



**Report of meeting between Timescapes’
‘Intergenerational Exchange’ and
‘Following Young Fathers’: University of
Leeds, 10th December 2014**

Data Sharing Workshop Outcomes

**Dr Anna Tarrant
University of Leeds**



Introduction

A key aim of the Timescapes programme was to explore and promote ways in which the linked collection and assembly of archived qualitative longitudinal data might enable secondary and collaborative analysis (Bornat *et al.* 2008). To date, select members of the original nine original projects that constituted the Timescapes programme, have conducted the majority of this work and have published useful guides based on their experiences to support other projects seeking to develop their own approaches (see for example Irwin and Winterton 2011; Bornat *et al.* 2008). The experience of accessing and analysing several Timescapes datasets as a secondary researcher, with no prior involvement in the original research programme, remains a relatively novel, and currently uncharted activity.

This report documents how I, as a secondary analyst, facilitated the bringing together of two of the Timescapes project teams to conduct secondary and collaborative analysis of data, as part of a strategy of comparison across datasets that are not directly comparable. Having had no previous involvement in either project, my role was to find ways of working concurrently with both teams while also seeking to engage in this collaborative process as a relative outsider; asking different questions of the data and producing different interpretations. The aim of the meeting therefore was not only to engage in a collaborative process but also to shape and refine pre-determined research questions for a funded project that proposed to explore men's subjective experiences of care in a low-income locality¹. This required careful planning and attention to the relational dynamics of the process of secondary analysis.

In documenting this process, as well as the outcomes of the meeting, it is anticipated that this approach might be a model or pilot for other secondary analysts who seek access to the Timescapes Archive, without having had prior involvement. The topic that the meeting focused on was 'men and care', something that neither team have previously analysed explicitly prior to the meeting.

Timescapes and the two projects

ESRC Timescapes is a qualitative longitudinal programme of research comprising of seven indecently conceived, but linked, primary research projects that explored how personal and family relationships develop and change over time. As well as scaling up and promoting Qualitative Longitudinal (QL) research, a key aim of the initiative was to create an archive for preserving and sharing data, and for encouraging data re-use. The Timescapes Archive, which comprises nine of these linked QL datasets is underpinned by a stakeholder approach that aims to 'engender trust and respect between primary and secondary researchers, and meet requirements to share data as a

¹ <http://flag.leeds.ac.uk/research/mens-experiences-of-family-life-and-multiple-responsibilities-in-low-income-localities/>

means of broadening evidence and advancing knowledge' (Neale and Bishop 2012; Neale, 2013, p. 13).

Bringing two datasets into conversation as a secondary analyst is a relatively new practice (although see Irwin and Winterton, 2012), requiring careful consideration of the methodological challenges and benefits, but it a practice that warrants further attention and that warrants further attention. Indeed, 'collaborative cross-project work for the purpose of secondary analysis is integral to the design of the Timescapes programme' (Irwin *et al.* 2012, p. 71) 'Intergenerational Exchange' (IE) and 'Following Young Fathers' (FYF) were identified as relevant archived datasets to analyse, during the development of the funding application for a proposed research project about men's care trajectories in a low-income locality in Leeds. The project, entitled 'Men's experiences of family life and multiple care responsibilities in low-income localities', has since been awarded funding by the Leverhulme Trust as part of their Early Career Fellowship scheme.

The two projects were initially chosen because they can provide insights into men's subjective experiences of care in contexts of constraint and at different stages in the life course. While both projects were independently conceived, as part of Timescapes, they share broader common concerns and characteristics. They are both qualitative and longitudinal and linked by an over-arching interest in researching both the dynamics of personal and family lives across the generations (Neale and Bishop, 2012), as well as how processes of social change are 'worked out' in different socio-economic, historical and cultural contexts (Coltart *et al.* 2013). Data for each project was also derived predominantly from in-depth interviewing on topics relating to family life and both drew on theorising from sociology, aspects of the research design that have a significant bearing on the context of data production. An initial process of familiarization with outputs from the both projects, alongside individual exploratory conversations with the primary researchers confirmed that both datasets were appropriate for re-use and could yield insights into this broad area of substantive interest.

There are differences in the nature of the data derived from each project however, meaning that the datasets are not directly comparable. A key difference is that the project participants were different as a result of each projects' substantive concerns. The FYF project sought to understand the lived experiences and support needs of young fathers under the age of 25 so their interviewees were young men who became fathers during their teenage years. This dataset is based on five waves of interviews, starting in 2009 as part of the Young Lives and Times project and extending to two further waves of interviews in 2011. While interviews were the main method used in the study, the project combined these with focus groups, participant observations and timelines to 'walk alongside' the fathers as their lives unfolded (Neale and Lau, 2011). IE investigated how vulnerable and marginalised grandparents support and care for their grandchildren, so their interviewees included men and women who were

mid-life grandparents. In total four grandfathers were interviewed across four waves of interviews although there are also voices from other male family members. Sheila's² transcript for example (one of the transcripts chosen for discussion in the workshop) includes the voices of several of her sons, who discuss their experiences of life growing up in the low-income locality and their practices of protecting each other.

While differences across datasets can present challenges for secondary researchers, they also proved fruitful, as the data-sharing meeting revealed. In particular, the window of one generation onto another was identified as an interesting methodological outcome that had not been considered by the primary research teams prior to the meeting. The FYF data for example provides fascinating insights into the young men's perceptions and experiences of the grandparent generation that was interviewed for the IE project and vice versa. Similarly, Sheila's transcript, mentioned above, afforded understandings of the experiences of her sons, young men who, across the waves of interviews, began to have their own children as well.

The meeting was held at University of Leeds and was attended by myself, Kahryn Hughes (IE); Carmen Lau-Clayton, Laura Davies and Linzi Ladlow (FYF). Unfortunately Nick Emmel (IE) and Bren Neale (FYF) were unable to attend the meeting but had had some involvement prior to the workshop through their influence in the decision-making about which transcripts would yield insights into men's subjective experiences of caring.

Organising and running the workshop

As mentioned, I had several conversations with each of the project members about their research and their datasets. This was part of a broader strategy of familiarizing myself with the ways in which the projects were conceived and to begin to develop trusting relationships with the project members by assuring them that I planned to work ethically and respect their position as key stakeholders of the datasets (Neale, 2013).

I gave the primary project teams the opportunity to fill in a Doodlepoll prior to the data sharing workshops and ensued that this was done in advance so that there would be time for the teams to meet to select which cases/transcripts they thought would be most fruitful for bringing into conversation and to familiarize themselves with the particulars of my proposed project. The invitation to the workshop provided details about;

- the substantive area of interest for the new project (men, care, change and continuity),
- the proposed research questions that would be refined during the process of qualitative secondary analysis,

² All of the names mentioned in this paper are pseudonyms that were assigned by the primary research teams, to protect the anonymity of the participants.

- Questions to guide the choice of transcripts (see Appendix 1)

The researchers from the primary teams were given a deadline of 10 days prior to the workshop by which time they needed to circulate their transcripts to everyone involved so that they could be read in advance. This facilitated the smooth running of the meeting and ensured that discussions could be focused on conceptual themes, clarifications and queries about context. The FYF team circulated two transcripts from the third of five waves of interviews; 22 year old Darren and 20 year Dominic (both pseudonyms). Both were young fathers who discussed their relationships with their families but they differed in terms of their relationship status; Darren still lived with the mother of his children, Dominic was negotiating access with his ex-partner. The IE team chose the transcripts of a grandparent couple that were formally recognized as kinship carers to their two granddaughters (Geoff and Margaret) and Sheila, mentioned earlier, a grandmother, whose interviews included her sons and provided evidence of the ways in brothers cared for and looked out for one another.

During the week prior to the workshops I familiarized myself with the data and took extensive notes, identifying sections of data in each transcript that were relevant to men and care. This was most time consuming for me as secondary researcher, because I was the only person who needed to read all of transcripts and who had no prior knowledge of either dataset. At a practical level, secondary analysts may want to give themselves more time for this early preparation.

During the workshop, I acted as chair, took notes and recorded the session on a voice recorder. This helped me to keep a record of the events. During the workshop my role was to move between the position of primary and secondary researcher, asking for clarifications as a secondary researcher and seeking to make meaningful conceptual connections that would inform my next project as a primary researcher. Two questions framed the discussions;

1. What can we understand about men and care simply from these transcripts?
2. What else do we need to know?

Question one facilitated discussions of the men's experiences of care within the transcripts and aided in drawing out perspectives on how the men in the transcripts orientated themselves to caring. As such, it helped to derive new interpretations from the data. It also aided in gaining an understanding of the contexts in which the narratives were produced. Context is a multi-faceted concept and in this case does not just refer to the proximate knowledge of the participants and their immediate circumstances but also the ways in which the data are embedded in, and shaped by project aims, methods and modes of questioning (Irwin et al, 2012). This is especially important because both sets of transcripts were part of second or third waves of interviews within qualitative longitudinal datasets. Question Two was a more open question posed towards the end of the session. The intention of posing this question

was to aid in refining the research questions for my own empirical project and to identify possible gaps in knowledge.

Choice of interviews

The workshop was particularly constructive as a starting point for finding potentially productive lines of inquiry and for determining how transcripts were positioned within the broader context of each study. Selection of the data was made based on what the primary researchers perceived to be typical and atypical narratives in relation to the men's experiences of care. Lead by question one (What can we understand about men and care simply from these transcripts?) both teams began by explaining their choices. This information is outlined below but in terms of the process of secondary analysis, this was a useful exercise because it was a starting point for exploring common themes across the datasets and provided me, as the secondary researcher, with an early way into the datasets:

Intergenerational Exchange data (presented by Kahryn Hughes)

- Sheila's interview is where the title 'Intergenerational Exchange' came from. The narrative in relation to men and care is about the brothers caring for one another. The older brother for example plays a key role in steering his younger brother out of trouble (this also happens in Darren's narrative – Darren almost parenting his younger brothers so that they don't make the same mistakes).
- Geoff and Margaret's interview was chosen because Geoff doesn't see family as the inevitable and best place for a child to grow up – he questions why his granddaughters shouldn't be going into care instead. In this respect, Geoff's narrative is very different to the others in the dataset who argue that family is family and are more accepting of their responsibilities within the family unit.
- Across this dataset, the move of grandchildren from primary school to secondary school is problematic for these grandparents and they feel they lose a sense of control. Geoff feels he is unable to talk to his granddaughter and talks about wanting to slap her at one point when she talks back to him. Similarly, involvement by grandparents is much more clear cut and straight forward when children are in primary school and strong relationships can be built with teachers etc – the mechanics of this are much more difficult at secondary school.
- Geoff attended two support groups – one for grandparents and one on men, alcohol and violence. The grandparent groups are very much about grandparents encouraging each other not to blame themselves for having to take on the responsibility for the grandchildren but this model didn't necessarily 'fit' Geoff's narrative. In attending these groups, Grandparents Association situated Geoff in a particular way that is reflected in the differences in his attitude to caring between his first and later interviews.
- Kahryn recommended that I look at Bob's early interviews to provide context to his later ones – Bob also had a violent character that he works out over the

course of the interviews representing his journey to being a ‘good’ grandfather.

Following Young Fathers data (presented by Carmen Lau-Clayton)

- The interviews provide very different accounts of family life and perspectives on older generations (i.e. the grandparent generation in the IE project) ,
- Darren talks about getting benefits as getting ‘paid’ – such language removes some of the shame of living in poverty,
- Dominic is younger and comes from a more conventional family context and wants to create his own conventional family context,
- In these narratives there is a sense that they think they ought to be involved and that their narratives are a rehearsal of stories constructed through engagement with the services that intervened in their lives,
- Darren uses the language of ‘fair’ (Cameron’s Fair Society) in his discussion about having children. Distinct awareness that what his brother is doing in having multiple children is unfair – he manages his own story in terms of working as a route to being able to afford having 2 children,
- These narratives are about finding redemption from being a parent. Their degree of perception of how successful they are at this varies across the narratives. This wave of interviews also represents their journeys to being a ‘good’ parent,
- Caring practices in Darren’s narratives were being reduced to a tick box exercise and the need to prove commitment.

Identification of emergent common themes

Once each team had explained their choice of transcripts and their position within the broader dataset, the conversation progressed quite naturally onto a discussion in which comparisons were drawn between datasets. Certain comments or reflections by the primary researchers about their datasets sparked further discussion of how each dataset compared or differed. This comparative engagement with the datasets resulted in the identification of new interpretations and considerations of the original material. A number of themes emerged relating both to men and care but also other possible fruitful lines of inquiry that both teams might take forward themselves. These broader themes also opened up new questions in relation to understandings of men’s identities and care practices. The themes were:

Broader themes

- *Situated family positions* - In both datasets there is evidence of how particular services and individuals working for those services, position people in terms of their family identities but also in terms of their position in the life course. IN the FYF data for example, assumptions are made about fathering and parenthood and this affected how the young men were treated. The young men in FYF are no longer constructed via childhood but as young adults and there

are expectations that they have different capabilities to others in their peer group because their own child is now the child. This was the same in Ruth's interview, another participant in the IE project. She felt that her daughter was still a child at 14 and barely able to access her benefits but she was suddenly being positioned as a mother (see Emmel and Hughes, 2014). This challenged Ruth's identity as mother and grandmother. In both datasets, young parents are having their role as mother and father validated and legitimized and they become adult even though their capabilities haven't changed. There are other instances in IE where young men are co-parenting siblings. In Sheila's interview, her son Darren protects his younger brothers from the gang culture characteristic of the locality and he protects their mother from his abusive alcoholic dad when he is old enough to do so.

- *Journeys to 'good' (grand)parenthood* – The qualitative longitudinal design of each project reveals the journeys that both the grandparents and young fathers go on in order to become 'good' parents or grandparents. Both sets of participants appear to develop a language or way of talking about their parenting or grandparenting across the waves of interviews and in each instance this is a product of their interactions with different third sector services and individual service workers. It appears that in both datasets, trusted individuals who provide support, invest time and energy and who make the effort to understand them, play significant roles in supporting these journeys. This suggests that low-income families cannot be fully understood without an insight into who supports them and how they contour their identities and relationships over time,
- *Fear in interactions with social services* – In both datasets there is evidence that the involvement of social services is being used as a weapon in the power dynamics between parents. In IE, daughters who have left their grandchildren with their parents and then want them back, use this as a way of controlling their parents. In FYF, the mothers of the young men's children are also doing this by way of securing access.
- *Children as weapons* – Across both datasets, children are also being used as weapons within relationships. In FYF, the fathers who are no longer with their child's mother accuse their ex-partners of using their children as a weapon, in Intergenerational Exchange, daughters are leaving their children with their parents and then threatening to take them back at any time with little thought for the emotional consequences of such behaviour on both the grandparents and the children. Access to children is therefore an important factor in this. It appears that grandparents and fathers are vulnerable to this. In IE. Lynn, one of the grandmothers makes this point to a social worker, that the mother is not always the best option for a child.
- *Micro-management of money* - Both datasets provide insights into this. The need to be resourceful and living day to day to meet the basic needs of their

children/grandchildren is highly evident. There are lots of discussions of resourcefulness in this as well as exchanges beyond the financial.

- *Multigenerational living* - Common in both datasets either because the father is too young or can't get a home or because grandchildren are being cared for in the homes of their grandparents. What impact does this have on the paternal/maternal identity and subsequent care practices?
- *Life experiences in common* – Several of the IE grandmothers and grandfathers were teenagers themselves when they became parents and they reflect back on how their lives have changed. The young fathers also provide a window of insight into their own mothers and fathers and the ways in which they perform grandparenthood.

Themes relating to men and care

- *Practices of care* – Geoff's narrative was chosen because of his atypical orientation to family. This led to discussion of the ways in which men in both datasets presented their versions of family. The dominant narrative was that 'family is family', even in contexts of separation and family reconstitution; this wasn't the case for Geoff who, in early interviews, felt that his granddaughters might be better off in care. It would be useful to theorise these presentations of family by men in more detail in a new study but a greater understanding of how men's family contexts and personal circumstances evolve over time is required (justifying the focus of the proposed study). Towards the end of the meeting it was identified that there was much less information about the domestic responsibilities of men, particularly in the FYF data. This may also be an avenue for further consideration.
- *Men learning through service engagement* – Both datasets reveal how men change over time and adapt to their caring responsibilities. This is especially shaped by interactions with services. In IE for example, the men's identities and practices are molded by engagement with services targeted at grandparents but also more generic services about alcohol and violence. In FYF, following engagement with services for teenage dads, the young men develop a language over time in relation to their adaptations to fathering. Both sets of men experience journeys that lead to them to providing the 'good' care that is expected of them.
- *Pride and confidence* – Building pride and confidence over time, appears to be a key issue in shaping the care practices the men engage in and reduces the risk that they fall back on potentially dangerous practices and experiences involving violence, alcohol and substance misuse and depression. Many of these participants talk about being worried and/or anxious and the consequences of this for others, is something a future project could try to understand more about.

Identification of these themes will steer the analytic strategy for the secondary analysis, which will involve translating concepts and evidence across datasets and enabling meaningful analytic conversation across these differently constituted datasets.

Broader issues for secondary analysis

The meeting proved to be a valuable exercise, particularly as part of the process and practice of conducting secondary analysis *across* two datasets that a) are differently constituted and b) were previously unfamiliar to the secondary analyst. It was particularly productive in the process of drawing out substantive concerns and also provided the opportunity to reflect on methodology. The advantages of running a data-sharing workshop for both the primary and secondary researchers are multiple but for the secondary analyst specifically:

- The meeting confirmed that comparative work across the two datasets *would* enable meaningful analytical conversation in relation to men and care,
- The primary research teams offered a route in to what are otherwise large and complex datasets, providing a starting point through the identification of relevant lines of inquiry,
- The primary researchers aided in the continuation of the familiarisation process in several ways;
 - By sharing their intimate knowledge of the participants and providing their perspective on how each narrative unfolded over time,
 - By clarifying how their data was contextually embedded at multiple levels. Developing an understanding of the various contexts in which data is produced has been identified as a key element of the efficacy and validity of knowledge claims made by secondary researchers who had ‘no presence at the point of data generation and limited knowledge of the proximate setting and of participants’ (Irwin *et al.* 2012, p. 67).
 - By discussing their own interpretations of the substantive concerns that provided the focus of the workshop – in this instance men and care.

Despite the many advantages of working concurrently with primary research teams, there are other issues and challenges that require further consideration. Some of these are outlined below:

- *Bringing two teams together: what’s in it for primary researchers?*

Both primary and secondary research teams can benefit from identifying relevant lines of inquiry. Given time constraints, in this instance attention to the ways in which the primary research teams might benefit from this collaboration (if they have the time and resources) was not explicitly considered. In line with the stakeholder

approach, it may be useful for the secondary analyst to build time into a workshop that allows the primary research teams to consider the following questions;

- What do the two original teams want to do, if anything (having invested time in the workshop)?
- Is there sufficient comparison across datasets beyond the interests of the secondary analyst and if so, do they want to explore these additional avenues of comparison?
- Are there publishing and funding opportunities, either in collaboration with the secondary analyst or even separate from them?

Such an approach might ensure that the primary research team(s) benefits from being involved in the process and committing their time and resources.

- *Getting to know the rest of the cases*

The workshop provided the opportunity to share only one or two interviews from each dataset. This meant reading one transcript from one wave of interviews. While this provided a useful route in to each dataset, the transcripts were necessarily disembodied from their original contexts in the interest of exploring relevant themes and familiarizing with data in a limited time frame. What this means is that transcripts might be ‘read’ incorrectly if divorced from the case as a whole. This is especially true of Qualitative Longitudinal data where the challenges of understanding contexts of data production are magnified. In reading the later interview by Geoff, first for example, I had no indication of why he didn’t believe family was the best place for the care of his grandchildren. This was only explained and clarified by Kahryn later in the workshop. Reading these transcripts was a time consuming process for the secondary researcher but also supported concerns within the literature that epistemological distance from the original research can be problematic. What the workshop did support was the opportunity to gain an understanding of how the primary research teams understood the contexts in which these transcripts were produced and a steer towards an analytical strategy for the qualitative secondary analysis moving forward, involving the reading of full cases (i.e. reading each transcript from each wave of interviews for each individual).

- *Generating new questions or refining?*

In the context of this project, the secondary analysis process was intended to support and refine research questions that had already been posed, in the light of existing evidence. It may be that the analysis of the data opens up entirely new questions that were not considered during the project conception, in which case, the secondary analyst will need to justify these changes to their funders.

The datasets may also be used to generate access to the research site, raising a number of ethical questions for the secondary researcher; should I re-access these participants? Could they be useful gate-keepers to new participants? Can gate-keepers from these studies be useful again and will they support a new project by a new researcher? Timescapes supports a situated and processual model of pursuing ethical practice in which ethics emerge through the research process. These are all interesting questions because of their implications for researcher-researched relationships as they develop over time and are questions that need to be engaged with, negotiated and considered by both primary and secondary researchers through their collaborative practice.

Key points from the experience

- *Building relationships with the primary team(s)* – In order to run a session like this it is important that the secondary analyst works in a way that is underpinned by ‘stakeholder ethics’ (Neale, 2013). In working concurrently with the primary teams it is important to build trust with each of them by being clear about intentions and respecting their stake in the datasets of interest. In this case it was useful to have a champion from one of the projects (Kahryn from IE) who already knew the other team members and provided a route into establishing relationships. The ability to work with the primary research teams is dependent on timing, availability and the extent of interest each primary team member has in the project.
- *Preparation* – It is important to prepare early for the workshop, especially if it is part of a process of refining a research project. Primary teams need time to meet and select and then circulate transcripts. They may need to re-familiarize themselves with datasets if they haven’t worked with them for a while and they will need to look at the datasets again in the light of a new focus. The secondary analyst will have the most to read as the least familiar with both datasets so time is also needed to begin to make notes and comparisons.
- *Clarity of purpose* – The secondary analyst needs to be clear about the purpose of the analysis. Are they refining and generating research questions or analyzing the datasets for the purpose of developing new interpretations? Maybe even both? If the secondary analyst wants to re-use data for analysis and publication, this should be made clear to the primary researchers and issues of intellectual property and collaborative working must be negotiated early on.

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