



PEARL

Fathers at work—Forfeits, deficits and disregarding discourse

Kelland, Jasmine; Brown, Andy; Searle, Nicola

Published in:

Gender, Work and Organization

DOI:

[10.1111/gwao.13199](https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13199)

Publication date:

2024

Document version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link:

[Link to publication in PEARL](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Kelland, J., Brown, A., & Searle, N. (2024). Fathers at work—Forfeits, deficits and disregarding discourse. *Gender, Work and Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13199>

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Wherever possible please cite the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

Fathers at work—Forfeits, deficits and disregarding discourse

Jasmine Kelland  | Nicola Searle | Andy Brown

University of Plymouth, Plymouth, England

Correspondence

Jasmine Kelland.

Email: jasmine.kelland@plymouth.ac.uk

Abstract

Existing research observes that fathers navigate the workplace through a complex network of mistreatment, adopting “ground breaker discourse” as a mechanism by which to maintain alignment with masculine norms to reduce mistreatment. Through analysis of online forum comments in response to a UK newspaper article exploring fathers and masculinity, this research investigates if “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit” are evident in this context and how they are navigated. The research affirms the existence of “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit,” uncovering an additional forfeit of “impeded attractiveness.” Additionally, it expands knowledge regarding the way in which fathers maintain hegemonic masculinity when combining work and care through observing that fathers adopted a “disregarding discourse” toward any criticism as a management strategy, suggesting a new dimension for research in this area. This research identifies ways in which organizations can improve the workplace experience for fathers, with a view to increasing gender equality for both parents and maximizing the effectiveness of staff in the post-COVID workplace. It is suggested that future research could involve a more representative sample and an exploration of any potential differences in the findings in the context of the post-COVID work environment.

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2024 The Author(s). *Gender, Work & Organization* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

KEYWORDS

caregiving, fathers, gender, masculinity

1 | INTRODUCTION

The landscape for contemporary Western working parents is suggested by many to have moved toward a position of increased equality in relation to both work and home spheres over the last 150 years (Burnett et al., 2013; Moran & Koslowski, 2019). The cultural norm for modern UK fathers is suggested to be that of an active parent, who takes an increasingly involved role in the upbringing of their children, spending more time on childcare than previous generations (Gatrell et al., 2022; Office of National Statistics, 2023). This is specifically pertinent in the post-COVID-19 context in which it was widely reported that fathers undertook a much larger share of caregiving than they had previously (Andrew et al., 2020).

It is espoused that traditional divisions of family and work aligning to female homemaker and male breadwinner norms have been replaced by increasingly less gender prescribed patterns, in which *both* parents undertake employment outside of the home and mediate between family and employment (Haas & Hwang, 2019), requiring gender roles to be renegotiated and disrupting more traditional masculine norms (Maheshwari et al., 2021). However, despite this purported change in the conceptualization of fatherhood, a climate of minimal actual change in paternal working patterns prevails, with fathers continuing to access policies that support work and family less than mothers (Moran & Koslowski, 2019). This trend was revived in the pandemic/post-pandemic context in which employed mothers were found to be more likely than fathers to have an agreed special working arrangement and undertake homeworking (ONS, 2022).

This study is largely, but not exclusively due to the geographic accessibility nature of online forums, located in the UK. The UK working environment is typified by a largely traditional model of division of work and caregiving, with fathers rarely reducing paid work hours for caregiving and mothers maintaining the larger share of caregiving activities, regardless of the working hours or salary of either parent (ONS, 2022). Whilst the post-COVID environment has seen some shifts in paternal working patterns (Burgess et al., 2022), in the UK context the proportion of men, who take extended periods of parental leave is very low, whereas women with dependent children remain far more likely to work part-time than men (Hodkinson & Brooks, 2023). Thus, the UK is deemed an appropriate country for a study which explores the challenges facing contemporary working fathers as they navigate work and family.

The prevailing adherence to the full-time male breadwinner ideologies has been suggested to create a stall in parental gender equality, allowing the persistence of a “*myriad of barriers to greater paternal caregiving*” (Hodkinson & Brooks, 2023, p. 34; Moran & Koslowski, 2019; Berdahl & Moon, 2013). Such trends appear to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which there was a re-traditionalization of gender roles, whereby mothers were reported to take on the majority of the childcare load and gendered gaps in economic security and employment widened (Aguar et al., 2022; Kristal & Yaish, 2020). Moreover, whilst research on the experiences of fathers in work is evolving, it remains significantly under-researched when compared to the emphasis placed on the academic study of mothers (Gatrell et al., 2022). Thus, research that focuses on exploring these challenges, with emphasis on “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit,” both previously observed in a UK context, is necessary and pertinent and directly addresses the calls by Borgkvist et al. (2018) and Byun and Won (2020) for wider research on the experiences of fathers.

This paper explores the issues facing fathers via self-reported online comments on a forum for UK newspaper “The Guardian” (Rice-Oxley, 2017) in response to an article exploring masculinity and fatherhood. This innovative method of data collection was chosen due to its ability to potentially illicit more candid responses than traditional methods such as interviews. Data of this kind can develop understanding of wider public opinion regarding fathers’ experiences and the management strategies adopted when combining work and family. We focus on exploring the

barriers faced by fathers through the lens of “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit,” seeking a deeper understanding of these challenges and their navigation. Specifically, we investigate whether the previously established strategy of “ground breaker discourse” is utilized as a navigation tool in a UK context, as it was in an Australian context, responding to calls for more research on this strategy from other cultural groups (Mercier et al., 2024). It is envisaged that this investigation has the potential to elicit new knowledge regarding the experience and perceptions of fathers when managing work and family, with a view to increasing organizational understanding of the challenges they encounter. Additionally, it is predicted that this study has the potential to improve gender equality for both parents, an issue revived during the COVID period in which traditional patterns of managing work and family appeared to have a resurgence (Aguar et al., 2022).

This paper commences by outlining how fathers are conceptualized in the workplace, exploring how they are viewed when they conform to traditional ideologies and charts the experience of those fathers who deviate from these established positions. Emphasis is placed on the ways in which traditional gender norms are maintained within the workplace, and the role that masculinities play within this. The methods employed are then detailed, highlighting the rationale for the choice of data collection and how the analysis was conducted, in preparation for a presentation of the findings and a discussion of organizational implications.

1.1 | Fathers at work—Those who conform to traditional ideologies

Academic literature widely advocates that mothers and fathers have differing experiences within the workplace with varied expectations of behavior largely underpinned by traditional gender roles (Vandello et al., 2013). Organizations themselves are proposed to be structured in a gendered way, in which assumptions about gender are inherent, resulting in both advantage and disadvantage depending on the distinction between masculine and feminine roles (Acker, 2006). In this context practical and normative pressures are placed on women to prioritize caregiving and for men to arrange caregiving around breadwinning (Hodkinson & Brooks, 2023), resulting in men often undertaking limited caregiving responsibilities (Haas & Hwang, 2019). Within this traditional framework fathers are conceptualized as “professionals without caring responsibilities”, aligning to notions of the “ideal unencumbered worker” (Kugelberg, 2006; p. 158). Fatherhood in the workplace has been observed to be symbolic of a dedicated and reliable worker, associated with stability, flexibility, commitment, increased work effort, success, and financial responsibility (Kmec et al., 2014; Hodges & Budig, 2010). Whilst it has been suggested by academics that support for the traditional male breadwinner model is receding (Cook et al., 2020) labor market statistics suggest that it continues to dominate in the UK (ONS, 2022).

Fathers aligning to breadwinning norms have been found to result in numerous rewards, such as higher starting salaries and more agency than working mothers (Bailey, 2015). In a US context, breadwinning fathers have been evaluated as more competent, fit for promotion, more settled, and focused on their job role than non-fathers (Berdahl & Moon, 2013) and receive more praise for caregiving than mothers (Fuegen et al., 2004). When fathers prioritize work over family they have been observed to be conceptualized as modern-day warriors in both USA (Gomez & Korine, 2008) and Japanese contexts (Hidaka, 2010). With perceptions of being a “good father” often observed to be intertwined with work outside of the domestic sphere, primary income provision and taking economic responsibility (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). This holds true in a more contemporary context, as observed by Haines and Stroessner (2019), who explored the associations between men/women and caregiving/breadwinning via their role prioritization model and noted that working fathers who align to breadwinning norms will often reap benefits from their parental status. This is supported by the work of Padavic et al. (2020), who observed that being a good worker remains culturally compatible with being a good husband and father, often due to linkages between breadwinning and hegemonic masculinity.

Adherence to breadwinning patterns of employment has been highlighted as a central tenet of the hegemonic masculine norm, which provides a framework for the identification of the “ideal or actual characteristics of being a man”

(Collier, 2019:21; Richards Solomon, 2014; Brandth & Kvande, 1998). It dictates that “real men” maintain their hegemonic masculinity through demonstrating “*active disassociation*” from the family sphere (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003, p. 33), with protection of such masculine identities established as a key priority in preserving gender inequality and allowing men to dominate over women (Gatrell et al., 2022; Brandth & Kvande, 1998). In an organizational context, organizational masculinity theory places emphasis on the need for fathers to distance themselves from children and family responsibilities as a sign of their organizational commitment (Collinson & Hearn, 2005). Within this process, informal interactions have a key part to play in the establishment of the organizing processes that maintain inequalities in work (Acker, 2006; Healy et al., 2019). Specifically, Wright observed that such informal workplace interactions are interlinked with control and compliance within male-dominated private sector environments. Thus, pointing to variability in the extent of inequality regimes within organizations, depending on type of organization and the location of individuals within that organization (Healy et al., 2019; Wright, 2016).

Such patterns remain evident in contemporary workplaces, and it has been proposed by Gatrell et al. (2022) that beliefs about hegemonic masculinities and breadwinning are so deep rooted it is challenging for organizations to update their policies and working fathers continue to be constructed by many employers as “*manly economic providers*” (p. 1207). Within this context, organizational masculinity is maintained and hegemonic masculinity remains dominant within organizational cultures (Lefley & Janeček, 2023). However, Padavic et al. (2020) argue that whilst associations between breadwinning and fathering remain intertwined within Western society, it is no longer the “sole template” with contemporary fathers wanting greater involvement with their children. This is supported by research from Germany by Balan et al. (2023), who observed that organizational promoters of family friendly policies are adopting “new caring masculinities” as a way of helping contemporary fathers to reconcile work and care. However, they note that within this construction of “new organisational masculinity” there is reliance upon adoption of practices which align with more traditional elements of masculinity such as decisiveness, risk taking, assertiveness, and masculine power.

Fathers who attempt to depart from breadwinning working patterns are often positioned as challenging the hegemonic norm, and thus fathers can risk stigmatization due to being considered less masculine due to deviating away from the alignment between paid work and masculinity, with caregiving continuing to be conceptualized as female work (Borgkvist et al., 2018; Byun & Won, 2020; Vandello et al., 2013). Thus, the aforementioned climate of benefits and premiums for fathers appears to dissipate when they move away from the traditional gender ideology associated with full-time work (Berdahl & Moon, 2013).

1.2 | Fathers at work; deviation from traditional ideologies—Forfeits and deficits

Fathers who shift from full-time breadwinning to active caregiving face navigating a workplace lacking the traditional benefits given to breadwinning counterparts (MacDonald & Liff, 2007). In this context, rather than face benefits, fathers have been observed to have a more negative workplace experience which is typified by limited workplace support and facing invisibility in their role as a parent (Burnett et al., 2013; Tracy & Rivera, 2010). More specifically, fathers have been observed to experience implicit and explicit workplace discrimination when navigating caregiving, in which an immediate message regarding disapproval is transmitted (Byun & Won, 2020; Hipp, 2020; Kelland et al., 2022). These fathers face sanctions when integrating work and family, as traditional organizational masculinity works against them (Holter, 2012). Similarly, in a Korean context, fathers who took parental leave were found to be associated with negative feminine qualities such as weakness and uncertainty (Byun & Won, 2020). A potential explanation for this is examined through the lens of “poor worker stigma,” where men prioritizing family over work are seen as breaching expected workplace behavior, leading to wage penalties, lower performance ratings, and fewer promotions (Rudman & Mescher, 2013; Wharton et al., 2008).

Byun and Won (2020) suggest that fathers face more stigma and repercussions, both psychological and practical, for taking parental leave, as it is seen as less typical than mothers taking leave. Thus, the decision to

amend working patterns due to caregiving has been conceptualized as “a risky choice for fathers” due to moving away from masculinity and connotations of being “ideological renegades” (Maheshwari et al., 2021; Byun & Won, 2020: 606). In a contemporary UK context, Cook et al. (2020) explored data from the UK Household Survey and observed that whilst both parents faced stigma when attempting to utilize flexibility for caregiving reasons, stigma was more widely reported by men in the workplace than women and was especially prevalent regarding a reduction of working hours. Similarly, Berdahl and Moon's (2013) study found that US middle-class fathers involved in high levels of childcare faced a “fatherhood penalty,” experiencing more workplace harassment and social mistreatment, such as teasing and exclusion than fathers with traditional roles.

In an attempt to understand the challenges facing fathers when managing work and care in more depth, this paper focuses analysis on two specific challenges, specifically utilizing the lens of “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit.”

Firstly, caregiving fathers have been observed to face “fatherhood forfeits” (Kelland et al., 2022). In a UK based study of managers and working parents caregiving fathers were observed to “forfeit” a positive workplace experience by deciding to take an active role in caregiving. Specifically, they found that caregiving fathers faced mockery, were regularly conceptualized as being “idle,” and viewed with suspicion. Our first research question investigates the concept of “fatherhood forfeits,” specifically exploring if this concept, which is in its infancy, is observable in a wider context than the original study, seeking wider understanding of its nature and manifestation. Secondly, this research explores the concept of the “patriarchal deficit” which has previously been observed in an Irish context whereby fathers were found to be placed in a secondary position, which was suggested to hinder paternal involvement (Bailey, 2015). When fathers reduce their childcare involvement, it negatively impacts the child and places the mother as the primary parent, significantly affecting gender equality (Norman, 2022). This second research question is focused on obtaining wider understanding of the concept of the “patriarchal deficit” through broader data collection than the original study, which focused on the experience of expectant fathers and fathers with a new baby. Bailey's work focused on a time period in which the mother in most situations is on maternity leave therefore it might not be fully representative of paternal experiences; thus, our broader sample provides opportunity for wider analysis of this phenomena.

The rationale for a wider understanding of the climate of sanctions, specifically, “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit,” faced by fathers when navigating work and care is two-fold. Firstly, sanctions for fathers have been observed to be prevailing in nature, having a key role to play in the promotion of adherence to more traditional patterns of parenting in which men's caregiving is devalued and breadwinner mentalities are preserved, which is associated with stalling gender inequality (Berdahl & Moon, 2013; Hodkinson & Brooks, 2023; Moran & Koslowski, 2019). Whilst the data for this study predates the COVID-19 pandemic, it provides an opportunity to expand knowledge on the nature of the way in which fathers manage work and care and can inform the post-COVID workplace in which the level of father involvement is increasing (ONS, 2021; Burgess et al., 2022). The concepts of “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit” have been chosen in particular due to both of these previous studies being located in the UK, and this location can reasonably be assumed to be represented in this study given that data have been collected from a UK newspaper. Thus, making the data broadly complimentary and comparable, with both concepts being specifically focused on UK fathers in the workplace. Secondly, it has been suggested that as a result of COVID-19 experiences, fathers are expected to increase their involvement in caregiving (Andrew et al., 2020; ONS, 2022), which is likely to translate to an increase in requests for changes in working patterns. This accompanies a climate of reevaluation of work and family balance in which some organizations insisting that staff return to the office, both of which will require management (Burgess et al., 2022; Partridge, 2023). A wider understanding of how the “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit” manifest will aid this management. Specifically, it is envisaged that our pre-COVID data will inform the post-COVID workplace to avoid the frustration felt by fathers when managing work and care and improve retention and productivity (Kelland & Rosier, 2024; Padavic et al., 2020), which are issues that are coming to the fore due to the emergence of post-COVID-19 skills shortages (Botelho, 2021).

It is important to note at this juncture that notwithstanding research on mothers being more dominant, research exploring how fathers navigate between work and family and reconcile the barriers they encounter has seen many academics making contributions in this space, often looking to the masculinity literature for theoretical underpinning. This leads the discussion to the third and final research question which seeks further understanding of father's navigation of "forfeits" and "deficits," with specific focus on the employment of "ground breaker discourse" as a way of reconciling masculinity in this context.

1.3 | Fathers and masculinity

Work and family scholars suggest that fathers navigate the traditionally maternal family sphere by redefining traditional masculinity. This can occur in various ways through the adoption of new types of masculinities (Brandth & Kvande, 2018), such as "caring masculinities" (Elliott, 2016) and "hybrid masculinities" (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Brandth and Kvande (1998) suggested fathers rework masculine identities through constructing their care as "masculine care," including becoming a friend to the child, and teaching independence, allowing differentiation between their care and the caregiving of mothers. In line with this, it is proposed that men display strength and resilience in their approach to caregiving thus creating a specific way in which masculine identity has been renegotiated (Borgkvist et al., 2018). The concept of "caring masculinities" goes a little further and rejects hegemonic masculinity, specifically the notion of domination over feminization, and values are adopted that align to caring such as emotion and interdependence (Elliott, 2016). According to Bridges and Pascoe (2014) the concept of 'hybrid masculinities' focuses on the selective incorporation of elements typically associated with various marginalization and subordinated masculinities, suggesting a fluidity in masculinity which continues to be largely underpinned by the hegemonic ideal.

The third research question in this paper examines how fathers who actively engage in caregiving manage masculinity, drawing on Borgkvist et al.'s (2018) study of 'hands-on fathers' with flexible working arrangements in Australia. They found that fathers using flexible working arrangements adopted a 'ground breaker discourse,' positioning themselves as 'paving the way' and being 'front runners.' This discourse helped them maintain their masculinity in a typically feminized environment by demonstrating strength and a sense of power, aligning with societal expectations of hegemonic masculinity.

The study presented here investigates if 'ground breaker discourse' is an approach adopted by fathers when navigating care and work in a UK context as was observable in an Australian context. It explores if this discourse is representative of fathers' management of the challenges they encounter and the reconciliation of masculinity in this context or if any novel discourses emerge within the data. Additionally, through utilization of the contemporary mechanism of sharing thoughts via an online comments section of a UK newspaper website, it explores how fathers navigate work and care and how they are perceived when doing so, particularly concerning the aforementioned "forfeits" and "deficits."

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research questions are addressed through analyzing reader comments data in response to an article by Mark Rice-Oxley in the UK newspaper "The Guardian", published in November 2017 entitled "The Masculine Mystique", which explored the challenges faced by modern fathers with regard to involvement in parenting (Rice-Oxley, 2017). The article was available on The Guardian website and generated over 1000 reader comments, at which point further comments were disabled by the newspaper. Reader comments were made directly under the published article on the website and all comments in this study have come from this source only. Using reader comments as a primary data source is a comparatively recent method in public opinion research (Richards, 2018) that has attracted a growing

interest (Friemel & Dötsch, 2015). One key reason for this is its accessibility, which allows people to engage with sociopolitical issues, serving as a proxy for measuring public opinion on societal matters (Thelwall, 2018).

This method has been chosen as the anonymous position of contributors has the potential to yield more frank, honest, and detailed perceptions of the phenomenon (Walther et al., 2005). Such a data collection method enabled the guarantee of complete anonymity, more so than traditional methods due to contributions being unidentifiable, overcoming a common challenge for research within social sciences (Lelkes et al., 2011). In such environments, contributors may feel a sense of anonymity due to reduced inhibitions online, leading to disclosure of more personal information and offering a unique perspective on group norms compared to face-to-face discussions (Robinson, 2017, p. 394). Specifically, for this study, it is believed to have potential to generate wider insight on the treatment of fathers in the workplace, the sanctions they face, and the way in which such sanctions are navigated (Kern et al., 2016).

This method can provide deeper insights into the chosen topic (Thelwall, 2018) and analyzing behavior online presents an opportunity to monitor real time attitudes (Kern et al., 2016). Further arguments have been presented via a “call to arms” for academics to become more competent at using the huge quantity of data the online environment provides (Beer, 2012). Therefore, on balance, this method was chosen due to its potential to capture a broader understanding than that which currently exists, its scope to uncover perceptions not originally considered and its ability to provide insight into what is important to contributors (Richards, 2018). When considering the data, it is important to recognize that the sentiments expressed represent social constructions of reality, as articulated by the participants (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The researchers do not aim to establish these as verifiable facts. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), in the constructivist paradigm, the core assumption is that realities are not objective but are constructed by individuals, influenced by various social and cultural factors leading to shared constructions. Contributors were prompted to comment by the news article, sharing their own experiences, and the shared construction emerged through the discussion forum as participants built upon each other's observations. Therefore, the sentiments expressed by the contributors in this study are subjective and diverse, reflecting individuals' attribution to their own lived experiences of the discussed phenomena (Howell, 2012).

All 1000 comments from the forum were copied into a Microsoft Word file before coding began. Despite users initially defining a pseudonym for themselves to comment, they were assigned new pseudonyms to ensure complete anonymity (Richards, 2018). This practice was informed by the approach from O'Malley et al. (2022) and encouraged by Silverman (2013) as an ethical practice for dealing with qualitative data from online sources.

A data-driven, (largely) inductive approach (Patton, 2002) was adopted when evaluating the data, with some themes derived from the literature and others emerging organically as part of the data analysis process. Howell (2012) suggests that a continuum exists between inductive and deductive approaches and this was the case here. Data analysis took the form of thematic analysis and was completed following the established guidance from Braun and Clarke (2006). One author initially conducted a systematic analysis of the data, regularly discussing findings with other authors. All researchers checked the accuracy and appropriateness of the coding, iterating until consensus was reached, and ensured that the analysis effectively captured the data's nature, in accordance with validation and trustworthiness concepts emphasized by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Phase one involved the data being read through twice to ensure familiarization and in-depth analysis, systematically identifying any comments which were “not applicable” as part of the data reduction process (Miles & Michael Huberman, 1994). Comments of this nature were double-checked in consultation with other authors to ensure accurate removal of irrelevant data and 250 were removed as part of this process. Phase two involved line-by-line coding, identifying established themes from the literature review and creating broad codes for thematic analysis, establishing patterns within the data (Richards, 2018). Phase three involved code revision, removing codes, and adding sub-codes to allow for deeper analysis (Miles & Michael Huberman, 1994). Consequently, not all codes that emerged were used in the final analysis. This process was continued until the researchers felt that the scrutiny of the data had reached a saturation point and regularities had started to emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3 | RESULTS

This paper seeks to explore if the data collection method of analyzing online comments yields further insights into the experiences and perceptions of fathers managing work and care, specifically exploring if “fatherhood forfeits” and “patriarchal deficits” emerge. It also seeks to explore how any such challenges are managed, with specific reference to exploration of the potential emergence of ‘ground breaker discourse’ in this context as a navigation tool to allow preservation of hegemonic masculinities.

The utilization of online contributions illicit potential for novel insight into perceptions of the phenomena under consideration. While the tone and content of most contributions suggest they are first-person anecdotes from fathers, the anonymous nature of the data allows for views beyond this demographic. Occasionally, commenters speak about their experiences with fathers involved in childcare, whether through observation, personal relationships, or workplace interactions. Nonetheless, these contributions offer an interesting insight into perceptions of the social acceptability of fathers navigating the work–family space and are relevant to our investigation. Of the main thematic areas coded from the comments, the highest proportion of comments (22%) were attributed to two main themes: how involvement in caregiving made a male less attractive to women and different treatment, through exclusion, mockery, or suspicion. These proportions were closely followed by 18% of the commenters displaying a disregarding attitude to criticism, 16% citing secondary status as a father compared to a mother as an issue, and 9% citing the media as reinforcing the issues of incompetence and unattractiveness. The final two areas that emerged more prominently within the data included the concept of choosing who stays at home for childcare as strictly a middle-class issue, with many citing that this is a moot point within working class/lower income families (7%) and fathers receiving less support in the workplace than mothers regarding childcare (6%).

3.1 | Fatherhood Forfeits—Viewed with suspicion, facing mockery, and considered idle

Earlier research on the “fatherhood forfeit” (Kelland et al., 2022) observed that working caregiving fathers faced social mistreatment, specifically they were viewed as idle with suspicion and faced mockery, and whilst the “fatherhood forfeit” of being viewed as idle did not emerge from this data, both suspicion and mockery were observable within this study. “Jak760” felt that fathers who deviate from breadwinning norms could expect to face mockery, as described below:

I've known people before who've ridiculed pretty much any situation besides the husband being at work full-time and the wife being at home ... and that kind of attitude puts pressure on a lot of men.

(Jak760)

Whilst Cook et al. (2020) suggest an evolving societal perception of the traditional male breadwinner model, this anecdote suggests that such mockery might present a climate in which more traditional gender roles are reinforced and remain as a normative position, despite signs of progress.

The “fatherhood forfeit” of suspicion emerged regularly, with contributors reporting that in social settings they felt they were considered as “*the strange man*” at which “*people stared.*” (Manfred1). For some, the judgments of suspicion appeared more significant as illustrated by “star45;”

Accusations that I had only adopted so that I could be a paedo, because while I had been married, people still knew I was “a bit funny”

(star45)

The contributions discussed above identify a prevailing sense that male caregiving is still considered as something out of the ordinary. Commentators have provided examples of unease or ridicule in social settings, although the workplace also provides fertile ground for compounding such feelings. In a workplace context, contributor Tarque4564 relayed that when he requested part-time working on numerous occasions “*they looked at me like I was crazy*”.

Along with providing evidence of “fatherhood forfeits,” this brief account also lends support to the findings of Tracy and Rivera (2010), who report the negative workplace experience that male caregivers experience when deviating from traditional full-time norms. Furthermore, this reinforces the notion that flexible work requests are fraught with risk of stigma for male caregivers (Cook et al., 2020).

3.2 | New fatherhood Forfeit—Impeded attractiveness

In addition to the emergence of the “fatherhood forfeits” of suspicion and mockery, a new forfeit emerged from our data which has not been previously identified within known academic literature. This “forfeit” centers around perceptions of male attractiveness and how this is impeded or reduced by caregiving behavior, providing new insight into how the “forfeits” manifest. It is suggested that such a “forfeit” has potential to act as a force against taking an active role in caregiving and adopting working practices that align with that. For example;

I wonder how many women would find it a massive turn-off to have their husband staying at home with the kids

(Dhbys)

If, on our first date 25 years ago, I had said my ambition was to be a stay at home dad, I doubt there would have been a second date.

(gouchor)

Many contributors expressed that this perception of reduced attractiveness was directly associated with assumed impeded masculinity, as illustrated here:

I gave up my work..other men look down on you and see you as less masculine while many women would not date a male without career prospects

(ktpmym2)

If you act like feminists tell you to then you won't get laid.

(Dom24)

..so unless a guy wants to be relegated to the friend-zone, best to keep up the macho act as best as one can.

(milgramx)

These sentiments have clear links to the findings of existing research which associates reduced masculinity with caregiving (Byun & Won, 2020; Vandello et al., 2013). In addition to affirming existing findings regarding masculinity, the data are suggestive that contributors are continuing to make associations between hegemonic masculinity being impeded by caregiving. However, these findings offer a new dimension to this knowledge through highlighting the associations between involvement in caregiving and perceptions of impeded attractiveness, conceptualizing this as a further barrier to caregiving, in which fathers “forfeit” a positive experience.

In response to the initial research question, it is apparent that two of the previously identified “fatherhood forfeits” were evident in the research method of online comment analysis, providing support for their existence and increasing understanding of their nature. The data were also illustrative of a new ‘fatherhood forfeit’, focused on the impeded perceptions of the attractiveness of fathers who move away from more traditional hegemonic masculine norms to take an active role in caregiving. With the first research question addressed, the data presentation now moves to explore the data in relation to the existence and nature of the “patriarchal deficit.”

3.3 | Patriarchal Deficit—Secondary positioning of fathers

As with earlier research outlined above, it was widely apparent within the data that contributors considered fathers to have secondary positioning to mothers, in terms of competency in their parental role and workplace support. As illustrated by the following quote with regards to competence:

there have been comments over the years that have annoyed me, some that stick in the mind, such as; 'daddy babysitting today?' from shop assistants ; 'mummy can do it for you in the bath tonight' to my child when given medicine by pharmacist ;'giving mum a night off?

(BBambix)

This aligns to the experience of “Cam1x,” who also observed such secondary positioning:

a man with a child is assumed to be under the control of the nearest woman... -waitresses ask the nearest woman what the child I am holding wants to eat/drink.

Similarly, “dazzler72” narrated an example in which their child was unwell and highlighted how the automatic assumption was that his partner would collect them from nursery and not him:

the nursery called at 3:30 to say my youngest child wasn't well and could we collect him early. I asked my manager if I could leave early and he pulled his face and asked “Why, where's your lady?”

(dazzler72)

In response to the second research question which sought wider understanding of the “patriarchal deficit,” the data presented here provides further support for its existence, evidencing how contributors to an online forum observed fathers secondary positioning to mothers regarding the intersection between caregiving and work, in the same way as Irish fathers were in Bailey's (2015) original research. This takes the discussion to the final research question which sought wider understanding of how fathers navigate work and caregiving, with the focus on expanding knowledge on the previously established strategy of “ground breaker discourse” as a navigation tool for management of masculinity in this context.

3.4 | Management of caregiving and work—Disregarding discourse

It was apparent within the data that contributors who presented themselves as fathers had commonality in their approach to dealing with the challenges they faced when managing care and work, adopting an overwhelmingly “disregarding discourse” when faced with criticism, appearing to utilize this as a coping mechanism. This suggests a new direction for work in this area, highlighting a further way in which masculinity is asserted in a feminized context in addition to the previously established “ground breaker discourse” (Borgkvist et al., 2018). Contributors

regularly reported that they navigated the challenges encountered through espousing a disregarding attitude toward those who criticized their choice of working patterns, with the following style of comments routinely emerging:

Don't worry about what other people think. They're not as smart as you think they are
(Tiktoktok5)

There has never been a shortage of a***holes in the world and they tend not to bother me
(BJR1937)

I used to do Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons with my kids .. sod what anyone else thought
(Pauldanny21)

Have any of these troubled fellows tried Not Giving A Fuck? It worked for me.
(imbant4)

This noteworthy emergence of a “disregarding” attitude to criticism offers support for the findings of Gatrell et al. (2014) in which working fathers were found to exhibit a growing “sense of entitlement” toward their employers regarding the level of family support they receive, resenting their organizations when the support was not forthcoming. This resentment can be clearly seen in these comments:

Do it, do it, do it and balls to your boss. I did and don't regret a second of it
(botzix9)

I was able to tell them where to go [when a request for FWA was denied] and get a job with a more understanding employer
(imaloserxr1)

Such comments are indicative of potential organizational retention challenges for employers who do not effectively support fathers in the management of work and care and monitor their job satisfaction (Paais & Patiruhu, 2020). However, more research is required, specifically looking at this link would support the notion fully.

With all three research questions addressed in line with the data presented, the final part of this paper will now focus on what this research brings that is novel, implications for practice, and further research.

4 | DISCUSSION

It has been previously established that the expectation of modern fathers is for them to be more actively involved in the caregiving of their children than in previous generations; however, this is not without complexity. Existing research has identified that fathers who adopt an active style of parenting face numerous challenges, challenges which can be associated with hindering paternal involvement and stalling gender equality for parents. This paper sets out to explore these challenges facing fathers in more detail, to increase understanding of them and to aid the maximization of staff resources, which is an imperative business objective for the post-COVID workplace.

Our findings to some degree affirm the discoveries of earlier work and family scholars, by identifying how, within the context of online forum comments, the previously acknowledged “fatherhood forfeits” of mockery and suspicion once again emerged (Kelland et al., 2022). This paper identifies a new forfeit facing fathers, which

relates to associations between involvement in caregiving and perceptions of impeded attractiveness to women, largely associated with an assumed step away from more traditional masculine norms. Specifically, within the data, contributors expressed concern that alignment to caregiving behaviors would reduce their attractiveness to the opposite sex, largely presented as a cautionary tale for fathers if considering undertaking a wider role in caregiving and amending their working patterns accordingly. This is in line with earlier assertions, which have found that alignment to hegemonic norms is considered as sexually attractive. For example, Talbot and Quayle (2010: p275) commented on the central role played by hegemonic elements of masculinity (such as providing and protecting) in romantic contexts, reporting that this was despite “nice guys” (who undertake tasks such as caring for children) being valued in social contexts and work environments. This aligns with the research on the involuntary celibate community (incels) in which it has been found that making money, alongside looks, is perceived to be central to attracting female attention, with moves away from traditional masculinity being viewed as weak and submissive by women (Collins, 2018; Jones, 2020). Within the data, there was further evidence of the existence of fathers facing the “patriarchal deficit” of secondary positioning to the mothers with regard to support in the workplace (Bailey, 2015), highlighting its pervasive nature as an ongoing barrier for contemporary fathers.

Finally, the data identifies that fathers adopt “disregarding discourse” in the face of criticism when navigating work and care, which is presented as a way to preserve their hegemonic masculinity. Previous research in an Australian context exploring men's use of flexible working arrangements observed how fathers adopted “ground breaker discourse” (Borgkvist et al., 2018) and we extend knowledge through illuminating a further way in which hegemonic masculinity was maintained by fathers. This approach enabled the fathers to assert organizational masculinity, restoring their dominant position despite an apparent move away from traditional connotations of the “organizational man,” who does not face work and family challenges (Lefley & Janeček, 2023). This finding demonstrates how, in the face of challenges with engaging with alternative and new masculinities (Brandth & Kvande, 2018), contributors reconciled their fathering identity when combining breadwinning and caregiving, through the continuation of maintenance of hegemonic masculinity through dominance. The concept of “disregarding discourse,” as with “ground breaker discourse” (Borgkvist et al., 2018), demonstrates a further way in which fathers can maintain a sense of strength and power in the face of a departure from more traditional conceptions of hegemonic masculinity in an organizational context. Specifically, we shed light on the way in which this occurs, highlighting how fathers maintain dominance over the person who is criticizing them through the adoption of “disregarding discourse.” This is evidenced above by “Pauldanny21” in his statement, “*sod what anyone else thought*” with regard to organizational responses to his reduced working hours for childcare, allowing the maintenance of power in this situation by choosing to not let others' judgment impact his decision-making. Our findings build upon Collinson & Hearn's (2005) organizational masculinity theory, which posits that fathers achieve dominance by creating a distance from their children, highlighting how this can also be achieved whilst demonstrating a closeness to them. We expand knowledge on the ways in which informal interactions establish organizing processes within the workplace and the part played in the maintenance of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006; Healy et al., 2019; Wright, 2016). We add further depth to the arguments that, even in the face of a climate of “new organizational masculinities” traditional elements of masculinity (such as assertiveness and power) continue to dominate (Balan et al., 2023). Thus, rather than rejecting hegemonic masculinity as proposed by the notion of “caring masculinities” (Elliott, 2016), we found that our contributors were actively asserting it through “disregarding discourse.” It might appear on the surface that the practice of the contributors involves blending masculine traits with more modern expressions of masculinity, through discussions of combining work and care as expected by the tenets of hybrid masculinity (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). However, emphasis was placed on maintaining dominance within their interactions, with comments such as “balls to your boss” being commonplace, pointing to a hegemonic masculinity stance rather than more hybrid versions.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

5.1 | Implications for organizations

Firstly, it was found that “fatherhood forfeits” and the “patriarchal deficit” remain evident, with a new forfeit of “impeded attractiveness” being observable in this context. Such continued barriers are offered as a potential explanation as to the dominance of the male breadwinner model in the UK, which has significant implications for ongoing gender inequality, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Kristal & Yaish, 2020). Therefore, it is proposed that direct action is needed by organizations to address these challenges. Through the mechanism of inclusion strategies, it is suggested that organizations should offer an ongoing program of manager-specific focused training, exploring the ways in which expected gender norms can guide behavior to include raising awareness of the gender-specific challenges faced by fathers. Such inclusion training will allow managers to have increased awareness of the workplace challenges of suspicion, mockery, and secondary positioning and explore how the fear of “impeded attractiveness” might impact upon father’s workplace decision-making regarding working hours. This could include exploration of the changing societal expectations of men and the specific challenges men face surrounding navigating masculinities.

Secondly, this paper found that fathers engage in “disregarding discourse” when faced with challenges around work and caregiving, which appeared as a way of preserving their masculinity. Providing further evidence for the existence of a “sense of entitlement” from working fathers (Gatrell et al., 2014). This approach is potentially problematic for organizations as such an attitude might be at odds with organizational norms of behavior, create a challenge for team working, and might manifest as negative customer service and withdrawal of discretionary effort (Purcell, 2003). As was implied in the data, such discourse can be associated with employee dissatisfaction and might result in staff turnover at the extreme end, which can be challenging for organizations in the post-COVID-19 context, in which skills shortages are rife and talent acquisition is challenging (Botelho, 2021; Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). Thus, senior leadership teams should increase their awareness of the challenges surrounding masculinity and gender norms that might be encountered by fathers to enable them to manage them effectively. Such raised awareness is conceptualized as a step toward a change in society regarding the expected behavior of men and the maintenance of organizational masculinity in which men have dominance over women and is widely linked to stalls in gender equality (Lefley & Janeček, 2023).

5.2 | Limitations and directions for future research

It is pertinent to note that these data were collected pre-pandemic, and that the pandemic is widely renowned for impacting upon the way in which work is conducted with considerable increases in working arrangements that are more conducive to managing work and care. Thus, if there was to be a repeat of this study, the challenges faced by fathers and the consequent management strategies might be less observable as moves away from traditional working patterns are more commonplace. However, it has been reported that the focus on flexible working is waning, which perhaps points to an exaggeration of the changing climate (Anghel, 2024).

With regard to the sample, due to the anonymous nature of online comment forums, details regarding the social structures that exist within the workplace of the contributors is not known. Relevant contextual factors such as the nature of the participants’ workplace environment, their role and the gender dominance within the organization remains elusive. For example, it is possible that there are certain circumstances when “disregarding discourse” was more widely observable than “ground breaker discourse.” Due to the anonymous nature of the sample, it is not known whether one strategy was more prominent in certain contexts, and indeed if there were cultural differences between the Australian and the UK sample. As it is well established that such factors can impact upon the ways in which informal interactions occur within organizations, further research exploring the

impact of contributors workplace demographics is suggested to increase understanding (Acker, 2006; Healy et al., 2019). A further limitation of our sample is that the data are derived from the comments section of "The Guardian" newspaper, which is largely associated with left-leaning readers. It is possible that this might have impacted upon the perspective of contributors and might not be a fully representative sample, despite it being chosen due to it being renowned for a high level of engagement and extensive debates (Graham & Wright, 2015). Therefore, it is suggested that future research is undertaken to explore if the findings that emerged within this data appear in an alternative research method, which is less challenging with regard to bias and representativeness. Finally, in the light of Latzko-Toth et al.'s (2016) concept of the importance of "thickening" of data in social media research, it is suggested that the researchers attempt to interview those who made online comments. Such a "thickening" process (Hall, 2022) seeks to address some of the criticism cited earlier pertaining to the legitimacy and validity of drawing conclusions from online comments.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID

Jasmine Kelland  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7355-3069>

REFERENCES

- Acker, Joan. 2006. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations." *Gender & Society* 20(4): 441–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499>.
- Andrew, Alison, Sarah Cattan, Monica Costa Dias, Christine Farquharson, Lucy Kraftman, Sonya Krutikova, Angus Phimister, and Almudena Sevilla. "Family Time Use and Home Learning during the COVID-19 Lockdown." IFS Report No. R178. 2020.
- Anghel, Irina. 2024. *Jobs Offering Flexible Working Are Getting Rarer in the UK*. Bloomberg: Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2024-04-reed-jobs-report-flexible-working-vacancies-decline/>.
- Bailey, Jemimah. 2015. "Understanding Contemporary Fatherhood: Masculine Care and the Patriarchal Deficit." *Families, Relationships and Societies* 4(1): 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1332/204674314x14036152282447>.
- Balan, Claudia, Marieke van den Brink, and Yvonne Benschop. 2023. "New Fathers, Ideal Workers? New Players in the Field of Father-Friendly Work Organizations." *Gender, Work and Organization* 30(3): 957–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12930>.
- Beer, David. 2012. "Using Social Media Data Aggregators to Do Social Research." *Sociological Research Online* 17(3): 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2618>.
- Berdahl, Jennifer L., and Sue H. Moon. 2013. "Workplace Mistreatment of Middle Class Workers Based on Sex, Parenthood, and Caregiving." *Journal of Social Issues* 69(2): 341–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12018>.
- Borgkvist, Ashlee, Vivienne Moore, Jaklin Elliott, and Shona Crabb. 2018. "I Might Be a Bit of a Front Runner": An Analysis of Men's Uptake of Flexible Work Arrangements and Masculine Identity." *Gender, Work and Organization* 25(6): 703–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12240>.
- Botelho, Alfredo. 2021. "Post-brexite and Covid-19 Period Goan Migration Scenario to the United Kingdom: A Compendium of Literature." *Research Journal (Arts)*: 1.
- Brandth, Berit, and Elin Kvande. 1998. "Masculinity and Child Care: The Reconstruction of Fathering." *The Sociological Review* 46(2): 293–313. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954x.00120>.
- Brandth, Berit, and Elin Kvande. 2018. "Masculinity and Fathering Alone during Parental Leave." *Men and Masculinities* 21(1): 72–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x16652659>.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.
- Bridges, Tristan, and C. J. Pascoe. 2014. "Hybrid Masculinities: New Directions in the Sociology of Men and Masculinities." *Sociology Compass* 8(3): 246–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12134>.

- Burgess, Adrienne, Rebecca Goldman, and Jeremy Davies. 2022. *Closing the Gap: UK Working Fathers' and Mothers' Use of Time 2014-22*. London: Fatherhood Institute.
- Burnett, Simon B., Caroline J. Gatrell, Cary L. Cooper, and Paul Sparrow. 2013. "Fathers at Work: A Ghost in the Organizational Machine." *Gender, Work and Organization* 20(6): 632–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12000>.
- Byun, Seo-Young, and S.-Yeon Won. 2020. "Are They Ideological Renegades? Fathers' Experiences on Taking Parental Leave and Gender Dynamics in Korea: A Qualitative Study." *Gender, Work and Organization* 24(4): 592–614.
- Collier, Richard. 2019. "Fatherhood, Gender and the Making of Professional Identity in Large Law Firms: Bringing Men into the Frame." *International Journal of Law in Context* 15(1): 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1744552318000162>.
- Collins, Beatrice. 2018. "A Horror Tale of Male Entitlement: Jack the Ripper and His Shadow, the Incel Movement." *Institute for Public Policy Research Journal* 13: 10–6.
- Collinson, David L., and Hearn Jeff. 2005. "In Work and Organisations." In *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 289.
- Collis, Jill, and Roger Hussey. 2003. *Business Research*, Vol. 142. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cook, Rose, Margaret O'Brien, Sara Connolly, Matthew Aldrich, and Svetlana Speight. 2020. "Fathers' Perceptions of the Availability of Flexible Working Arrangements: Evidence from the UK." *Work, Employment & Society* 35(6): 1014–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017020946687>.
- de Aguiar, Thereza Raquel Sales, Shamima Haque, and Keith A. Bender. 2022. "Athena SWAN Gender Equality Plans and the Gendered Impact of COVID-19." *Gender, Work and Organization* 29(2): 591–608. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12784>.
- Department of Management Faculty of Economics Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku Ambon Indonesia, Paais, Maartje, and Jozef R. Pattiruhu. 2020. "Effect of Motivation, Leadership, and Organizational Culture on Satisfaction and Employee Performance." *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 7(8): 577–88. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no8.577>.
- Elliott, Karla. 2016. "Caring Masculinities: Theorizing an Emerging Concept." *Men and Masculinities* 19(3): 240–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x15576203>.
- Friemel, Thomas N., and Mareike Dötsch. "Online Reader Comments as Indicator for Perceived Public Opinion." 42032 1 (2015): 151–72.
- Fuegen, Kathleen, Monica Biernat, Elizabeth Haines, and Kay Deaux. 2004. "Mothers and Fathers in the Workplace: How Gender and Parental Status Influence Judgments of Job-Related Competence." *Journal of Social Issues* 60(4): 737–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00383.x>.
- Gatrell, Caroline, Jamie J. Ladge, and Gary N. Powell. 2022. "A Review of Fatherhood and Employment: Introducing New Perspectives for Management Research." *Journal of Management Studies* 59(5): 1198–226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12771>.
- Gatrell, Caroline J., Simon B. Burnett, Cary L. Cooper, and Paul Sparrow. 2014. "Parents, Perceptions and Belonging: Exploring Flexible Working Among UK Fathers and Mothers." *British Journal of Management* 25(3): 473–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12050>.
- Gomez, P.-Yves, and Harry Korine. 2008. *Entrepreneurs and Democracy: A Political Theory of Corporate Governance*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Graham, Todd, and Scott Wright. 2015. "A Tale of Two Stories from 'Below the Line' Comment Fields at the Guardian." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 20(3): 317–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161215581926>.
- Guba, Egon G., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1989. *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage.
- Haas, Linda, and C. Philip Hwang. 2019. "Policy Is Not Enough—The Influence of the Gendered Workplace on Fathers' Use of Parental Leave in Sweden." *Community, Work & Family* 22(1): 58–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2018.1495616>.
- Haines, Elizabeth L., and Steven J. Stroessner. 2019. "The Role Prioritization Model: How Communal Men and Agentic Women Can (Sometimes) Have it All." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 13(12): e12504. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12504>.
- Hall, N.-Anne. 2022. "Understanding Brexit on Facebook: Developing Close-Up, Qualitative Methodologies for Social Media Research." *Sociological Research Online* 27(3): 707–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211037356>.
- Haywood, Chris, and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill. 2003. *Men and Masculinities*. UK: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Healy, Geraldine, Ahu Tatli, Gulce Ipek, Mustafa Özturk, Cathrine Seierstad, and Tessa Wright. 2019. "In the Steps of Joan Acker: A Journey in Researching Inequality Regimes and Intersectional Inequalities." *Gender, Work and Organization* 26(12): 1749–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12252>.
- Hidaka, Tomoko. 2010. *Salaryman Masculinity: Continuity and Change in Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*. Salaryman Masculinity: Brill.
- Hipp, Lena. 2020. "Do Hiring Practices Penalize Women and Benefit Men for Having Children? Experimental Evidence from Germany." *European Sociological Review* 36(2): 250–64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz056>.

- Hodges, Melissa J., and Michelle J. Budig. 2010. "Who Gets the Daddy Bonus? Organizational Hegemonic Masculinity and the Impact of Fatherhood on Earnings." *Gender & Society* 24(6): 717–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243210386729>.
- Hodkinson, Paul, and Rachel Brooks. 2023. "Caregiving Fathers and the Negotiation of Crossroads: Journeys of Continuity and Change." *British Journal of Sociology* 74(1): 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12980>.
- Holter, Øystein Gullvåg. 2012. "Towards a New Fatherhood: Fathering Practices and Gender Equalities in Recent Nordic Research." *Fatherhood in Late Modernity*: 273–94. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvddzvgg.16>.
- Howell, Kerry E. "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology." 2012.
- Jones, Annie "Incels and the Manosphere: Tracking Men's Movements Online." 2020.
- Kelland, Jasmine, Duncan Lewis, and Virginia Fisher. 2022. "Viewed with Suspicion, Considered Idle and Mocked: Working Caregiving Fathers and Fatherhood Forfeits." *Gender, Work and Organization* 29(5): 1578–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12850>.
- Kelland, Jasmine, and Charlie Rosier. 2024. *Caregiving Fathers Vote with Their Feet to Find Flexible Work*. University of Plymouth: Available at: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/news/caregiving-fathers-vote-with-their-feet-to-find-flexible-work>.
- Kern, Justin L., Brent A. McBride, Daniel J. Laxman, W. Justin Dyer, Rosa M. Santos, and Laurie M. Jeans. 2016. "The Role of Multiple-Group Measurement Invariance in Family Psychology Research." *Journal of Family Psychology* 30(3): 364–74. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000184>.
- Kristal, Tali, and Meir Yaish. 2020. "Does the Coronavirus Pandemic Level the Gender Inequality Curve? (It Doesn't)." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 68: 100520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2020.100520>.
- Kugelberg, Clarissa. 2006. "Constructing the Deviant Other: Mothering and Fathering in the Workplace." *Gender, Work and Organization* 13(2): 152–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2006.00301.x>.
- Latzko-Toth, Guillaume, Claudine Bonneau, and Melanie Millette. 2016. "Small Data, Thick Data: Thickening Strategies for Trace-Based Social Media Research." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, edited by Luke Sloan and Anabel Quan-Haase, 199–214. London: SAGE.
- Lefley, Frank, and Vaclav Janeček. 2023. "Board Gender Diversity, Quotas and Critical Mass Theory." *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 29(2): 139–51. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-01-2023-0010>.
- Lelkes, Yphtach, Jon Kronick, David Marx, Charles Judd, and Bernadette Park. 2011. "Complete Anonymity Compromises the Accuracy of Self-Reports.": Retrieved from <https://pprg.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/Anonymity-JESP-FINAL-June-2012.pdf>.
- Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.
- Liu-Lastres, Bingjie, Han Wen, and W.-Jue Huang. 2023. "A Reflection on the Great Resignation in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 35(1): 235–49. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-05-2022-0551>.
- MacDonald, Sandy, and Sonia Liff. 2007. "Working for the Family." *Human Resource Management Journal* 17(2): 118–33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2007.00032.x>.
- Maheshwari, Bhawana, Jatin Pandey, and Aditya Billore. 2021. "Paternity Leave: Stepchild of Family-Friendly Policies Moderating Role of Traditional Masculinity Ideology." *Personnel Review* 51(7): 1772–87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-07-2020-0519>.
- Mercier, Eric, Amanda Le Couteur, and Paul Delfabbro. 2024. "I Am Different': A Qualitative Analysis of Part-Time Working Fathers' Constructions of Their Experiences." *Community, Work & Family* 27(1): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2022.2045904>.
- Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Sage.
- Moran, Jessica, and Alison Koslowski. 2019. "Making Use of Work–Family Balance Entitlements: How to Support Fathers with Combining Employment and Caregiving." *Community, Work & Family* 22(1): 111–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2018.1470966>.
- Norman, Helen. 2022. "Fathers' Engagement in Low Income Households and the Effects on Children's Attainment at Primary School." *Piece Study*: Available at: <https://piecestudy.org>.
- Office for National Statistics. 2022. "Employee Earnings in the UK.": Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2022>.
- O'Malley, Roberta Liggett, Karen Holt, and Thomas J. Holt. 2022. "An Exploration of the Involuntary Celibate (Incel) Subculture Online." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37(7–8): NP4981–5008. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520959625>.
- Padavic, Irene, Robin J. Ely, and Erin M. Reid. 2020. "Explaining the Persistence of Gender Inequality: The Work–Family Narrative as a Social Defense against the 24/7 Work Culture." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 65(1): 61–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839219832310>.

- Partridge, Joanna. 2023. "Two-Thirds of CEOs Think Staff Should Return to Office Five Days a Week, Survey Finds." *The Guardian*: Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2023/oct/05/two-thirds-ceos-think-staff-return-to-office-five-days-a-week-survey-finds>.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Sage.
- Purcell, John. 2003. *Understanding the People and Performance Link: Unlocking the Black Box*. CIPD Publishing.
- Rice-Oxley, Mark. 2017. "The Masculine Mystique." *The Guardian*: Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2017/nov/21/the-masculine-mystique-why-men-cant-ditch-the-baggage-of-being-a-bloke>.
- Richards, Kelly. 2018. "Born This Way? A Qualitative Examination of Public Perceptions of the Causes of Paedophilia and Sexual Offending against Children." *Deviant Behavior* 39(7): 835–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2017.1335526>.
- Richards Solomon, Catherine, and Catherine. 2014. "After Months of it, You Just Want to Punch Someone in the Face': Stay-At-Home Fathers and Masculine Identities." *Michigan Family Review* 18(1): 23. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mfr.4919087.0018.103>.
- Robinson, Stephen Cory. 2017. "Self-Disclosure and Managing Privacy: Implications for Interpersonal and Online Communication for Consumers and Marketers." *Journal of Internet Commerce* 16(4): 385–404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2017.1402637>.
- Rudman, Laurie A., and Kris Mescher. 2013. "Penalizing Men Who Request a Family Leave: Is Flexibility Stigma a Femininity Stigma?" *Journal of Social Issues* 69(2): 322–40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12017>.
- Silverman, David. 2013. "What Counts as Qualitative Research? Some Cautionary Comments." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 9(2): 48–55. <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.09.2.05>.
- Thelwall, Mike. 2018. "Social Media Analytics for YouTube Comments: Potential and Limitations." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21(3): 303–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2017.1381821>.
- Tracy, Sarah J., and Kendra Dyanne Rivera. 2010. "Endorsing Equity and Applauding Stay-At-Home Moms: How Male Voices on Work-Life Reveal Aversive Sexism and Flickers of Transformation." *Management Communication Quarterly* 24(1): 3–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318909352248>.
- Vandello, Joseph A., Vanessa E. Hettinger, Jennifer K. Bosson, and Jasmine Siddiqi. 2013. "When Equal Isn't Really Equal: The Masculine Dilemma of Seeking Work Flexibility." *Journal of Social Issues* 69(2): 303–21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12016>.
- Walther, Joseph B., Suzanne Pingree, Robert P. Hawkins, and David B. Buller. 2005. "Attributes of Interactive Online Health Information Systems." *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 7(3): e33. <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.7.3.e33>.
- Wharton, Amy S., Sarah Chivers, and Mary Blair-Loy. 2008. "Use of Formal and Informal Work-Family Policies on the Digital Assembly Line." *Work and Occupations* 35(3): 327–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888408316393>.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Jasmine Kelland joined University of Plymouth 11 years ago and is also a Program Leader of the MA in HRM. Prior to joining academia she had a successful career in HRM.

Nicola Searle is in the process of conducting her PhD research which is focused on the Emotional Intelligence of HR practitioners. She is also a HR Business Partner and has been affiliated with Plymouth for over 7 years.

Andy Brown has been in post as Lecturer in Plymouth for 3 years, prior to that he was a Lecturer at University of West of England. Prior to joining academia he had a successful career in Management.

How to cite this article: Kelland, Jasmine, Nicola Searle, and Andy Brown. 2024. "Fathers at Work—Forfeits, Deficits and Disregarding Discourse." *Gender, Work & Organization*: 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13199>.