and eventually get rid of the commodities required to facilitate a new-born baby. Adding to existing geographical research on everyday practices, this research used semi-structured in-depth interviews, to explore how first-time parents negotiate consumption, in relation to the acquisition, utilisation and divestment of children's commodities. Interviews were conducted with new parents, in particular mothers, to investigate how and why they chose to consume in certain ways, and to understand the role of second-hand economies in this transition. It concludes that, alluding to representations of class and the construction of gender and motherhood, first time parents balance cost, risk and sentiment to negotiate consumption, perpetuating discourses of 'good parenting'.

Research Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that any use of the work of others has been appropriately acknowledged as in-text citations and compiled in the reference list. I also confirm that the project has been conducted in compliance with the University's research ethics policy and evidence of this has been included in my dissertation.

I agree that the project dissertation can be made available as a Reference Document for other students in the School of Energy, Construction & Environment Information Room/Map Library.

Signed: Yasmeen Reznik Date: 26/04/2022

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1.0 Introduction

In contemporary culture, taking on a new role is often associated with a transaction in the marketplace (Hogg et al. 2004). The transition to parenthood is undoubtably one of these times, requiring the sudden accumulation of commodities to negotiate a new-born baby. Likewise, becoming a parent for the first time not only requires personal adjustment, but a need to understand the mass of goods which come with a new baby, what is 'needed', how to use and store things, and how this material culture facilitates the discursive role of a 'good parent' (Miller 2013).

Geographers have tied notions of 'good parenting' with policies, put in place by New Labour, to encourage parents to take up work (Smith 2013). These include contributing up to 80% of childcare costs, and mandatory 'work focused interviews', in order for parents to take financial responsibility for their children and contribute to the capitalist labour market (Smith 2013). Moreover, there has been a shift in society's expectations that 'good mothers' should spend time at home looking after their children, whilst also taking an active role in the workplace (Wainwright et al 2011). Policies such as these re-enact class-based performances of parenting, which middle class parents-to-be may also demonstrate through acts of consumption.

Practices and motivations for consuming commodities for babies are complex and will be explored within this research. Negotiating consumption goes beyond acquisition, to include utilisation, as well as divestment, thus extending into and out of people's homes (Evans 2017). Geographers are interested in households as a site of consumption, to understand 'the social lives of things' (Evans 2017), as well as how identities are constructed, and value is assigned to commodities.

Furthermore, and increasingly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the home has become a site for online consumption. The popularity of online shopping has risen sharply, with 99% of individuals aged 25-34 preferring to shop online, rather than in-store, in 2020 (Martin 2021). Additionally, rising living costs and increases in fuel and energy prices means new parents are constantly looking for ways to save money, by shopping online for the best deals, and making use of alternative economies (Mintel 2022).

Mintel (2022) reports that in 2021, nearly 3 in 5 parents (59%) bought items second-hand. This alternate economy has also been termed 'pre-loved', which arguably instils emotional meanings to second-hand items. Online platforms have added to traditional sites, such as charity shops, therefore expanding their markets, allowing consumers to save money and stop items going to waste or landfill (Mintel 2022), though alternative motivations, such as balancing risk, have been explored further in this research. These 'peer-to-peer' marketplaces are largely app-based, including Facebook Marketplace, Vinted, Gumtree, Shpock, and private or public Instagram sales pages.

Overall, this project presents an account of how first-time parents negotiate consumption. It crosses the line into consumers' homes, to understand how consumption is managed through the transition into parenthood, and specifically motherhood.

The aim of this research project is:

To understand how first-time parents negotiate consumption, in relation to the acquisition, utilisation and divestment of children's commodities.

The objectives are:

- To investigate how new parents acquire commodities for their babies and to explore their motivations for this
- To explore how goods are utilised and stored within the home as a site of consumption
- To identify the motivations and practices of the divestment of baby 'stuff'
- To understand how concepts of gender and motherhood are socially constructed in relation to the aim and objectives of the project

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will bridge the gap between geographies of consumption and geographies of motherhood, to cover geographies of consumption more broadly, before discussing changes in spaces and practices of consumption and the addition of second-hand economies. This will juxtapose geographies of motherhood, covering the social construction of gender and motherhood as identities, and make links with the commodification of parenthood.

2.2 Geographies of consumption

Consumption has become 'a way of life' (Miles 1998), and is covered by a range of disciplines, including economics, sociology, anthropology, cultural and media studies, and history, to name a few (Kneale and Dwyer 2008). However, before the 1980s, geographies of retailing and consumption were largely neglected, and therefore mostly descriptive, simplistic, and economic-focused (Blomley 1996; Crewe 2000). The growth of interest surrounding consumption in human geography coincided with the expansion of the discipline, after the 'cultural turn' in the 1980s (Kneale and Dwyer 2008). By the 1990s, shifts in retail and increased sites of consumption resulted in more focused academic attention towards relations between capital and the state (Wrigley and Lowe 1996; Crewe 2000). Specifically, mass consumption of commodities, free market trade, and marketing and advertising exemplified the commodification of everyday life in the postmodern epoch (Mansvelt 2005).

After the cultural turn, geographies of consumption expanded to consider more material and symbolic meanings of consumption. Mansvelt (2005: 6) argues that 'consumption can be understood as the complex sphere of social relations and discourses which centre on the sale, purchase and use of commodities'. Geographers are interested in the value and meaning of commodities; these are not fixed, rather fluid, meaning they vary across time and space (Mansvelt 2005). Commodities are objects of consumption and exchange (Lee 1993). For Marx, the 'use value' of objects is distorted as they become 'fetishised', acquiring human values and meanings to non-human objects (Kneale and Dwyer 2008). This research seeks to add to the work of geographers who have looked at the social meanings of commodities (see

Clarke 2004; Crewe 2003; Jackson 1999), to understand how meanings are attributed to objects, and identities are constructed as a result of consumption practices of new parents.

Whilst geographies of consumption have always paid attention to its material and symbolic nature, over time, there has been a shift in focus on sites and practices of consumption (Lane and Mansvelt 2020), which will be explored in the following two sections.

2.3 Spaces of consumption

Consumption spaces can be broken down into 'public' (high street, shopping centres) and 'private' (the home, the garden) (Crewe 2000). Early work in cultural geography focused on larger, more obvious spaces of consumption, such as shopping malls (see Gottdiener 1997; Miller et al. 1998). Following this, geographers have become interested in how different spaces are implicated and the distinctions between these. For example, studies into more inconspicuous spaces of consumption include charity shops (Gregson et al 2000) and nearly new sales of childrenswear (Clarke 2000; Waight 2015). Crewe and Gregson's work on car-boot sales (1998) revealed how exchange within such marginal spaces is not simply economic, but social, variable and challenged. Similarly, this work shows that the value and meanings inscribed upon commodities are elusive, and open to interpretation. The work on spaces of consumption has exposed the complex motivations for consumers to take part in these economies; this research will add to this work, to understand how and why first-time parents consume commodities for their children in the ways they do.

In addition to the above, there are a growing number of studies on the home as a site of consumption (see Cox 2013; Stevenson and Prout 2013; Hunter 2020). Feminist geographers argue that the home is a contested, gendered space, and meanings of the home are different for everyone (see Blunt and Dowling 2006; Mallett 2004; McDowell 2015). Geographies of the home ascertain that the home is much more than just a house or household, it is a 'place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and relations between the two' (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 3).

Within both geography and consumption literature, there has been a consideration of the home and domestic space to understand the ways in which consumer goods are appropriated in everyday spaces (Crewe 2000). For example, Orrmalm (2021) has looked at how everyday

space is made in the family home with babies' engagements of material things. Their work concludes that the subtle movement of toys within the home, and how things flow and are spread out, shapes spaces of the home. In addition, Lane and Gorman-Murray's edited book (2011), *Material Geographies of Household Consumption,* reviews the relationship between sustainability, consumption practices and the home. This research will add to this body of literature on the home as a site of consumption, as well as the use of online platforms accessed from the home, to understand the ways in which commodities are acquired and utilised within the home, as space is made for a new baby.

2.4 Consumption practices

In addition to a shift to more everyday spaces of consumption, since the mid-2000s, geographers have paid more attention to wider social and commodity practices (Lane and Mansvelt 2020). Evans (2019) has called for a clearer understanding of what consumption is, and when it occurs. Warde (2014: 281) identifies three fundamental dimensions of consumption: acquisition (accessing goods which will be consumed), appropriation (incorporating goods into everyday life with associated meanings) and appreciation (how pleasure and satisfaction is derived from consumption). Evans (2019: 507) adds to this, to include devaluation (the counterpart to appreciation and potential loss of cultural meaning or economic value), divestment (the counterpart to appropriation and removing attachments to goods) and disposal (the counterpart to acquisition, which may occur in different ways, not necessarily wasting).

The expansion of work on consumption practices has resulted in an understanding of what consumers do with goods after they have purchased them, how they are used, and the meanings associated with these practices. Examples of geographical literature concerned with the divestment and disposal of commodities include Gregson's work *Living with things* (2007), and Gregson et al's (2007) study on household divestment; both of which are conducted in participants' homes and interested in the movement of things in and out of the home. The latter reveals how participant's practices of divestment are bound with social relations, for example, abandoned clothing from Glastonbury festival is bought home, laundered, and taken to a charity shop, where its value will be renewed by the next buyer

(Gregson et al 2007). The change in focus of the study of consumption practices shows how through different trajectories, meanings are endowed, and identities are constructed through peoples' belongings.

Current literature follows a 'practice' understanding in relation to consumption, focusing on more everyday aspects and ethnographic methods (Warde 2005). This means that 'consumption is not itself a practice but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice' (Warde 2005: 137). For example, Tomori and Boyer's work (2019) looks at parenthood as a lived practice within the space of the home, to understand how parents negotiate how and where they sleep in relation to their new infants. This research will add to current literature on practice theory, instead, to focus on consumption as an outcome of the practice of parenting (Warde 2005).

2.5 Second-hand consumption

In addition to the focus on everyday spaces and sites of consumption, second-hand consumption is an area which has become of increasing interest to geographers (Clarke 2000; Gregson and Crewe 2003; Guiot and Roux 2010; Waight 2014; 2019). This work has examined second-hand consumer motivations, to understand insights of exchange and value of goods, and to develop accounts of consumption past production (Gregson and Crewe 2003).

Previous research related to second-hand consumers has uncovered economic and recreational motives to this form of shopping (Bardhi and Arnould 2005). Namely, those who have no choice to shop second-hand due to financial hardship (Williams and Windeback 2002), and those who chose this method to seek commodities for their unusual character and the enjoyment of hunting for unpredictable bargains (Guiot and Roux 2010). Additionally, there is a stigma associated with second-hand goods that is marked by the disadvantaged and excluded consumer (Williams and Windeback 2002; Ponsford 2011). The development of research has added to these interwoven economic and recreational motivations, uncovering a critical motivation towards the traditional market system (Guiot and Roux 2010). That is, consumers buy second-hand to distance themselves from the classic market system, including ethical considerations of recycling and anti-waste (Guiot and Roux 2010).

In addition to this, Gregson and Crewe's work (2003) is a key text in the development of second-hand economies, looking at car-boots sales, charity shops and vintage shops, to understand the social relations of exchange and consumption. Their work highlights the potential for resistance to traditional forms of consumption and consumer society, such as the desire for the new, as well as alternative anti-consumerist ideologies. Their work has looked at consumption in relation to branding, as a form of conspicuous consumption, where consumers fashion their class and/or accomplishments through consumption to assert cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; Veblen 1994; Mansvelt et al 2016). Though second-hand is more of an inconspicuous form of consumption, Gregson and Crewe's work (2003) reveals how second-hand consumers are able to 'buy the brand' more cheaply, therefore substantiating Baudrillard's arguments that value is derived from signs and signifiers attributed to material goods (Baudrillard 1976).

Whilst the literature on second-hand economies is expanding, to date, Clarke (2000), Waight (2014) and Waight and Boyer (2019) are the only scholars to have published research specifically related to mothers as second-hand consumers. Waight's work (2014; 2019) at nearly new sales, highlights the gendered work undertaken by mothers, reproducing identities and values through the justification of second-hand consumption. In addition, the concept of 'risk' is highlighted as resistance to second-hand consumption, as mothers do not know where clothes have come from and feel unease at dressing their babies in unknown, and potentially 'dirty' items (Clarke 2000). Mary Douglas' (1966) work on risk and dirt conceptualises 'dirt' as 'matter out of place'; meaning dirt is that which is not in its proper place, and therefore upsets order (Longhurst 2001). This research aims to add to the limited literature on mothers and second-hand consumption, responding to a call from Waight (2014: 161), for a greater understanding of how maternal motivations for consuming second-hand links to identities as parents, mothers and consumers.

2.6 Geographies of Motherhood

Geographies of motherhood aims to explore the spatial practices of motherhood; 'how ideas about mothers, and mothers themselves, are produced through space, and how these spaces are animated through the act of caring for children' (Johnson and Johnson 2019: 8). Stemming

from feminist geographies, geographies of motherhood are concerned with the active construction of motherhood as an identity over time and space.

Feminist geographies in the 80s, which mirrored second-wave feminism, were concerned with how gender is manifested spatially, specifically the differences between public and private space (Mitchell 2000). For instance, a more up-to-date example of this can be seen in Waight's work (2019) on second-hand economies, which concludes that women remain 'the primary domestic workers responsible for unpaid childcare and housework', despite this being a social role which is acquired over time, and that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (De Beauvoir 1949: 293). Following this, feminist geographies in the 90s, which mirrored third-wave feminism, explored ideas of identity being performed (Butler 1990). For example, clothes and make up are disciplinary practices in the construction of gender (Bartky 1990). Similarly, mothering has been conceptualised as a performative act (Butler 1993; Mansvelt 2017), whereby women 'perform' through care, in line with the discourse of a 'good mother' (Afflerback et al 2014).

Feminist geographers have looked at the concept of being a 'good mother' as a social construction, closely linked to social class (Collett 2005). Psychologists determine attributes such as love, care, patience, spending time with and aiding the emotional development of children to constitute a middle-class understanding of what it is to be a good mother (Brown et al 1997). Marketing and consumption literature argues that first-time mothers are inundated with these messages during their transition to motherhood, which consumption practices arguably contribute to (Afflerback et al 2014; Kehily 2014).

With particular reference to how parenthood is constructed spatially, social and cultural geographers have looked at family cars (Waitt and Harada 2016) and the space of the home (Tomori 2019). Waitt and Harada's work (2016) takes a more-than-human feminist approach to understand how parents 'do' family on the move, and how driving somewhere together shows how parents care for, and about, their children. For example, talking and joking together, rather than having DVD players in the back to occupy the children, is a care-giving practice which reinforces 'good' parenting. This research will add to the more-than-human geographical scholarship to understand how first-time parents negotiate consumption.

2.7 Motherhood and consumption

Motherhood and consumption are both connected to geographies of children's consumption, however there is a gap in literature between consumption and infants. In comparison to adults as consumers, there is much less geographical research on spaces and places of children's consumption, which places children as 'becomings' and not consumers in their own right (Mansvelt 2009). Cook (2008), a sociologist, identifies the mother as a 'co-consumer', who must address both her own and her child's needs.

Linked to the concept of motherhood, there has been a body of literature, though not specifically geographical, looking at the transition in and out of motherhood and its links with consumption (Prothero 2002; Cook 2008; The VOICE Group 2010; Martens 2010; Theodorou and Spyrou 2013; Ponsford 2013; Gram and Pederson 2014; Mansvelt et al 2017). Namely, motherhood is an example of an identity which is constructed through the provisioning of goods. For example, Kehily (2014) looked at how pregnancy magazines and books reposition women in relation to the market, encouraging women to indulge in 'me-time' through consumption of spa days and maternity items before the birth. However, there is a gap regarding different practices of consumption, such as second-hand and divestment, in this area, which this research aims to address.

Literature from other disciplines reviewing the links between motherhood and consumption includes environmentally conscious consumption (AbiGhannam and Atkinson 2016), clothing (Anderson et al 2008), baby monitors (Nelson 2008) and prams (Thomsen and Sorenson 2006). Thomsen and Sorenson's work (2006) shows that pram consumption holds symbolic meanings in which women 'tap into' their identity construction as mothers. Their work refers to the pram as the ultimate 'status symbol' of becoming a mother, and how different prams send different signals about the owner's identities as mothers, such as buying the 'best and safest pram' to perform the discourse of being a 'good mother'.

In addition, Afflerback et al (2014) use semi-structured interviews with new mothers to understand symbolic meanings and identity construction associated with consumption rituals of gifting and nesting. Consumption rituals associated with first time motherhood de-commodifies products, adding special meanings associated with being a parent for the first time (Afferback et al 2014). They highlight, with regard to baby showers, how mothers gain a

sense of control through the space and 'stuff' to meet the needs of their child (Afflerback et al 2014). By defining what was an 'essential' and 'non-essential' gift, women adopted the status of 'motherhood' to determine how useful or important an item was. Mauss (1924) argues gift giving creates social relationships, an idea built upon by Appadurai (1988), who recognises that gifts and commodities are not mutually exclusive, but meaning and value is acquired as they are exchanged.

2.8 Summary

This review has covered geographies of consumption more broadly, and its links with geographies of motherhood. While the work on motherhood and consumption is expanding, there is a gap on how this is looked at spatially, with limited reference to second-hand consumption and the transition to parenthood. This research aims to fill this gap, by exploring the everyday practices and trajectories of consumption, in relation to the acquisition, utilisation and divestment of children's commodities. This research brings together the themes discussed throughout this review to understand how and why new parents consume commodities for their children.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter will critically review the use of semi-structured interviews for this project, explaining why this method was chosen and detailing how this method was employed. This chapter will also include a brief section on research philosophy, positionality and ethics.

3.1 Research philosophy and positionality

Philosophy is central to research within human geography; it shapes the research question, methodology and interpretation of data (Graham 2013). Since the 'cultural turn' in the 70s, qualitative research strategies have been used by human geographers to understand emotions, experiences and perceptions about the world (Cope 2010). This project aims to understand how new parents negotiate consumption, following the work of cultural and feminist geographers who seek to explore concepts and experiences of everyday life (Rogers et al 2013). Striving for an empathic and subjective understanding of behaviour, the use of semi-structured interviews in participants' homes has allowed for detailed, thick descriptions (Graham 2013). Therefore, this project has followed an interpretative approach to research.

Within qualitative research, it is essential to be reflexive and consider positionality (Rose 1997). My position, as an auntie, and with parental responsibility for my younger sister, has shaped my understanding of children's consumption, therefore influencing this research project. On the other hand, as I have not negotiated the transition to parenthood, I recognise that my subject knowledge is partial. However, sharing similar backgrounds to the participants, in terms of caring for children, allowed the development of rapport and mutual understanding during interviews (Valentine 2005).

3.2 Interviews

In order to collect data for this study, 7 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 new parents between January – February 2022. Semi-structured interviews, opposed to structured questions, allowed for fluidity, creating a more conversational style, and therefore more appropriate to the objectives of this research (Valentine 2005). Semi-structured interviews have also been used in research related to parent mobilities and second-hand consumption (Boyer and Spinney 2016; Waight 2019).

I personally knew 6 out of 8 of the participants prior to the interviews and contacted them via WhatsApp to explain the research project. The other 2 participants were recruited using the snowballing strategy, they were acquaintances of another participant, and I contacted them via WhatsApp after they expressed an interest in taking part.

All participants were first-time parents who planned their pregnancy. This was important, as motivations and consumption practices for people with unplanned pregnancies may differ. Only one of the participants was male, and their ages ranged from 22-30. Their occupations included retail staff, office manager, carer, chef and nursery manager (see appendix 1 for participant information table). Out of the 7 female participants, 5 were still on maternity leave, and 2 had gone back to work at reduced part-time hours. All but one participant found out the sex of the baby before birth. All were White British, except for one, who was Mixed Asian and British.

The interviews took place face-to face in participants' homes, at a pre-arranged time that was most convenient to them. Of the 8 participants, one couple was interviewed together, and the rest individually. This was a limitation of interviews, as all fathers had gone back to work full-time, so were not free in the daytime. I arranged the interviews with the mothers, who all agreed for the interviews to be conducted in their homes. Most of the mothers preferred for the interviews to take place in the daytime, around the babies sleep patterns. It was important to give participants the choice, so they felt comfortable (Cook and Crang 2007). Similarly, this takes power and positionality into consideration in relation to the interview site (Elwood and Martin 2000).

Throughout the interviews, participants showed me around their homes through 'guided tours', to highlight areas of the home which contained items for their babies. This included the living room, kitchen, nursery, playroom and hallway. Similar methods have been conducted alongside interviews in geographical studies relating to everyday activities (see Power 2005). In addition, some participants sent me photos, and others allowed me to take photos of items and spaces in their home. Within human geography, it is argued that a methodological limitation of considering talk and text only, cannot be substituted for the 'rich,

complexity of social life' (Conradson 2005: 141). The addition of photography to this method has not only depicted place but enabled new conceptions of place (Dowling et al 2016), giving attention to the 'unspoken and habitual dimensions of everyday life' (Conradson 2005: 141).

Initially, when conducting the first two interviews, the predetermined themes (see appendix 2) were stuck to more rigidly, resulting in fewer opinions and less detail from the participants. However, on reflection, this didn't feel as natural as a conversation, resulting in the proceeding interviews to veer off from the interview themes often, allowing for some degree of control of the interview by the participants (Dunn 2016). This allowed me to elicit experiences and opinions of participants, allowing them to describe, using their own words, everyday details of their consumption habits (Crewe 2000). The interviews lasted between 30 and 70 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed (see appendix 3 for an example of interview transcript). Whilst the transcription process was time-consuming, it allowed me to get close to the data, and make notes on initial themes which arose (Kitchin and Tate 2000).

3.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data software NVivo was used to analyse the transcripts; this was an efficient and flexible way to group, code and link the data (Hoover and Koerber 2009). This project used a grounded theory methodology, a term coined by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. It is an inductive approach to research, where 'research is led and guided by the experiences of participants and findings reflect patterns in these experiences' (Engward 2013: 37). The transcripts were coded into themes, to produce a coding framework (see appendix 4), which comprised of master-categories and sub-categories (Kitchen and Tate 2000). This method was appropriate as the codes were used to 'conceptually organise' and make sense of the material (Crang 2005: 224). The results and discussion section will explore the main findings of how and why parents acquired, utilised and divested commodities for their babies, and how identities were constructed throughout the process.

3.4 Ethics

This research has been conducted in compliance with CU Ethics and signed off with ethical approval (see appendix 5), no research was conducted prior to receiving this approval. Ethical considerations were adopted throughout the project. I sent each participant an information document (see appendix 6) so they could make an informed decision to consent before the interviews were arranged. In addition, before the interviews took place, all participants signed a consent form (see appendix 7), agreeing for the interviews to be audio recorded and explaining their right to withdraw. The data was stored on Coventry University One Drive and pseudonyms have been used to protect participants anonymity.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse and discuss the main themes which came from results of the semi-structured interviews, in relation to the aims and objectives of this project, set out in chapter 1. In summary, this chapter will critically discuss how new parents acquire, utilise and divest children's commodities, drawing on the social construction of gender, and notions of 'good mothering'.

4.2 Acquisition

Interviews with new-parents revealed that the main ways goods were acquired were through purchasing (brand new and second hand), gifting and hand-me downs. Commodities acquired in preparation for welcoming new-borns included, but were not limited to, clothes, bibs, nappies, dummies, muslin cloths, socks, mittens, toys, sleeping bags, feeding equipment, cots, wardrobes, changing mats/tables, pushchairs, car seats, cars and new homes. The extent of these goods shows the volume of goods needed for this transitional period, and how 'motherhood is produced in/through consumption' (Cook 2013: 77).

4.2.1 Social networks

The importance of social networks was imperative to parent's acquisition of commodities. Figure 1 is the list Rebecca used to sort out everything she needed. It was sent to her by another mother who recently gave birth to twins.

Babies List

Nursery:
Swaddling blankets (didn't use)
Gro bags, sleeping bags, (still use these now, bigger sizes)
Blankets
Cots/cot bed
waterproof mattress
Bedding (fitted sheets)
Next 2 me crib
Fitted sheets and waterproof sheet for crib
Cot mobile (didn't use this, got in the way)
Changing unit
Room thermometer-
Night light, don't use this
Camera Monitor

Out & about:
Pushchair/pram/carry cot
Rain protector
car seats (infant)
car seat bases (ISOFIX)
sun blinds (for car window)
Car seat mirror
Changing bag + fold up changing mat
bottle storage bags
Formula pots
baby carriers (used a material one for new born stage, once you get the hang of it its amazing)

Baby clothing (necessities):
Sleep suits
Bodysuits
Hats
Cardigans
Socks
Scratch mits
Coming home outfit
Blanket

Entertainment:
Play mat

Feeding:
Bottles
teats
Bottle brush
Muslin squares
Steriliser bucket, didn't get a plug in one just use million tablets with water
Bibs
Formula milk
Formula dispensers
Bottle carriers
Feeding pillow
high chair
Small blender (just used a fork)
Small Tupperware
Vacuum flask

Home comforts:
bouncer/rocker seat
Dummies
Bumbos (baby chair)

Bath & change time:
Baby bath
Baby nail scissors
Brush & comb set
Non-slip bath
Top & tail bowl (used this loads in early days)
Bath support
Baby toiletries
wipes
nappies
Cotton wool
Vaseline
nappy bags
Baby oil & lotion
Nipple cream
Baby shampoo
Cuddle & dry robe
Changing mat (we got 2, one for upstairs, on for down stairs)

Figure 1. Babies list (Rebecca 2022)

The list denotes the sheer volume of goods negotiated by new parents, to accommodate a new baby into their lives, as well as emphasising the importance of community knowledge and social relations in acquiring and using these items. Similarly, Lucy, who was one of the participants recruited by Rebecca, explained:

> *"The list! I sent it to my sister, and said is this true, and she was like yeah **shocked** .. I was so overwhelmed by that, like it was so helpful, but I actually couldn't believe how much one little person needs .. and things that you don't even think of either"*

In addition, April explained:

> *"To be honest, I found it really helpful having people pregnant at the same time as me... just to share ideas, are you getting one of these? Are you planning on getting one of those? And vice versa"*

The importance of community knowledge is substantiated by previous research on consumerism and motherhood, which suggests that relationships with other mothers were highly valued by those entering motherhood (Nelson LaCoste 2006; Afflerback 2012). In addition, personal notes added next to items shows other mothers' willingness to offer advice, particularly in relation to what was needed and what could be substituted. This uncovers the strength of social capital in relation to consumption practices of new-mothers, referring to the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam 2000: 19). Therefore, the acquisition of baby 'stuff' was aided by social networks and other mothers' commitment to sharing knowledge regarding commodities.

In addition, participants explained how social media and the internet both played a role in acquiring commodities for their babies. For example, using WhatsApp to communicate with friends regarding 'baby things', using Google to search for reviews of products, and shopping online to find the best prices. Additionally, marketing and product placement came up as a theme, which participants admitted to *'falling for',* as Frankie explained. This shows the importance of online spaces of consumption for new parents, and how social media intersects aspects of everyday life for them as consumers (Appel et al 2020). From a Foucauldian perspective then, this shows the power of social media, and how these platforms function as a site through which surveillance power is exercised (Bettens 2021).

4.2.2 Gifts

Another key theme which emerged from the research was gifting, and how through different means, it formed a large part of how all participants acquired commodities for their babies. Gifts make up the 'stuff' which contributes to consumption (McGrath et al 1993), and like commodities, it is argued that the everyday appropriation of gifts is linked to notions of ritual, routine and obligation between social networks (Money 2007).

Participants experienced gift exchange in different ways: given money for what were generally larger items, chosen by parents-to-be, prior to the birth (including pushchairs, cots, cribs and highchair), given smaller gifts which were purchased after consulting parents on their 'needs', and gifts purchased without consulting parents, mostly smaller presents, such as clothes and toys.

Several participants discussed the challenges of dealing with so many gifted items at one time, and the emotional and spatial implications for this:

> *"I was gifted so much. It was really overwhelming... **nervous laughs** I think that's what really threw me off, what to do with everything"*
>
> *Frankie*

> *"I bought this box as somewhere to put the toys, because she had so many and there were so many duplicates of everything. And I feel sad, because people have spent their money, but I'd probably had preferred it if they asked me what I wanted"*
>
> *Lucy*

This is a rather negative outcome of how women felt whilst trying to negotiate the volume of gifts received during their transition to motherhood. Participants were unsure of how accommodate all these items, for instance Lucy, who purchased another box as somewhere to store everything. Mauss (1991) argues what separates commodities from gift giving is the obligation to receive and reciprocate, whereas Hurdley (2006) and Money (2007) challenge the equal exchanges of the gift, arguing that for recipients, there is an obligation to 'keep, store, care and/or show the gift' (Mansvelt 2012: 190). This is applicable in this research, as participants received gifts in such a quantity, so were obliged to sort through them, and decide where to store them.

Afflerback et al (2014) argue that gift registration is a consumption ritual which provides a sense of control for mothers-to-be, therefore shaping their new identities as mothers. Two participants made a baby registry list, a common online platform used by parents-to-be to organise gifts, therefore substantiating the idea of control in identity production. Their experiences were contrasting, with Sophie explaining:

> *"We made a registry with everything we wanted, and people literally just bought off there for us ... and it would like black out, so it has been ordered, so that was really helpful"*

Contrastingly, Katrina disagreed, stating:

> *"Ben [partner] put together a list of stuff that we liked, and then people bought off that, but no one really followed it, we probably got about 3 things and the rest bought clothes,* ***shakes head****"*

Although both women had different experiences, the option to create a list to organise gifts shows how the transition is centred upon consumption, and more specifically through gift giving. Subsequently, Katrina was seemingly unimpressed that not many people followed the list, which questions the value of gifts during this transient period, and in turn, the accumulation of so much 'stuff'. The research shows how gifting is 'an attempt to nurture social relations within the market of mass-produced consumer goods' (Farbotko and Head 2013), or as Miller (1998: 8) describes it, 'the material culture of love'.

Another theme which arose from the research in relation to gifting was baby showers. All but one participant held a baby shower, which has been conceptualised as a form of consumption serving as a 'rite of passage' to motherhood (Fischer 1993: 1). Contrastingly, in Kehily's work (2014) on consumerism and maternal identities, only one participant held a shower, which she argues is because women were eager to distance themselves from the consumer world, whilst reiterating the need to be practical and focus on the babies needs to highlight their 'grown up' acts of consumption. This research revealed that the baby shower was a symbolic practice for mothers-to-be to transition to motherhood, by 'de-commodifying' gifts such as baby monitors, to construct special meanings and the 'good mother' identity. For example, Emily explained:

> *"My mom bought me, which I never even thought of, a baby monitor, for when he is asleep. The angel care, it's got a mat as well, so if he stops breathing at night it will go off, so she surprised me with that at the shower, which was lovely"*

This shows how the discourse of the 'good mother' is constructed through gift exchange, as caring and nurturing characteristics are reinforced by the purchasing of the baby monitor, from one mother to another mother-to-be, which therefore creates special meanings associated to commodities (Kehily 2014; Afflerback et al 2014; Nelson 2008). In addition, safety benefits, such as the mat, adds value to this product. Similarly, Marten's (2014) work

on selling safety, highlights how products are marketed to consumers, with added 'safety' benefits, in line with protecting and nurturing their new-born. Arguably, from a Marxist perspective, this is a capitalist notion to add emotional value to products.

Hand-me Downs

While the majority of the gifts were purchased brand new, all participants received hand-me down items, which were also referred to as 'gifted'; in some cases, only one or two things, but in most cases, they made up a large majority (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Hand-me downs (source: Author's photograph 2022)

'A hand-me down is a garment or other item that has been handed down after been used and discarded by another' (Waight 2018: 97), and with regard to children's commodities, this type of sharing economy is one of the most 'normalised cultures' of Western second-hand consumption (Waight 2019: 1). This can be seen in this research, as every participant took part in hand-me down economies.

Hand-me downs are a cost effective and more sustainable way to obtain children's commodities (Waight 2018); in this research, financial motivations were the main reason for acquiring goods in this way. For example, Lucy stated:

> *"At first, I thought, well I'd actually like to buy her some clothes that I like. But then I was like, why would I not take free ones!?"*

Similarly, substantiated in Clarke's work (2004), the importance of social networks is also relevant to items handed down, as Katrina explained:

> *"A lot of our friends had babies around the same time, or just before, so we had quite a lot of stuff off them, like clothes, toys, bouncers"*

This shows how, aided by social networks, saving money is the primary motivation to receive hand-me down goods, however, sustainability is also an 'accidental' positive outcome. Throughout the research, environmental concerns were not mentioned by any of the participants, which could be due to the particular set of people in this research project. However, all participants received hand-me down goods, which would have otherwise remained unused or discarded, and were therefore a more sustainable alternative. Similarly, this was evidenced in Waight's work (2014) on second-hand economies with mothers.

4.2.3 Purchased

Aside from gifts and hand-me downs, participants acquired children's commodities by purchasing them themselves, both online and in-store, with a mixture of brand new and second-hand. The uncertainty of what to expect from motherhood was apparent, and consumption was used as a means of negotiating this transition, as Lucy stated:

> *"I didn't know what to get, and then I went mad and bought everything I could think of, because I thought 'oh will she need this', when in reality, she's not needed anything but me really"*

This is confirmed by Ponsford's work (2011: 541), whereby through consumption and materiality, mothers can display their competence to be seen as a 'good mother', and 'deflect negative associations of poverty away from their children' through material goods. Similarly, participants admitted buying material goods, such as toys and sensory items, to encourage their baby's development, such as Rebecca described:

> *"I've bought a foil blanket, I've bought some Montessori stuff, and like, am I doing enough? Will he be clever? Different sensory things, lights, fabrics... that whole thing, am I being a good mom, am I doing enough?"*

This shows how the social construction of being a good mother is aided by consumption, with anxieties of this transition and the pressure of babies development being met by consuming (The Voice Group 2010).

In addition, motivations of sentiment and risk were alluded to when considering purchases, which also contributes to the discourse of 'good mothering'. For example, as discussed in the previous section, all participants were happy to accept hand-me downs, they knew the item's history, and were connected to the giver through social networks. However, regarding second-hand items, the concept of risk was heightened, as the history was unknown, as April explained:

> *"Rebecca gave me some swimming costumes of Mikey's that he didn't really get to wear, so we had those, which was really helpful ... and like, I know Rebecca, I know she wouldn't give me anything that's covered in germs, but you'd have to rely on a stranger to keep things clean"*

Similarly, social media and online apps, such as Vinted and Facebook Marketplace, were used by many participants to search for second-hand items. It is evident that the ease at which parents can scroll and search for a second-hand item online is accelerating this economy, bringing people closer together through time-space compression (Harvey 1999). Lucy explained:

> *"I'm trying to buy a ball pit off Facebook Marketplace, but every time I find one, I'm like no, that looks a bit grimey ... or even if the carpet doesn't look like it's been hoovered, but my carpet is never hoovered, so why do I care?"*

This shows how, alluding to Douglas' social construction of 'dirt as matter out of place' (1966), the concept of 'dirt' on baby items can be seen as contaminating the 'pure' body of the baby, which was corroborated in Waight and Boyer's (2019) research on the care of baby things.

Similarly, except for one, all participants explained they preferred to buy the cot, car seat and pushchair brand new, with examples of rationale including: *"you realise how much sick has been on that cot"* and *"I just thought, I can't really wash it very well".* As Waight and Boyer (2019) explain in their research, something about the make-up of these items and their material composition suggests they cannot be cleaned as easily as solid items can. Moreover, resistance to purchasing second-hand for new mothers is linked to the social construction of their new identities and aspects of care.

Interestingly, participants with older babies revealed they had purchased more second-hand items, suggesting that, as the new-born stage comes to an end, so do constructions of 'purity'. As Emily explained:

> *"I've got a stroller for him now he's bigger, just a quick one if we are popping to the shops. I got that second hand, because I wasn't going to pay full price for one ... stuff just gets wrecked* ***shakes head rolls eyes****"*

With regard to clothing, the interviews revealed mixed opinions from participants concerning buying second-hand clothing. Contrasting views stated:

> *"I'd definitely buy clothes new, mostly because, I feel like they've been worn before, but there's not really any harm in it, because I've gifted clothes to other people"*
>
> *April*

However, Sophie explained:

> *"I really don't mind second-hand stuff ... Jamie's dad got a couple of bin bags full of clothes off Facebook marketplace. I think it was £20 and there were about 150 outfits in there. There were so many, even like Ralph Lauren and Ted Baker stuff, which I would never usually go for"*

Branded items were not specifically searched for when purchasing second hand, which was similarly expressed by other participants. In this instance, the mother as a consumer is not interested in branded items, unlike in Gregson and Crewe's work (2003), where adult consumers actively look for branded items at cheaper prices. This could be, as Kehily (2014)

argues, because mothers are concerned with perpetuating the idea of functionality in line with the 'good' mother discourse, and therefore determine branded items as 'a waste of money'.

Notions of class were also alluded to; participants were able to actively choose whether or not they wanted to purchase certain commodities second-hand, and who from. This shows that participants did not fall into the 'excluded' consumer category (Williams and Windeback 2002), whilst also highlighting how socio-economic groups are produced and understood with regard to consumption. For example, Frankie stated:

> *"I know it's a bit judgey, but say if someone's selling something on like Facebook, and you look at the picture, and you think it's from a gross house, or... **hesitates** like, a bad area, but say like they've got all mess in the background. But then if you look at it and think oh, that's from a nicer place, like that woman I got the seat from, I know her house and I've had quite a few things off her, and I can always have things off her, because it's like a nice clean house, even if it's not wipeable, because I feel like it's a nice clean house. Whereas if I look at a picture and I think it doesn't look the nicest, I'd rather not get it"*

This shows how the idea of cleanliness and risk ties with notions of 'bad' and 'nice' areas, alluding to representations of social-economic class across different scales (Hall 1997). Frankie would prefer to buy items from 'nicer, clean' homes, perhaps the ones in line with her socio-economic class, which therefore, from Bourdieu's perspective, allowed participants to identify, or differentiate themselves from others, through acts of consumption (Kehily 2014).

With regard to purchasing brand new, themes of sentimental value emerged; participants stressed the importance of buying their baby's first outfit brand new, for example, Rebecca stated:

> *"It sounds silly, but I wanted to buy like his first baby grow that he wore new... little sentimental things like that"*

This shows how emotional value is attached to material goods (Mansvelt 2005), drawing on emotional geographies and the feelings that consumers experience when consuming particular products (Williams et al 2010).

Overall, it was clear that mothers, rather than fathers, are the ones making the decisions regarding purchasing babies' commodities, reiterated by Anderson (2008), who used semi-structured interviews to understand mother's consumption of baby clothing. This highlights feminist geographers' arguments that domestic care-work is bound with emotional labour and conducted primarily by women (Clarke 2000; Waight and Boyer 2019), and how purchasing clothes for the baby may be seen as a 'mother's task', to perform the social construction of 'good mothering' (Anderson 2008).

The research has shown how motivations for purchasing children's commodities are complex; mothers balance notions of risk when deciding whether to purchase second hand, however saving money was a contributing factor. This section has also shown how representations of class have an impact on consumption practices.

4.3 Utilisation in the Home

Geographers maintain that, concerning minority world households, the consumption of goods and services is a 'normal' way of making 'space feel like home' (Cox 2013). Public discourse, particularly the media, portrays an idealised view of the home, as heterosexual families belonging and living intimately (Blunt and Dowling 2006). As interviews were conducted in participants' homes, it was evident to see that these spaces corresponded with this discourse, and space had been made for children's commodities. Interviews revealed how accommodating these goods changed the ways participants felt about 'home'. This section will discuss two main themes of utilisation of children's commodities in the home, the idea of making space, and the nursery.

4.3.1 Making Space

Discussions of the home within feminist geography maintain that, as a result of patriarchal norms, the construction of the home is a 'woman's place' (Oberhauser et al 2018). All participants owned and lived in their own homes, except for one, who was due to move in imminently. Interviews revealed that bedrooms, living rooms, loft space, cupboards under the stairs, kitchens and hallways had all been used or adapted, somehow, to negotiate the new baby and all the 'stuff' that comes with them.

For example, Emily explained that her partner had recently built a storage system (Figure 3) in the living room to accommodate all their sons' toys, because she *"likes it tidy"* and *"stuff takes over the whole house really".*

Figure 3. Toy storage system (source: Author)

This shows how space has been made to accommodate children's toys, in what was previously an 'adult-centred' living room, and that the toys disrupt the tidiness of this 'adult controlled' space (Dowling 2008). This has also been seen in Dowling's work (2008) on open-plan homes in Australia, where the style of the home is altered to suit family practices. The open-plan space can be more inclusive, or contrastingly exclusive, where the garages were transformed into children's spaces, and they were not welcomed into 'family spaces' (Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Similarly, bell hooks (2000: 50) argues, that 'when women in the home spend all their time attending to the needs of others, home is a workplace for her, not a site of relaxation, comfort, and pleasure', as April explained:

"I don't know if all moms are the same, but I'm a person who is really affected by their environment. You got through your whole adult life without toys and having your things your own way, and then contrasting to colourful bits everywhere, and plastic bits you keep treading on, so all of a sudden, it's changed. It's like, this is no longer my house, this is his house. Like never before would I have had multi-coloured tiles, it wasn't what I would have liked to look at. But it's his home, so when he's asleep, I get a bit of my home back, so it makes me feel a little bit more content in my environment while I'm having my little bit of me time I suppose"

This highlights how during parenthood, the home is a contested site of comfort (Oberhauser et al 2017), and the utilisation of commodities within the space of the home creates a new 'sense of place' for new mothers (Anderson 2008). The visibility of toys, as mess, changes the dynamics of the home, where new parents must adapt their home as a space which is now also their child's home (Stevenson and Prout 2013).

In addition, space was made in the 'family' room for items such as extra changing mats and nappy caddies (Figure 4), and as April explained: *"my make-up bag somehow made its way in there"*, another example of the gendered nature of care-work and how children's commodities come to 'fit in' to the space of the home.

Figure 4. Changing mat and nappy caddy downstairs (source: Authors photograph 2022)

4.3.2 The Nursery

The nursery came up as theme throughout the first two interviews, and as a result was discussed in proceeding conversations. Clarke (2004) describes the nursery as a room to nurture infants and house their 'material culture'; throughout the research, it became apparent the nursery was an important site for new parents to use consumer goods to construct identities, both in relation to parenthood and the social construction of gender.

In this research, decorations for the nursery were heavily influenced by social media, as Emily noted:

> *"I've got this woman on my Instagram, she renovates houses. That's how I knew about the cot as well, because she had it. And literally if you look at my nursery and her nursery, it's exactly the same. So literally, that is like Josh's [shows me], and I copied it* ***proud*** *... She'll tag the places, so even where she's got 'twinkle twinkle little star' on the wall, she'll put where she got it from, and all the pictures are from like Etsy. She put where everything is from, and you can just click it and buy it"*

The power of social media and influencers can be seen here, to fit in with current nursery trends, and allow consumers to purchase commodities so easily (Labrecque et al 2013). Decorating the nursery is marked as a transition from couple to family (Kehily 2014), where new parents can construct this space in line with their tastes, asserting a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Kehily (2014) argues that decorating the nursery can be enjoyed by parents in more privileged positions, as they have access to capital, resources and space, as Sophie explained:

> *"I loved doing it, I enjoyed the whole process of doing it, we [partner] did it together and just got some stickers off Etsy, and some bits off Etsy. I'd say it took me quite a while to sort of, sort of vision it really, and think what I wanted. Because when I found out it was a boy, I was thinking well should we have a dinosaur theme, and then jungle was really popular at the time, but in the end, I just went for neutral theme because it matches the rest of the house"*

This shows how, although none of the babies were due to sleep in the nursery right away, it was important for mothers to prepare this space, both as a space to keep babies' material culture, and also to perform the organised 'good mother' role. Participants painted the nursery, assembled furniture, and hung pictures (See Figure 5), which as Tomori's work (2019) also shows, was a way of performing gender roles.

Figure 5. Nursery (source: Author's photograph 2022)

For example, Sophie explained that she chose the decorations and the theme for the nursery, but that her partner assembled the furniture, asserting socially constructed gender roles. Similarly, as Figure 5 shows, the colour of the nursery itself can be highly gendered, forcing gender roles and preferences onto babies before they are born. This shows how goods are utilised and stored within the home, alluding to themes of gender, family and parenthood.

4.4 Divestment

This section will explore the divestment of 'baby stuff', including how this was conducted by new parents and their motivations for this. In this research, none of the participants had sold on any of their children's commodities. Instead, practices of divestment included 'passing back' to family and friends, donating to charity, and storing away for potential reuse by second children. It was mostly clothing which was passed on, whilst larger items were stored away in spaces of the home, such as the loft, for potential use by second children in the future.

Gregson and Crewe (2003) explain how there is a 'moral economy' to second-hand childrenswear, filled with obligations to pass items on and reuse. This could also be seen in Section 4.2, the acquisition of commodities, where participants relied heavily on hand-me downs. As all participants received so many items in the form of gifts and hand-me downs, their moral obligation and motivation was not to re-sell, but to donate and pass back. For example, Jack, the only father to take part in the research, explained:

> *"And I think as well, it's kind of reciprocal, because you're kind of helping your friends out by having their stuff, because clothes build up. We tended to donate back and pass a lot of stuff on, because there is that much stuff that you have you don't need to keep it in your drawers, so it's dual purpose, it frees up space in your house and it also helps somebody else"*

This can also be seen in Waight's work (2019), which highlights the limits on storage space in the average British home, resulting in the need to keep things moving. Similarly, the gendered nature of domestic work was evident here, as although Jack aligned with the moral economy of passing back, it was Rebecca who sorted through and organised:

> *"As I was getting rid of stuff, I did bags for different people. Yeah, so I did a bag of stuff for the charity shop, stuff that was a little bit marked, a little bit stained or it hadn't washed particularly well. And then I've done bags for other people to pass on. So I did some bags for the refugee centre, and then people that I knew who had had babies, boys, at the certain right time, I'd pass stuff onto them as well"*

This shows that although decisions relating to divestment were taken on by both parents, it is most likely women who take on responsibility for the 'backstage' care-work (Goffman 1990; Waight 2014).

In addition, putting certain types of clothes into bags for different people also shows how social class has a role to play in the divestment of baby clothes. For instance, Rebecca noted that items that didn't wash as well, or were stained, were given to the charity shop, asserting that these were not as valuable as other items passed on to friends, and perhaps that people who intend to buy these were not as worthy or socially significant (Clarke 2000). Similarly, Lucy admitted:

> *"I've got a bag under the stairs right now for the charity shop, I've had so many bags in the house for months, and then I just bin them, which is so bad I know"*

This shows how the value of items which were bound for the charity shop hold the same value as items which were disposed of through waste. Contrastingly, Waight's (2018) work found that items will 'go to waste' if not reused, and if they had been useful to participant's children then should be passed on to others. Nonetheless, as Lucy admits she knows throwing away old items is bad, this research substantiates Gregson et al's (2013: 105) view, that 'donating surplus goods is both a moral and moralising act'.

Participants also alluded to items which had not yet been passed on, but they were not longer using. These occupied certain conduits in the home, such as under the stairs, under beds, in cupboards and wardrobes. Hetherington (2004: 169) suggests that 'conduits of disposal' have a two-stage 'holding process', where items may be held to determine their value (use, exchange or sentimental value) before being thrown away. For participants who stored children's commodities in more permanent spaces, such as the wardrobe, these items held more sentimental value. This shows that the motivations for divestment are not straight forward and are affected by value and judgement.

This shows how practices of divestment included 'passing on' to other social networks, however in some instances, items were disposed of through rubbish. In relation to motivations for divestment, there was a 'moral obligation' to pass on items, particularly clothing. However, in some instances, for sentimental value, these were retained.

5.0 Conclusion

Overall, this research project has filled a gap in geographical literature in relation to consumption as an outcome of the practice of parenting. It has added to geographical scholarship of consumption and motherhood to understand how and why, new parents, in particular mothers, acquire, utilise and divest children's commodities. It has drawn on notions of class, gender and the construction of motherhood to understand the everyday consumption practices of new parents.

5.1 Relative to aim and objectives

This research project has considered how first-time parents acquire commodities for their babies, concluding that consumer culture is central to the practice of parenting (Miller 2003). This work has addressed the importance of social networks to new parents, including how online platforms play a role in negotiating consumption. It has explored how gifting adds value to commodities, through symbolic practices such as the baby shower, as well as how identities of 'good mothers' are constructed. Similarly, this work has highlighted the motivations of new parents, concluding that motivations of sentiment, and managing cost and risk, are inherent in perpetuating the 'good mother' discourse when purchasing commodities, both new and second-hand, for new-born babies.

In relation to the utilisation of commodities and the home as a space of consumption, this work has drawn on how space is made in the home and the nursery. It can be concluded that the experiences of first-time parents to store, manage and maintain commodities align with existing geographical research that the home is a contested space (McDowell 2007). Likewise, this research has explored how, as space is made in the home for children's commodities, gender roles are reinforced and caring for material culture aids the transition to parenthood.

In addition, this work has identified divestment practices of baby 'stuff', conceding with Gregson (2007), that the ridding of objects is bound with complex social relations. Subsequently, motivations for divestment have been addressed, concluding that the 'moral economy' and the care-work associated with passing on baby items, ensures they hold value and are, most of the time, not wasted.

5.2 Limitations

One of the main limitations of this project is that all participants were from heterosexual, white backgrounds, therefore not inclusive of a broader understanding of parenthood from different backgrounds. Additionally, due to time-constraints, only 8 participants living in the same geographical area took part, which does not represent a range of first-time parents as a whole.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

In line with the limitations of this project, recommendations for future geographical research would be to understand how parents from different backgrounds, rather than white and heterosexual, negotiate children's consumption. In addition, an idea for future research is to conduct interviews over longer time periods, namely prior to giving birth to the first child, after the child is born, and if participants have additional children, to understand how consumption is negotiated and motivations change over time and as children grow older. Similarly, since this project has focused mainly on the construction of motherhood, an idea for a further research project would be to understand how households with fathers as primary carers negotiate consumption, and if their consumption practices reveal similar results.

5.4 Summary

In summary, this research project has used data from semi-structured interviews with new parents, to understand how and why they negotiate consumption, as an everyday practice of parenting. It can be concluded that the 'good mother' discourse is typified through consumption practices, and motivations of cost and risk are managed. This research has also explored the role of second-hand economies for first-time parents, and how representations of class, and gender, are bound with the consumption practices of baby items.

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7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Table

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Babies Sex	Babies age (at time of interview)	Brief description
Rebecca and Jack	28 / 30	Retail staff / Housing manager	Boy	12 months	The only couple who participated in the research, and are expecting a second child in July 2022. Their son is the first grandchild on both sides, and they said they have been very lucky with gifts from both sets of grandparents and family members. They stated cost as the main barrier to purchasing items for their son and relied on the internet, social media and the community for reviews.
Frankie	24	Carer	Girl	5 months	Frankie's partner works away so she looks after their daughter full-time during the week. She said she makes the decisions about what to buy and said she has become more savvy since giving birth, in terms of where to get second hand items. The only participant who did not have a nursery due to space constraints in their rental property. Planning on moving into their new house this summer.
Sophie	22	Office staff	Boy	4 months	Sophie admitted she was overwhelmed by the support from family members in gifting items for their son. She was adjusting to motherhood and discussed the challenges of not knowing exactly what to do all the time.
April	30	Retail staff	Boy	10 months	April works in retail and admitted she found it difficult refraining from buying things for the baby when she was pregnant. April doesn't drive, but she said it does not stop her from going out with her son.
Emily	28	Office manager	Boy	17 months	Emily is one of two participants who have gone back to work part time. Her and her partner enjoy camping, and took their son several times in the summer, which she said involved buying a lot of new things.
Katrina	28	Chef	Boy	5 months	Katrina and her partner are currently renovating their home, she said her son has taken over the house with all of his stuff but she does not mind and is really enjoying being a mum.
Lucy	30	Nursery Manager	Girl	3.5 months	Lucy and her partner had just moved into a new house to accommodate their baby. They now have space for a downstairs playroom, which is filled with gifts and toys.

Appendix 2: Semi-structured Interview Themes / Questions

- Age of baby
- Occupation
- How did you know what you would need for the baby? And how did you plan for this?
- Did you find out the sex?

- Baby shower? Tell me about your baby shower
- Tell me about the nursery

- Were you gifted many things?
- Were there any items you prioritised buying yourself over other things?
- Did you and your partner both make the decisions about buying things together?
- Did you buy brand new?
- Second-hand purchases, including platforms
- Reservations about buying second hand for your baby? Any items in particular
- What were your reasons for buying brand new / second hand?
- Would you purchase the same things again if you had the chance?
- How did you get rid of unwanted items?

- Before you had your baby, were you environmentally conscious in your purchases?
- Did you consider sustainability when making decisions about purchases for your baby?

Appendix 3: Example of Semi-structured Interview Transcript

I: So when you found out you were pregnant, how did you like go about sorting out all the things that you needed? How did you know what you would need?

P: To be fair, I'm an auntie to 4, so I've got a brother and sister who had kids a lot younger than me, so I kind of just learnt what I needed from them. There's little things that I didn't know about, so I'd just ask questions, so me, Rebecca and Linsdey [pseudonyms] were all pregnant around the same time. As so we'd just talk about it, what do you think about this, or are getting that? I knew like the basics of what I would definitely need, like a moses basket. I knew I wanted to have his nursery ready, because I like to be organised, I like everything in its place.

I: Yeah

P: So everything had to be built, decorated, organised into little boxes

I: Okay

P: Little things that I didn't think about, like bottle brushes, because I bottle-fed Jake [pseudonym], I thought 'oo actually I do need some of those' and remembering that I need little milk dispenser caddies and stuff like that, that didn't quite click straight away. Those were like the last things that I ended up buying.

I: Yeah.

P: But the basic things I knew. I knew I needed sterilizer. I knew I needed a changing mat, pushchair, a moses basket, I chose a moses basket, I chose a moses basket, some people don't they like the next to me ones, that's what I knew from watching my brother and sister have their children.

I: So did you have one moses basket upstairs and one downstairs?

P: Yeah, a lot of people prefer the ones that are right next to them, but Miles was in hospital for 10 days when he was born, so he kind of learned to sleep away from me anyway. So, when we got home, I sort of encouraged that he was in the room, but not right next to me,

I: Oh okay that's fair enough

P: Things like I knew I needed, there's extra things that I bought that I didn't necessarily need, but wanted to have like a bottle prep machine. You can use a kettle if you want to, but the prep machines quicker.

I: Yeah.

P: And I bought a bottle warmer to keep upstairs. So that in the night, I didn't have to come all the way downstairs to heat the bottle up. So for me, most of my purchases were practical first and I needed to know that there was something practical for him to have in every single room of the house

I: Yeah. That's interesting, so you did it for ease more so which is understandable with so much going on

P: I'd prep his bottle water down here with his prep machine, take like 3,4 bottles upstairs with like 4 oz of water, and then a powder caddy upstairs as well, and then it was easier, rather than coming downstairs and making the entire bottle all over again. Like I say it was just that quickness

I: . So when you were like deciding about the things to get, so like the cot and the prep machine and things like that, was it both you and your partner that decided that together?

P: To be honest, it was me! I'd ask his opinion, but like most men, he didn't seem to have a massive opinion on these kinds of things, and because I'm the one who organises everything, I'm the one that researches everything, and I would say 'we are buying this'

I: Oh okay, and did you buy all the stuff brand new?

P: Yeah, everything. Actually, bar the prep machine which I got off my friend because she never used it. With it being my first, I wanted him to have everything new, new clothes, new push chair, not that there is anything wrong with buying second hand, but that's just how I felt at the time. Especially with covid being quite rife when we were pregnant, I was like no, not having it.

I: Oh okay, that's interesting. So where did you get the stuff?

P: I got the pram from a website called online for baby. It's a nickel bubble one. The website's really good and it was actually discounted more than their website if you got one it directly. So it's a big travel system, the car seat, you got a changing bag, a visor for the windows. You got a rain cover with it as well. And then obviously the base, and the carry cot which is just until they're about two. So I thought that's a good deal, so that's what I chose for him.

I: So would you say you were quite drawn to that because it was a bundle?

P: Yeah it was to be fair, probably affordable as well. I didn't want anything extravagant. There are some beautiful pushchairs out there,

I: How far were you when you started buying the stuff?

P: I definitely didn't buy anything until after I was 12 weeks, obviously if you're superstitious. I bought one cardigan from work, but that was a neutral colour. I didn't bother buying any clothes until I found out what I was having, I didn't really start buying clothes until I was quite heavily pregnant. I'd got tonnes of baby grows and vests that I just stored away in the airing cupboard. I couldn't really buy much early on, because we didn't know what we were having. Also we had Christmas coming up, my family have got birthdays in October, so I did most of mine into the new year. I didn't go mad in terms of buying newborn outfits because they aren't in them for 5 minutes. I bought lots of baby grows.

I: So, when you were planning the nursery did you have an idea of what you wanted?

P: His room is like a boho safari theme, I knew that I wanted a wooden name sign above his bed, so I knew exactly how I wanted it to be. I'm not a big fan of bright colours in rooms, I like neutral, most of my house is quite neutral, so I wanted it to grow with him and the home.

I: Did you and your partner decide together on what you wanted for the nursery?

P: I do get carried away with decorating... as I think most women do to be honest. When it came to the furniture I picked it out and then just asked him after what he thought. We picked the flooring together, but other than that no. It's just that he doesn't have an opinion really, and I made the decisions about the rest of the house.. but now Jake [pseudonym] has taken over!

I: [laughs].. well it looks lovely in here!

P: Thanks, his stuff has occupied everywhere. He's got toys here, there and everywhere, his ball pit. I just hide toys when he's gone to sleep because then I get my house back. I can't sit in the mess, I like to put it away when I've got that hour for me in my space.

I: Oh okay that's interesting.

P: I don't know if all moms are the same, but I'm a person who is really affected by their environment. You got through your whole adult life without toys and having your things your own way, and then contrasting to colourful bits everywhere, and plastic bits you keep treading on, so it's all of a sudden change. It's like, this is no longer my house, this is his house. Like never before would I have had multi-coloured tiles, it wasn't what I would have liked to look at. But it's his home, so when he's asleep, I get a bit of my home back, so it makes me feel a little bit more content in my environment while I'm having my little bit of me time I suppose

I: Yeah totally understand that, that's really interesting

P: That's just my opinion, some people might say it's not worth tidying it up, but I kind of think sometimes as a parent, especially a new parent, you do sometimes feel drained. Oh my god, how has my life gone from one extreme to the other!?

I: To be honest. I don't know how you guys do it! If I have Marc [pseudonym] for a day I feel like that!

[both laugh] Have you got anything planned for his first birthday?

P: I'm a really extra person when it comes to stuff like that. Anybody else would just get a cake, I'm getting a big balloon display, having a big gazebo in the garden. I know it's March, but we've got both of our family here at the same time and the house isn't massive. He's having like a jungle theme party.

I: Okay, that'll be nice.

[Baby crying upstairs, creates break in conversation]

P: I just like a lot of things! Got him a little birthday crown. I like to be over the top with someone else's birthday. I've got personalised invitations made, but everyone already knows where I live, but I've had it done as like a memory! He will only turn one once!

[talk about pregnancy during covid / wfh]

P: It wasn't so bad when I got the nesting feeling, everything was cleaned, I was exhausted. When it came to building his furniture, my other half built it all, and I organised everything into the right drawers and organised into ages. Bedding was in the wardrobe, everything you could possibly need. Got a box for nappies, box for all the products I used on him, but it helps! I find, people say you will never keep that up once they are here, but I have done. Like down there got the nappy caddy [points to corner] I'll keep a spare changing mat down here, thinking why do I need to go upstairs everytime I need to change him, got nappies, wipes, sudocrem, everything that I need in there. And I've always had both, and another one of those in our room, which I found really helpful.

I: Yeah I noticed that in the corner

P: Yeah definitely, again, just to make my life easier. Especially when you're a new mom, it just really seemed to help me. And especially when you're a new dad, like my other half doesn't have any children in his family, whereas I'm an auntie of 4, so I already knew the basics of taking care of a child, changing nappies, putting a baby grow on. So for him, rather

than worrying about where's the wipes, where's this, where's that, it's just there, he knows it's there, I haven't got to worry if he knows where it is if I'm not here.

[Talk about possibility of second baby]

I: Are you back at work now then?

P: No I had the year off

[Baby wakes up.. still half asleep]

[Partner comes into room]

I: How did you find it all, getting everything ready?

P2: Rebecca was great! A lot of it didn't make sense until afterwards I think. Like that caddy that's behind the door, you were very proud of that weren't you. You were very like happy about it. And I sort of get it, but I don't really get the vision, before. It didn't really sort of land until we were using it and it was all there. There was a lot of yeah we will need it, but not realising how much

P: Well I found that nappy thing from watching TikTok

I: That was going to be another question! Do you find that you use social media a lot?

P: Well I got the idea of doing something like that downstairs, there's a big thing now, call it Mom Tok, loads of moms sharing their nurseries, organising how they go about it. It's a big thing now, sharing their experiences on tiktok, like parenting experiences, getting ready for having the baby. And then when the baby comes, I watched that and I'm like, 'that's a really good idea!' 'I need that' 'I could do that!' To be honest lots of the things I never would have thought of, like nice dummy clips, go on etsy and they are all on there. I'd send a message to Lindsey [pseudonym] and tell her about it.

I: Oh okay.. so you'd see it and then text everyone else about it?

P: Yeah yeah yeah yeah. To be honest, I found it really helpful having people pregnant at the same time as me. Just to share ideas, are you getting one of these? Are you planning on getting one of those? And vice versa. We'd kind of say, what are you putting in your hospital bag? If I missed anything off. It was so helpful having people who were pregnant, no matter what stage, around you. Especially the first time, for the second time you'll know. But it was that support and that comfort really, that someone was in it with you. And yeah so you bounce ideas off each other and things like that, so yeah it was helpful

I: Oh that sound's good!

P: And we do try and meet up now and do stuff! I'm seeing her tomorrow actually! We're going to the Hollybush to see the fish, and do like soft play, or come here and play.
I: How did you find the lockdown while you were pregnant?
P: It really helped me because I had time to look things up and learn things. I watched birthing programmes and got a good idea of what I needed to do and what's best, and what other people did. I think that's probably the best thing.
I: If you were going to do it again, would you do anything different or would you do it exactly the same?
P: I probably wouldn't do anything differently if I'm being honest. I probably wouldn't be as excessive as I was. Like, I packed a bag for the hospital, like, I was moving away for a year. I felt like I needed to take everything to the point where I was like, stressing myself. And I wouldn't feel as pressured to get every single thing for when the baby came, because half of it you don't use for a while. I had tonnes of the next sizes up in baby grows, and it's like well whats the point in that? Could have got those later, but I felt like I had to have them. It's ok not to have everything prepared. Clothes for them to put on, nappies, wipes etc, not everything is detrimental. Like you don't necessarily need to have their room perfectly decorated. You don't need a massive system in place, it's helpful. Definitely help to us with adjusting to being new parents, but if you haven't got something, it doesn't matter, because you can always get it after they are born. And so it's like it's not the end of the world. I haven't got 10,000 vests and stuff like that, you can get them, it's fine. There are things that I wouldn't necessarily get again, like scratch mitts, they were a waste, because they are built into baby grows. But I've still kept them. I haven't kept everything.
I: What have you done with the stuff you haven't kept?
P: I've kept sentimental bits, and bits that he hasn't really worn, in case I have another boy. But I've given them to friends who are having babies, just like baby boys, because they barely touch them do they. Like his swing, his bouncer, his play mat, they are all in the loft. Because they're not really on them for very long. So, what I wouldn't buy any of that stuff again. Yeah, the only thing that I would buy again is obviously bedroom furniture because his bed goes down to like a toddler bed, and everything adjusts to like his age. But I wouldn't buy another prep machine or another sterilizer, I'll just keep the ones that I've got. But I do feel like I was probably more excessive than I needed to be thinking that I had to have everything. I had to have 3 or 4 dummy clips just in case, but probably to the details I

went to didn't really need to happen. But next time round I won't have the time, because I'll have a toddler

I: Yeah definitely

[Talk about going back to work]

P: I'll enjoy going back to work for the social aspect, and appreciate the fact that I will just get to be just me again. Not a mom. My identity is his mom. Just socialising and not thinking about what a baby needs, and not what needs to happen in the next 10 mins or half an hour.

I: Is there anything as he's got older, did you buy it all yourself or did you get gifted a lot?

P: Erm, he got bought a lot when I had him. I only really bought 0-3 clothes and a couple of newborn bits. He was gifted newborn bits before I even had him, so he got Christmas presents and he wasn't even here! But I didn't really buy any more than that because they aren't in it for very long. So yeah I got gifted stuff like that. Most of the baby grows, we bought ourselves, it was just easier, because I knew what I wanted and I'd got it. He was bought a lot of outfits in various ages as he was growing.

I: Did you buy it all brand new?

P: Yeah, [pause], actually Rebecca [pseudonym] gave me some swimming costumes of Mikey's that he didn't really get to wear, so we had those, which was really helpful. But for the most part, we did ourselves, in all honesty

I: Is there anything that puts you off buying second hand? Or would you rather buy new if you can?

P: I'd definitely buy clothes new, mostly because, I feel like they've been worn before. But there;s not really any harm in it because I've gifted clothes to other people. And so clothes is one of my things that I would have, I would have new for a second baby. That why I haven't saved tonnes and tonnes of his things. I would do the same for them as I have done for Jake [pseudonym] but that I think that's just like a mom guilt sort of thing, more so than anything else, not being practical

I: Okay

P: I don't really mind him, Well, the next one we'll use the same amount is basket for example. But if it was like ia swing for example, if somebody had used, and it was in good condition, I'd probably buy that. And because it's expensive. So stuff like that doesn't bother me so much. I think it's more the clothes thing than anything else, but that's just, I think it's

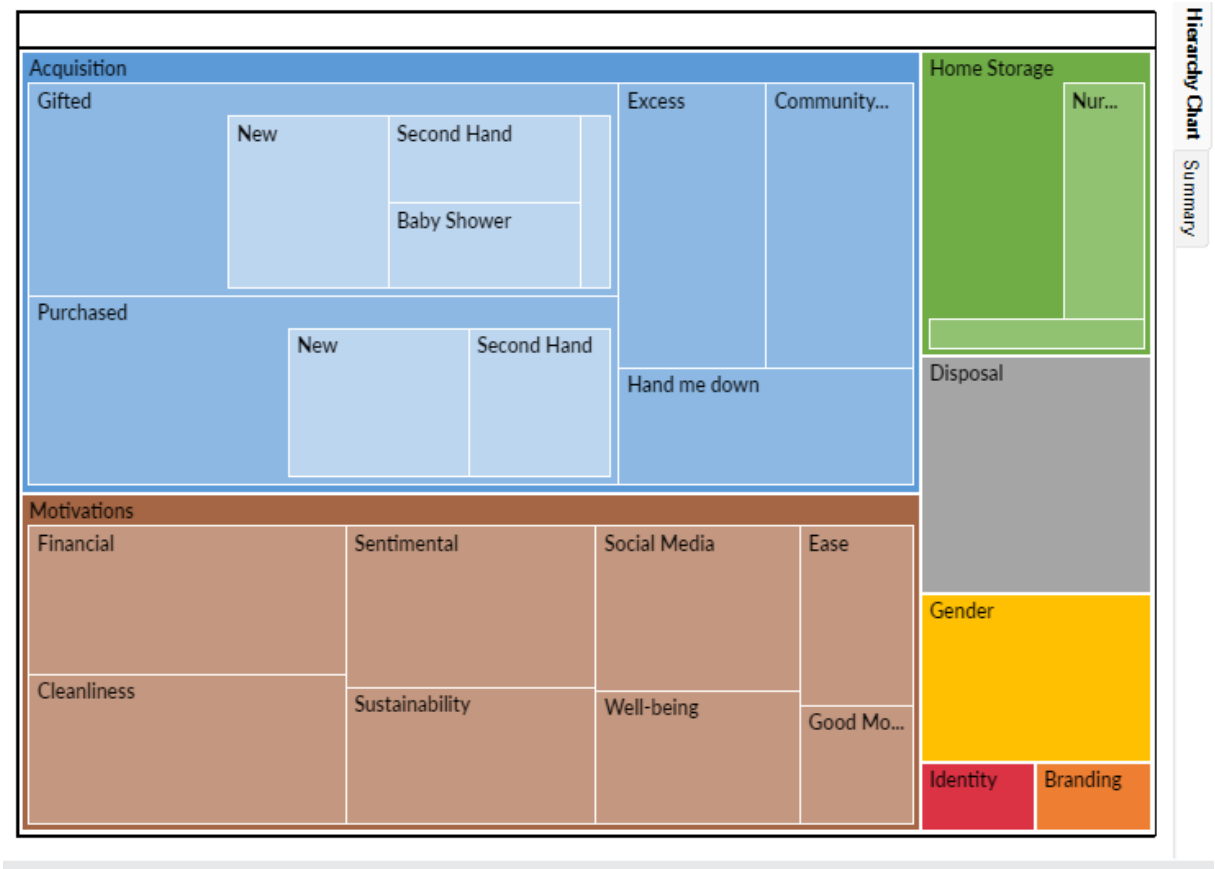
from like a COVID mindset sort of thing. I probably wouldn't really thought about it before. And like I know Rebecca [pseudonym], I know she wouldn't give me anything that's covered in germs. But you'd have to rely on a stranger to keep things clean.

[random chatter with baby]

P: I think more so than anything, I wouldn't put as much pressure on myself for everything to be perfect, and his room to be perfect, because it doesn't matter, they don't know. They have such basic needs when they are born.

[baby cries, time for me to leave]

Appendix 4: NVivo Interview Coding Framework



Appendix 5: Certificate of Ethical Approval

Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:	Yasmeen Reznik
Project Title:	Commodifying parenthood: negotiating having a new-born

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:	19 Nov 2021
Project Reference Number:	P129494

Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for
Commodifying parenthood: negotiating having a new-born

You are being invited to take part in research on the consumption practices of new parents. Yasmeen Reznik, final year BA Geography student, at Coventry University is leading this research. Before you decide to take part it is important you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of this research?
The purpose of the research is to explore consumption practices of parents after having a new-born baby. This includes how parents negotiate consumption, specifically the items they purchase and how they obtain these. Additionally, this research will explore the links between consumption practices and sustainability, and consumption practices and gender.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The research is being organised and funded by Coventry University. The research was granted ethical approval by Coventry University's Research Ethics Committee P129494.

Do you have to take part?
No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Consent Form to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate. Please note down your participant number and provide this to the lead researcher if you wish to withdraw from the research at a later date. You are free to withdraw your information from the research at any time until the data is fully anonymised in our records on 15/04/2022. You do not need to provide a reason for withdrawing. A decision to withdraw, or not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen if I decide to take part?
You will be asked to answer some questions regarding your consumption habits around the time of having your baby. The interview will take place somewhere convenient to you; this will either be in your home, or online via Microsoft Teams. It should take no more than 1 hour and we would like to audio record your responses.

Additionally, if you agree and it is appropriate to your responses, you will be asked to take some photographs of items in your home that relate to your responses.

Why have you been invited to take part?
You have been invited to participate in this research because you are a new parent.

What are the benefits and potential risks and benefits in taking part?
By taking part, you will be helping Yasmeen and Coventry University to better understand the consumption practices of new parents and how they negotiate new-born babies. There are no significant risks associated with participation.

What information is being collected in the research?
Participant responses and photographs are being collected through this research.

What will happen to the results of the research?
The results of this research may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name.

Who will have access to the information?
Your data will only be accessed by the researcher.

Where will the information be stored and how long will it be kept for?
Your data will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. Unless they are fully anonymised in our records, your data will be referred to by a unique participant number rather than by name. If you consent to being audio recorded, all recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

All electronic data will be stored on Yasmeen's phone and laptop via Coventry University One Drive. All paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses. The researcher will take responsibility for data destruction and all collected data will be destroyed on or before 15/04/2022.

What will happen next?
If you would like to take part, please contact the lead researcher. You will be asked to complete a consent form before taking part.

Researcher contact details
Researcher: Yasmeen Reznik. Contact details: rezniky@uni.coventry.ac.uk
Supervisor: Amber Martin-Woodhead. Contact details: ac3560@coventry.ac.uk

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this research?
If you have any questions, or concerns about this research, please contact the researcher, or their supervisor. If you still have concerns and wish to make a complaint, please contact the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Manager by e-mailing ethics.uni@coventry.ac.uk. Please provide information about the research project, specify the name of the researcher and detail the nature of your complaint.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for considering participating in this research.

Appendix 7: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Commodifying parenthood: negotiating having a new-born

You are invited to take part in the above research project for the purpose of collecting data on the consumption practices of new parents.

Before you decide to take part, you must **read the accompanying Participant Information Sheet and Privacy Notice**

Researcher(s): Yasmeen Reznik
Department: School of Energy, Construction and Environment
Contact details: rezniky@uni.coventry.ac.uk
Supervisor name: Amber Martin-Woodhead
Supervisor contact details: ac3560@coventry.ac.uk

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the research project are, what will be involved and that you agree to take part. If you are happy to participate, please initial each box to indicate your agreement, sign and date the form, and return to the researcher.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information about any aspect of this research. It is important that you feel able to take the necessary time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

1	**I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.**	
2	**I understand that all the information I provide will be held securely and treated confidentially. I understand who will have access to any personal data provided and what will happened to the data at the end of the research project.**	
3	**I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation and data, without giving a reason, by contacting the lead at any time until the date specified in the Participant Information Sheet.**	
4	**I understand the results of this research will be used in academic papers and other formal research outputs.**	
5	**I am happy for the interview to be audio recorded.**	
6	**If applicable: I am happy to share photographs with the researcher to illustrate points discussed in the interview and give consent for these to be published in the researcher's dissertation.**	
7	**I agree to take part in the above research project.**	

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	**Signature**	**Date**
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	**Signature**	**Date**