An Exploration of Pregnant Couples’ Constructions of Routine Ultrasound, Pregnancy, the Foetus and ‘Their Baby’.

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Visualising the Womb: Ultrasound Research as a Field of Study

Primacy of the Visual
Technological Imperative
Consumption and Choice
Primacy of the Visual
In Medicine, It’s What’s On The Inside That Counts.
Technological Imperative

- Nature is imperfect
- Technology is progress
- If it can be done, it must be tried. If it can be tried then I must try it.
Consumption and Choice

Challenge to biomedical authority.

“Hybrid practice” – medical vs. social?
Context/Approach/Method

In-depth, exploratory research

Visual aspect

Socially constructed meaning

Discourse analysis
Copy of recruitment flyer
Participants and Methods

7 couples Discussing together 60-90 minutes duration

Objects to share
Constructing ultrasound as normal and commonsense.

Constructing the pregnancy as legitimate and valid.

Constructing the foetus as healthy and normal.

Constructing the baby with personhood and gender.
Ultrasound as Normal and Commonsense

Audrey “It’s just always been discussed as being part of the process.”

Tavish “A matter of course, yea, like just with everyone… Why wouldn’t we sort of go for it?”

Lewis “I guess I would always, I mean I guess I’d always, it wouldn’t have been something that we would have discussed, um, not having scans as well. Is that ever an option, not to have them?”

Ali “Well (long pause) for us it wasn’t.”

Tom You should do it absolutely. There’s no reason why you wouldn’t.”
Garrett: “It was actually quite the confirmation as well. Like we, we (looks at Eva) we were pretty sure but it’s the first kind of solid thing we had that was (holds hands out in front of himself) yea, actually having a baby.”

Eva: “Yea apart from the, the two pink lines.

Ali: “It was also confirmation that there IS something inside you, you know like prior to that um, scan you’ve kind of peed on a stick and (smiles) that’s IT, there’s no, there’s no (laughing) other confirmation that you are actually pregnant and (shrugs) you know”

Couple 3

Kate: “OH MY GOD! I’m pregnant now. There’s a real thing happening here. There’s something there. It’s much more real than two lines, the doctors or a blood test or anything”

Couple 2

Couple 6

Pregnancy as Legitimate and Valid
Amy: “Everything’s where is should be and it’s got all it’s –
Tom: “It’s got all it’s bits.”
Amy: “- as well.”
Tom: “Parts and the right parts, the usual one’s –“
Amy: “And it’s the right size and yea… And they, and they see that everything’s where it, like it’s got (holds up hand) five fing, four fingers and a thumb (laughs) five toes and it’s got full ch-”
Tom: “Yea no, just. Just the basic checks to make sure it’s not like a mutant baby.”

Audrey: “And, and he looked like a person. So he had little arms and legs and you saw (outlining it in the air) and you see the little profile shot with the head and the nose and the stuff, so he, yea, he looked like a little person as opposed to just something that was making me constipated.”
Lulu  “Like I think it’s, even thinking it’s a girl and it’s definitely given me more of a connection. Thinking ‘oh my gosh we’re going to be raising a daughter’ and you, you start to think a bit different.”

Couple 5

Zac  “That kinda, sort of a visual image that’s stayed with me anyway of, um, the baby at that age.”

Couple 2

Lulu  “Like I think its, even thinking it’s a girl and it’s definitely given me more of a connection. Thinking ‘oh my gosh we’re going to be raising a daughter’ and you, you start to think a bit different.”

Couple 5

Eva  “(Points to the images on the coffee table) Because I’ve seen this visual representation in this way (takes finger to her temple) that’s how I kind of (points finger up in the air) imagine (takes hand to stomach) baby.”

Couple 6
Women’s reproductive rights.

Informed decision making.

Regulation of technology.

Implications
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