



## Qualitative Secondary Analysis and research design: reflections on a methodological framework for data re-use

For the project 'Men, Poverty and lifetimes of care'



The Leverhulme Trust

**A Timescapes Working Paper**

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## 1. 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). Indeed, a major strand of work within Timescapes focused on secondary analysis; project members took part in a range of collective secondary analysis activities (e.g. Bornat and Bytheway 2012; Bornat *et al.* 2008; Coltart *et al.* 2012) and a dedicated secondary analysis project was funded for the undertaking of substantive and methodological research using the original datasets (Irwin *et al.* 2012; Irwin and Winterton, 2012).

Now that the datasets are increasingly available to researchers outside of the Timescapes team, opportunities for secondary analysts to re-use this data have opened up, and with that, the possibilities for developing substantive insights and analytical reflections on qualitative research methodology. While certainly not the first person with no prior involvement in the original Timescapes programme, to engage in secondary analysis of the archived data (see Baker, 2010; Wilson 2014), the experience of accessing and analysing within and across more than one of the Timescapes datasets as a secondary researcher, remains a relatively novel, and unchartered research activity.

The re-use of qualitative datasets for the purposes of developing a research design is also a relatively unusual methodological approach. The study that I discuss in this paper, entitled 'Men, poverty and lifetimes of care'<sup>1</sup>, has the substantive aim of exploring men's care responsibilities within highly vulnerable families with complex and enduring needs and how these accumulate and change over time. To understand these substantive interests, the methodological aims of the research included the exploratory use of existing qualitative datasets to develop the study (described in this paper), followed by primary empirical data generation and analysis. Following Young Fathers (FYF) and Intergenerational Exchange (IGE) from the Timescapes archive were identified as potentially relevant datasets for re-use and project development because of similarities in their substantive interests, both to one another and to the funded study. Notwithstanding their linked attention to relationships and identities through the life course, which characterises the focus of the Timescapes research programme as a whole, both sets of data share commonalities, including insights into the ways in which complex sets of responsibilities and relationships are negotiated by participants within and across households and familial generations in low-income localities (Holland and Edwards, 2009). Both datasets also include male participants in their samples, providing evidence of how these processes are gendered. Together, they have the potential to generate understanding of the complex sets of responsibilities and relationships that men of different generations (teenage fathers and grandfathers) negotiate within and across households and familial generations, a key aim of the 'Men, poverty and lifetimes of care' study.

It is relatively unusual to analyse datasets produced by other researchers so early on in the project design, but in so doing, I have been able to develop the conceptual framework for the study, beyond a traditional literature review. According to Maxwell (2012), from a realist perspective of qualitative research, there are no fixed rules and constraints on how to construct a conceptual framework or what sources might be used for this. While others have found it useful (albeit perhaps quite arduous!) to develop new substantive insights from secondary data (e.g. Gray *et al.*, 2013; O'Conner and Goodwin, 2013), I propose here

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<sup>1</sup> The project website can be accessed via the following link: <http://menandcare.leeds.ac.uk>. It has been

that secondary qualitative data sources can also be a useful tool in this process and may be a significant and 'real' entity (Maxwell, 2013), shaping research design. Given the difficulties inherent in working with qualitative longitudinal data and analysing within and across two such data sets that are linked but necessarily not directly comparable, this insight has been a positive outcome in re-using the data.

This report documents the specific strategy I employed in this exploratory research, and concludes with some critical reflections on the utility of existing qualitative datasets that have been archived. Throughout, I return to implications for methodology in the re-use of qualitative longitudinal data and hope to provide a steer to secondary analysts considering using data that they were not involved in generating. I begin first however with background to the development of the empirical project that the secondary analysis will support and to the two chosen studies, to locate the discussion.

### **1.1. Project background**

The decision to analyse two Timescapes datasets for the purposes of refining the focus of a new empirical project, was made during the preparation of a funding bid to the Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship scheme. I developed a proposal for a three-year study that sought to explore men's gendered experiences of living in families with multiple and complex needs (a summary of the funding bid is available on my research [blog](#)). The idea evolved from involvement in previous projects where I was developing my expertise in relation to men and masculinities, grandparenting, and informal care and family practices. During this time, I met Dr Kahryn Hughes and following discussion about the Intergenerational Exchange Project, Project 6 of Timescapes, I raised the possibility that she become my research mentor. She agreed and, in collaboration, we began to develop the project bid, proposing a methodologically ambitious two-phase approach for exploring the longitudinal dynamics of men's care responsibilities in low-income localities. This included conducting an exploratory secondary analysis of the two identified datasets, followed by a phase of primary data collection to interrogate questions emerging from the analyses that also articulated, or opened up new directions, within the broader empirical field on men and care.

At this stage my knowledge of both projects was superficial. Following Young Fathers was a three-year study addressing the lived experiences and support needs of young fathers that explored how and why young men become fathers at an early age, how young fatherhood is constituted and practiced in varied socio-economic and familial contexts, and what impact policy interventions or other kinds of support may have on these processes. Intergenerational Exchange, also a three-year qualitative longitudinal study, examined change and continuity in the lives of mid-life grandparents (aged 35-55) living in a low-income estate in the north of England. Qualitative longitudinal methodology was employed to track the success or otherwise of their purposeful interventions in the lives of their grandchildren to improve their life chances. Like the FYF study, the research team compared insights from grandparents living in varied socio-economic circumstances, and sought to understand their experiences of their lives and how policy changes have impacted on their households over time.

At this early stage, I knew that both datasets included interviews with men living in families with complex and multiple needs and could provide insights into men's caring responsibilities across the life course. I secured the funding in July 2014 and started the project in October 2014. This provided the opportunity to conduct secondary analysis on these two datasets and to explore the methodological possibilities of using secondary

analysis to develop the conceptual framework for a new empirical study.

## 2. Developing a strategy

The remainder of this working paper documents the methodological framework and strategy that I employed as a secondary researcher who has had no prior involvement in the original Timescapes programme and no experience of conducting secondary analysis on datasets generated by other researchers and research teams. Given the exploratory nature of conducting secondary analysis for the purposes of developing and designing a research project, the framework was developed with reference to existing literature about the pitfalls and possibilities of qualitative secondary analysis (see Irwin and Winterton, 2012; Bornat and Bytheway, 2012). Irwin and Winterton (2012) suggest that in order to conduct secondary analysis with competence and to make valid and reliable knowledge claims, secondary analysts require a detailed understanding of the research projects: an understanding of the structure of the project data: a strategy for familiarizing themselves with the project data as a whole and an approach for working *across* data sets that are not directly comparable, that brings them into ‘conversation’ in a meaningful way.

The framework I employed comprised three stages that are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow:

- 1) *A consultation and review of outputs* from the archived studies;
- 2) *Data sharing and knowledge exchange* and,
- 3) *The conduct of qualitative secondary analysis.*

Important to note is that while each of these stages are presented in a linear fashion, the process was anything but linear, and was in fact much more messy, as qualitative research is. Each part of the strategy therefore involved some overlap.

### 2.1. Consultation and review of project outputs (Oct – Nov 2014)

Phase One of the framework was about familiarisation, with the Timescapes programme more generally and with each of the datasets. This was an important first step in the process because I needed to ensure that the decision to conduct secondary analysis on these particular data sets was appropriate. To move beyond a shallow knowledge of each project, I first consulted with members of the original project teams and reviewed the project outputs.

Consultation with the original project team members facilitated the sharing of plans and initiated familiarisation with the data sets. This was a productive process in several ways. Firstly, I was able to judge whether or not the data sets would support refinement of the initial research idea. It was quickly apparent that both data sets could provide insights into men’s experiences of living on a low-income at different stages of the life course; as teenage fathers and as mid-life grandfathers. Secondly, I was advised about how I might make in-roads into the datasets. Specific cases were recommended that might be most productive for starting analysis. At this stage, I remained mindful that these decisions are emotionally driven (Yow, 1997), as well as directed by the substantive concerns of the original research teams. The conversations also helped me to gain insight into details about research design and methodology. While both teams employed a qualitative longitudinal methodology (which will be replicated in the new empirical study), it also emerged that both teams had used comparable qualitative methods during their fieldwork. Both teams for example employed several waves of interviews but had also complemented these with visual maps;

the IGE team asked their participants to map their family histories and the FYF team asked their participants to complete self-portraits, timelines (past, present and future) and relational maps (Lau Clayton, 2012). While the visual maps were used to interrogate different things by each team, in both projects this mapping supplemented the interview data. Based on this engagement with both FYF and IGE data sets, visual mapping exercises will also be employed the new empirical project, to track men's care responsibilities over time.

I complemented this process of consultation by reading outputs from Timescapes as a research programme more generally, as well as outputs from each of the projects available at the time (outputs continued to be published from the projects, e.g. Neale and Davis, 2015; Emmel 2014). It was helpful to understand for example, that the Timescapes programme was designed to support analysis across linked datasets and that FYF and IGE shared interests in interrogating continuities and change in personal and family relationships over time. Outputs also confirmed the methodological approach employed by each research team, and the researchers' theoretical positions in their orientation to their data. This process aided in generating more detailed knowledge of the contexts of data production. During consultation with Nick from the IGE study for example, I was informed that the project was nested in a much longer ten-year programme of research examining change and continuity in relationships across generations among hard-to-reach people in a northern city in England. Nick provided me with a report from this first study to complement my other reading. This, and other outputs from a methodological study, which sought to document access to hard-to-reach groups, provided important historical and methodological context to the IGE study.

Via these conversations, I also began to negotiate access to the raw data. At this point in time, both data sets were at different stages of being archived (IGE was already archived and FYF was in the process of being archived) so the method for accessing the data varied for each project. I applied for access to the archived IGE dataset directly through the Timescapes registration process<sup>2</sup>. Not all of the data in this project had been anonymised so I required the 'Restricted Access' level of clearance from the primary research team. The FYF research team who have fully anonymised their data but have not yet archived it, gave me access to their data and the project meta-data directly, to speed up the process.

This part of the process was about familiarisation and preparing to undertake the process of analysis. More significant than that however was that it allowed me to explore issues of context, and the intentions and perspectives of the research teams (Irwin *et al.*, 2012), which are not just background information but 'constitutively integral to data' (Irwin *et al.*, 2012, p. 71, also see Hammersley, 1997; Mauthner *et al.*, 1998).

### *Methodological considerations*

- Determining the suitability of existing data sets for re-use may be contingent on a number of factors including the availability of funding, the opportunity to engage with the primary research team(s) and the degree of access to project data,
- If possible, consultations with primary researchers can provide invaluable support in the familiarization process. These conversations can be particularly productive in

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<sup>2</sup> There is further information about how to access the Timescapes archive on the Timescapes website: <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/archive/register.html>

terms of gaining an understanding of the knowledge they have built up over time as data producers and of the proximate contexts of data generation, that are a crucial component of analysis (Irwin *et al.* 2012). Conversations with primary analysts can assist the secondary analyst in developing a prospective orientation to the data by providing knowledge about the make up of the datasets and offer a way into what are otherwise large and complex datasets,

- Consultations can also inform decisions that secondary analysts make about their own choice of methods. In this case, both teams used maps and timelines to track continuity and change in the lives of their participants and I expect to use a similar approach during my interviews because they aid in the generation of visual data pertaining to the complex webs of relationships in which participants are situated,
- While supporting the familiarization process, secondary analysts should be aware that in collaborating with other researchers, their theoretical orientations might also become implicated in the outcomes of the analysis. In involving primary research team members, secondary analysts should be mindful of the influence of the input and direction of the primary research teams and its impact on the new analysis. If analyzing two datasets, secondary analysts may find themselves working with primary researchers with very different methodological and theoretical approaches.

## 2.2. Data Sharing and Knowledge Exchange (Nov - Dec 2014)

In part one of the framework, the process of familiarization was initiated, moving me beyond a superficial understanding of the data sets. It consisted of two activities; informal dialogues with the original team members and a review of outputs, about Timescapes itself and from the two studies. Part Two of the framework was an extension of this process. I organised a data-sharing workshop with the primary research team members who were available to attend.

Members of the Timescapes consortium have held data-sharing workshops before, for the purposes of active internal collaborations and to facilitate a comparative cross-project mode of working (Bornat *et al.* 2008; Irwin *et al.* 2012) that involves bringing qualitative data 'into conversation' to explore common themes. I intended to replicate this process but as a researcher, relatively unfamiliar with both studies, this was a daunting prospect. The decision to run this workshop was informed by existing reflections on both the advantages of such an approach and the difficulties identified by others that have conducted secondary analysis.

Firstly, researchers that have gained experience of conducting secondary analysis warn that identifying and selecting transcripts can be labour-intensive and time-consuming, corresponding to the time and effort involved in primary data collection (Gillies and Edwards, 2005; Wilson, 2014). Asking the primary researchers to identify initial transcripts is therefore a helpful route into the datasets. Secondly and perhaps most fruitfully for those involved, bringing the two research teams together to discuss specific cases from the data facilitates a process of working across datasets. It enables the exploration of points of comparison and the identification of analytically meaningful similarities, differences and silences *between* datasets, that support continued analysis and aids in generating a spread of new ideas and theoretical possibilities (Irwin *et al.*, 2012). Irwin *et al.* (2012) consider this process as significant for giving rise to new questions and avenues of enquiry. Bornat *et al.*'s (2008) report about a data sharing workshop they held to collaborate across 'Men as Fathers' and 'The Oldest Generation' for example, exemplifies how bringing together

evidence of fathering remembered and fathering experienced, resulted in the identification of a number of shared emergent themes.

Data sharing is therefore advantageous both to the secondary analyst and the primary research team, as it opens up opportunities for extending the reach of data. At a practical level it remains unclear in the literature how these data-sharing workshops might be organised and run (although see Bornat *et al.*, 2008). I describe the organisation and outcomes of the meeting in the meeting report, available on the project website [here](#) and include the invitation to primary researchers in Appendix 1.

The meeting was productive for several reasons. I gained additional information about the proximate contexts of data production for each project; the primary research teams suggested possible cases as starting points for analysis; I developed some themes via the collaboration that could be explored in the rest of the analysis; the meeting provided access to the 'raw data' and allowed me to test out initial ideas and the primary teams were able to identify possible connections between their data that they may not have done otherwise.

I found it particularly interesting that because my interpretations of single interviews were out of context of the larger qualitative longitudinal datasets in which they were embedded, that I had developed very different ideas about the participants to those of the primary research teams. I disliked some of the comments made by Geoff based on the transcript that was chosen because of his negative attitudes towards providing care for his grandchildren. However, when Kahryn described his history of being in care and how his ideas about family had been contoured over time by engagement with services in the locality, his narrative took on new meaning and my interpretation changed. This emphasized the importance of being able to engage with the primary research teams if possible and to adopt a case-by-case approach to the analysis to ensure that all of the interviews were read in context and not dis-embedded from their original contexts of production.

While the meeting felt productive, chairing, taking notes and directing the discussions meant it was difficult to engage fully with everyone in attendance. I had planned to audio record the meeting (and I would recommend this to anyone thinking of conducting a data sharing workshop) but due to issues with the audio equipment, notes were taken instead. Reading the transcripts prior to the meeting was also a difficult task; it was time-consuming and as indicated earlier, there were risks associated with disembedding the transcripts from their larger datasets. Allowing the primary research teams to choose the transcripts also means that their own interpretations and assumptions become implicated in the way the analysis is conducted and potentially in the design of the secondary analysts research. This is not necessarily problematic, but if using secondary analysis for the purposes of developing the conceptual framework of a new empirical project as I was, then this is an important consideration in terms of how the research design develops and how the experiential knowledge of the primary research teams influence the outcomes of the research as it progresses. A final issue was that not all of the team members were able to attend on the day or to attend the whole meeting, which made it difficult to complete all of the tasks. It may be productive to run several meetings, should the primary research teams agree, but this would require further time commitment on behalf of the primary research teams.

### *Methodological Considerations*

- **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 have not worked with them for some time 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 familiarize and begin to make notes and comparisons.

- **Clarity of purpose** – The secondary analyst needs to be clear about the purpose of the meeting and the purpose of doing the analysis. Are they refining and generating research questions or analyzing the datasets for the purpose of developing new interpretations? Perhaps even both? If the secondary analyst wants to re-use data for analysis and publication, this needs to be made clear to the primary researchers and issues of intellectual property and collaborative working negotiated early on,
- **Outcomes** – In this workshop, both teams identified a number of shared emergent themes that interested them and that shed new light on their datasets (these are listed and explained in the [meeting report](#)). As a secondary analyst this was beneficial in terms of clarifying the contexts of data production and building a better understanding of both datasets. The workshop also helped to determine which themes and conceptual ideas might be productive to take forward into the analysis phase, in this instance in relation to men, poverty and care. There was more limited time to explore how the primary research teams might like to build upon the discussions at the workshop. My recommendation would be to build in time at the workshop for the primary research teams to identify possible productive lines of inquiry explored during the workshop, although it is important that this is not done at the expense of the interests of the secondary analyst. A second data-sharing meeting might prove to be productive for this purpose.

### 2.3. Developing an analytic strategy (Nov 2014 - on-going)

The first two stages of the methodological framework involved a process of orientation to the datasets, via individual and collaborative conversations with members of the research teams and engagement with existing outputs from the projects. Both processes have been constructive in understanding the contexts of data generation and for finding a fruitful route for comparison across datasets.

Following the meeting, I received the IGE data first, having gained confirmation of access. This included project data such as the interview schedules for each of the waves: field notes: accounts of access and meetings with project stakeholders: pen portraits for each case, including excerpts of key narratives emerging in the first interviews: and finally, the transcripts themselves, organised into files for each wave. Faced with such a large amount of data, I began to read the project information. I read the interview schedules first to understand the research design and methodology and how the research questions might orient the participants in their narratives and discussions. I then read the pen portraits for each case to gain an overview of the varied circumstances of each participant and to understand their biographies.

Like Barker (2010), I preferred a case-by-case approach, reading one participant's transcripts across all data waves rather than analysing across participants for each wave. This approach was informed to some extent by my experience at the data sharing workshop and how the disembedded transcript had oriented me in a very specific way to each participant's narrative. This approach gave me a more complete picture of the participant and how their lives evolved across the study. I extended the pen portraits provided by the IGE team for wave one by writing pen portraits for the remaining waves, to get a sense of how the narratives evolved over time. I focused on narratives by the men involved in particular and

initially, I only did this for the transcripts in IGE that included the voices of men (as grandfathers, but also as sons) starting with Geoff and Margaret, whose transcript I had already read for the data-sharing workshop. This process aided in reading the narratives in context but also in highlighting gaps in the datasets in relation to my own interests in men's care responsibilities in low-income localities.

A key methodological issue in the secondary analysis of qualitative longitudinal data sets I encountered pertained to how qualitative longitudinal research is designed. Not only is there a risk to the secondary analyst of being caught up in the other people's research agendas and framings, but also as qualitative longitudinal research evolves, researchers will pursue questioning specific to those agendas. Qualitative longitudinal data is therefore unlikely to adequately serve the purposes of secondary analysts, who are asking different questions of the data. As an example, key lines of questioning specific to men's care responsibilities over time were not always pursued by the original research teams, creating gaps in knowledge, particularly in relation to how the men either accumulated their care responsibilities over time or lost some of their responsibility. This is potentially problematic if making knowledge claims. In the context of this study however, it was beneficial because it highlighted new possible lines of enquiry to be explored in the empirical study that would follow.

I eventually extended this process to the interviews with female participants but focused on their narratives about the men in their lives. This process was helpful in familiarisation with the narratives and for identifying gaps in knowledge about men's experiences but it was very difficult to retain the information about each participant's complex circumstances and relationships, possibly because of the textual nature of the data and the distance I felt from the participants, who still remain unknown to me. I have had on-going conversations with each of the original project teams to keep some of the details fresh in my mind, but I have had to read and re-read several times to commit details to memory and this has been a time-consuming and at times, frustrating process. While the pen portraits have been useful as prompts when reading through the transcripts, IGE for example indirectly accessed 361 individuals and family members through these interviews, intensifying the work that was required to become fully familiarized.

I received access to the FYF data during this time but I waited until I felt I had a sound understanding of the IGE data before I began to select and analyse the FYF data. I started to familiarise myself with the file storage for Following Young Fathers, which was time-consuming and complicated in itself. The FYF dataset for example is particularly large and it took some time to understand the sample structures. Published outputs from the project told me that twelve teenage fathers aged between 16 and 22, were intensively tracked as part of the initial FYF baseline study, Young Lives and Time between 2009 and 2012. I calculated from the available metadata that another twenty-three teenage fathers were recruited in a second wave, from 2012 to present.

The Young Lives and Time baseline data was generated during the same time period as the IGE data and the number of participants was more manageable than the FYF data set as a whole, so I decided to analyse these. Of the twelve, ten of the young men had experienced disadvantaged or chaotic backgrounds but not all of them were interviewed across the three waves, for various reasons (one went to prison and others could not be contacted). As well as taking place at the same time as the IGE interviews, the interview schedules also revealed that the interviews covered important themes that were relevant to my interests, including gaining care responsibilities as a teenage father, relationships with parents (who, according

to the accounts of the young men were under the average age of grandparenthood, lived locally and were in receipt of welfare benefits (Neale and Lau Clayton, 2011) and therefore had commonalities with the IGE participants), gaining or seeking employment and relationships with partners. I determined that these interviews, and the sample characteristics and circumstances of the teenage fathers, would increase the comparability of the FYF and IGE data sets with regards to context; the shared temporal context; relative socio-economic circumstances and experience of chaotic and marginalized backgrounds in the same northern English city. The availability of pen portraits for some of the men in FYF and identification of key events in the first wave of interviews, also provided some useful context to the circumstances of each participant and how their lives unfolded across the interview, confirming my decisions. These were not available for every participant or for each wave so I took the time to develop these for reference in future analysis. I also included Dominic, one of the transcripts identified at the data-sharing workshop. Although Dominic did not fit the sample characteristics and criteria quite so closely, I had already read the first wave of his interview for the workshop and had received some reflections from the primary research team on his narrative. His narrative still provided insight into the experience of becoming a single father and the challenges he faced in seeking regular access to his son and so supported my analysis about how men negotiate their care responsibilities in constrained circumstances.

By this stage, the details of the data in the IGE project were becoming blurry, so I returned to those data and re-read the relevant transcripts and accompanying qualitative summaries again. I then began to develop a coding framework based on my initial readings. In a spreadsheet (see Table 1) I produced a grid, akin to a framework analysis and included data from both IGE and FYF using the following themes:

- Care practices,
- Motivations,
- Relationality – referring to how men articulate their practices in the contexts of their relational identities – as sons/grandfathers/ fathers etc,
- Constraints on care responsibilities,
- Sense of responsibility,
- Abusive/angry men (referring to violence).

		Geographical, identity			
Bailey (2015) - 'patriarchal deficit'		- Based on this data I would argue that her concept extends to legal procedures and repartnering (Legal Aid, relational responsibilities for child care payments, child maintenance)			
Participants	Responsible for....	Care practices	Motivations	How men articulate their identities? i.e being	
Carolyn and Victor	Carolyn: Her own children, foster children and grandchild. Victor: Son from previous marriage, Carolyn's children and grandson.	C&V are foster carers. They become kinship carers for grandson following the breakdown of Carolyn's daughter [daughter name]. [Talking about ex-partner and getting together] V - It was an anonymous thing, really, wasn't it? At first, cos although I worked in the area, I lived somewhere else. So we were talking to each other almost like agony aunts [mutual/relational care], but from, you know, even though we've met face to face, our worlds weren't gonna collide. C- But I don't think we'd have stuck together for much longer, to be honest. Cos I was already... V - Well, I'd witnessed things as well, when... Him throwing things through glass, plain glass windows at you and stuff and it was... I was shocked, you know, that she'd, she was being attacked in front of everybody, full view of the street, and so I knew that was, well, I couldn't understand why it was still happening. But I knew that it was a doomed relationship. V- I had to stop work on quite a number of occasion, I took her for a... C- I didn't love him anymore, that's the thing. V - ...chill down time once because she was, she'd had something thrown through the living room window at her, and she was so upset and she was shaking, she was crying, and I took her to settle down for a cup of tea at Leeds and Bradford airport, and we sat there for a, half a cup of tea and then she said, "I've got to go back to him, I've got to go back now, I've got to go back," and I said, "Why?" she said, "Well, because I know what he'll be like, if I don't go back now," and that point we were still friends. So I had to then get her	[About grandson] V- Kids from an early age are unconditional, aren't they? C- Yeah. V - They just love you. If you love them they love you, there's nothing that gets in the way of that.[really interesting comment on the 'conditions' that develop around love as children get older]  [Victor's rationale for leaving his wife based on a less typical orientation to gendered roles. He feels that being the only provider was not right. He loves children and wanted to share work opportunities with his wife. This lack of equality in their relationship led to him seeking new work and consequently a new relationship] V- And it got, it came to a head when, erm, the local church came to see, er, [ex's name], my ex, and although we weren't involved with the church, we lived on a tiny little estate where the church was the focal point of this thing in Burley(?) and the lady came to the door and said would she like to work, erm, on the side, do a bit of typing, £100 in her hand every week, and I thought, "What?" and at the time, she was at (inaudible) and she was doing the CSA typing courses. I'd, we were having problems with her not working, and she decided to do this course, and she wouldn't, just wouldn't assist at all, and she wouldn't allow me to buy anything, she wouldn't change anything, she was, she's got issues. And, erm, the lady came and she said, "No, I can't do it, cos I've got [sons name] to look after," and I thought, "[son's] a baby, he's nearly asleep, he sleeps so	"We talk about [Carolyn's] time project is about. Firstly Vict has not been easy) where I reacting to being supplante suggests that when Carolyn unloving relationship Carol supporter and relied upon r [daughter] was pushed bac seems to have fought agair  Victor tells me that when he children that they would no and he asked that they call because in public that singl division always visible. He I and brought coherency intc grandad and Victor loves hi complexity or complication. straightforward, they love o incomplicatedly. Victor and responsible for him as a co  [Relationality of finances. N	

Table 1: Thematic analysis grid

The grid also included a column for a description of who the men say they are responsible for providing care to and a notes column, where I included personal reflections and relevant notes provided by the primary research teams. These themes, informed by my own understanding of care responsibilities as gendered, relational and practiced, helped me to develop a hypothesis about what shapes men's abilities to fulfil their care responsibilities. Despite being men of different generations, there were some shared concerns and common experiences across the datasets that indicated that there might be significant cumulative effects for men that influence the extent to which they can fulfil their care responsibilities. It is apparent that the desire to 'be there' for children and grandchildren is a relatively enduring narrative across the life course, shared by both sets of men:

*It's changed my personality and who I am and that. I mean I used to be a right little...but yeah I've, it's made me realise that I need to do good and that and try and stay out of trouble and, so yeah. . . I mean if I didn't have them I wouldn't have, I probably wouldn't be like this. I won't, well I know I would have gone into college and done all that. But it's made me stronger. It's made me look towards my life and yeah so it's changed me a lot yeah. . . yeah motivated. It's just put in me right direction. It's made me think 'oh look I've, I've gotta show 'em that, how to be a good dad when they are older. And you need to bring them up right and that. And that's how I've seen it so yeah.*

*Callum, age 19, father of twins, separated (FYF)*

*Well, I always say that having grandkids gives you a second chance at life, you know what I mean cos you've learned by your mistakes....and now you can only teach them, you know what I mean. Cos when you first get married, you get kids, hey there is no manual you know, saying do this do that. You've got to learn by your mistakes, haven't you?,*

*Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.*

*But I mean once you've learned that and you've got your grandkids, you've realized then that you know what to do.*

*Bob, age 56, grandfather (IGE)*

What the transcripts from each dataset do not reveal is why some men diverge from this narrative and lose contact with their children while others do not. In the IGE data for example, there are ex-partners and fathers who have been excluded from households as a result of violence, abusive behaviours and other complex issues such as drug and alcohol dependency and involvement in the informal economy. While it is possible to infer that these factors result in their exclusion from families, it is only feasible to speculate about the causal factors for these men's exclusion based on accounts from ex-partners. We know little about their personal histories or how their experiences are shaped by their localities. In the FYF data it is evident that grandmothers play a key role in encouraging and supporting sons to get legal support in order to maintain access to their children in contexts of relationship breakdown, but we cannot straight forwardly infer from this data set that unless young men have positive support from their mother or other family members, that they are more likely to keep access to their children later in their lives.

Some of the barriers to care provision identified by the men across the datasets also differ, but indicate the possibilities of an accumulation of hardship over time, albeit in different ways. Young men are particularly vulnerable to losing access to their children in contexts of relationship breakdown, financial constraint or when their housing trajectories are unstable. For the mid-life grandfathers, financial constraint plays out in the context of new relationships and continued relations with ex-partners:

*I can't go up there every day and she [partner] can't, well she don't wanna come to mine. And like I want to see [baby son]. So if she don't want to bring him to see me or she won't let me take him out then it'd have to go through courts wouldn't it. And I don't wanna do that 'cause then it'll just cause bigger, worse argument.*

*Jimmy, age 17, non-resident, in a volatile relationship (FYF)*

*...from when I left my ex, I was paying her maintenance, but she was refusing to let me see [son from previous relationship] ... my ex partner, she's never worked and she's always sat on benefits, which then affected what happened to me, then, with the Child Support Agency... What she did was, she took two part time jobs, the emphasis then was on me... They weren't legal jobs. The emphasis was then on me to grass her up for working on the side whilst at the same time being pursued for maintenance by the Child Support Agency. I couldn't convince them, because they saw me just as an **absent father**, who was disgruntled and would say anything, and, erm, they, the Child Support Agency, although I had four step-children, dismissed [names step-children with Carolyn] and said that they, and they actually wrote to us... They said, "They do not count, you are an absent parent. It meant [current partner] was worse off and her children were worse off than before I moved in, and I thought that was intolerable.*

*Victor, age 44, re-partnered father (IE)*

While Jake and Victor's narratives are not directly comparable, both men describe the key factors implicated in their decisions to provide care for their children, and grandchildren in Victor's case. In Jimmy's narrative there is evidence of his fear about the possibilities of going to the courts for access to his child. He is also rendered vulnerable by living in a different household to his partner and child. Victor has a new relationship but the relations with his previous partner render his stepchildren and new grandson vulnerable.

In bringing these data together, there is evidence of men making constrained choices; in Jimmy's reflection on a possible future and in Victor's reflection on how his past impacts on his present. What is observable from this data therefore is that there might be an

accumulation of hardship over time and that relationship breakdown, financial insecurity and on-going relational ties to (ex) partners are key causal factors implicated in shaping the extent to which men can fulfil their numerous care responsibilities in low-income contexts over time.

In using the thematic grid, it also quickly became clear that the datasets could not answer all of my questions, for the reasons adhered earlier in this section. In qualitative longitudinal research, primary researchers follow up their questions over time in very specific ways relating to their own interests and research agendas and this means that other aspects get side-lined and are not fully investigated. Table 2 is a visual representation of some of the gaps in the datasets in relation to the key themes I developed in order to understand men’s care responsibilities. I filled in some of these boxes with questions that I would have liked to have had answered. These questions are now reflected in the design of the interview schedules for the new empirical project.

	A	B	C	D	E
1			Geographical, identifi		
2	Bailey (2015)	- 'patriarchal deficit'	- Based on this data	I would argue that her concept extends to legal procedures and repartnering	(Legal Aid, relational responsibilities for child care payments, child maintenance)
			<b>Responsible for....</b>	<b>Care practices</b>	<b>Motivations</b>
3		Participants			
	IGE	Josie	<p>Josie: Responsible for her children and grandchildren.            Boyfriend: Has four children from two previous relationships, and additional acquired children from Josie (none of their own) [eldest son] who has his own children later in the transcripts: Looks out for his mum and vice versa</p>	<p>was like his little runaround, "Do this," and, "Do that." Then cos [youngest daughter] ran away from home he started doing it with [youngest son]. And the stuff what they've gone through, and they've come through like they have, it's unbelievable. I mean [youngest son], in that 2 and a half years he never went to school.            I- This is (inaudible)?            R1- Yeah. And he was a special needs. He was under the hospital cos he had bowel trouble. He had Asthma, but he had 'em sleeping in a tent with no blankets at [Brid] so they could go rob shops, to bring it back to sell it on. Do you know what I mean? I mean, and, erm, I ended up going through court for custody of [youngest son] while I was in jail. So me and [eldest son] got custody of him. [had to rely on her oldest son as a 'co-parent' for youngest son]            So he went to live at [eldest son's]. But obviously [eldest son] couldn't do too much without my consent 'til I came back out. And then I got full custody of [youngest son] when I come back out. [grandson has 'special needs' too, in that he's very poorly; also, [youngest daughter] seems to have additional needs or vulnerabilities in Josie's talk]            I- And then you ended the relationship, er, while you were in jail?            R1- (inaudible), in jail, yeah. I mean the, er, the first 3 months once I was in jail, that was it. The divorce was going through. [this is an echo of what the grandparents are having to do, go to court for custody, but she's having to do it as the mother]</p> <p>[Current boyfriend protects Josie from ex]</p>	How did [Josie's eldest son] feel about legally co-parenting brother [younger brother]?

Table 2: Gaps in the data.

The identification of these gaps was a useful tool for developing a new empirical project because they highlighted where my interests diverged from the original primary research teams. I was really interested to understand for example, what motivated Josie’s eldest son, from the IGE project to become a co-parent to his younger brother while his mother was in jail, but he was not interviewed and Josie was not asked to reflect on this.

Overall, the evidence available has been a useful tool, beyond the traditional literature review, for developing the study’s conceptual framework and starting to build a model representing the causal links between masculinities, poverty and care responsibilities. Because the datasets are not directly comparable, this has been problematic for developing valid interpretations of how men fulfil their care responsibilities over time. Nonetheless, the process has been important for recognizing that the effects of financial hardship and living in low-income localities might start in the men’s early life, and build up over the life course. We lack research on how continuing hardship and/or changing family circumstances influence the decisions men make about distributing their limited resources within their personal networks of care at different times in their lives. However, the re-use of the

existing data has supported the development of hypotheses to test in light of new empirical data and evidence.

### *Methodological considerations*

- Qualitative secondary analysis within and across two qualitative longitudinal datasets is extremely time-consuming. If available, pen portraits and project data can support secondary analysts in familiarising themselves with each of the cases and their contexts of production,
- A strategy for organizing and then analyzing the data is required to manage it effectively and to facilitate continued familiarisation. I found a case-by-case approach useful for these qualitative longitudinal datasets and I selected a smaller sample from each dataset in accordance with my research interests. This included data from IGE that involved interviews with men and young men from FYF living in comparable localities and socioeconomic circumstances as the participants in IGE.
- A key difficulty of using qualitative longitudinal data is that primary research teams follow up the specific concerns they have across the waves of interviews, relating to their own theoretical interests and goals for the study. This means that there were significant gaps in the data for me, in relation to change and continuity in men's lived experiences and in relation to the extent to which they fulfill their care responsibilities,
- Despite these gaps, it has been possible to use the available data to hypothesise about the causal factors shaping men's abilities to fulfill their care responsibilities at two points in the life course and to make the most of the data by generating theories to test and refine in a new empirical study,
- Using qualitative secondary analysis to develop the conceptual framework of the study has therefore been a productive activity, moving beyond the risk of developing a potentially narrowly focused literature review. It has also informed my choice of methods moving forwards and has been integral to my realist research design.

### **3. Summary**

This paper has documented a three step strategy for conducting a rigorous qualitative secondary analysis on two qualitative longitudinal datasets, in order to refine research questions for an original empirical project about men's experiences of life on a low-income and their care responsibilities. This strategy involves several processes; *collaboration and consultation of project outputs*; *data sharing and knowledge exchange* and finally, the *qualitative secondary analysis* itself. While the process has been anything but linear, it has been essential to employ a conscious and carefully crafted strategy at each stage in order to:

- ensure that appropriate evidence was being brought into conversation for the purposes of the new study on men's care responsibilities in low-income localities,
- make well justified and carefully considered in-roads into what are large, complex and rich datasets,
- make critical decisions about what realistically can be achieved in analysing the data, particularly when bringing datasets together. It might be that new interpretations can be developed, or that the analysis can inform research design, or both,

- to develop a model of causality, (in this case about the factors shaping men's abilities to fulfill their care responsibilities) that forms a key component of the conceptual framework of the new empirical study,
- to begin to build an intellectual case for interrogating and explaining men's longitudinal experiences of life on a low income.

It is important to stress that this has been a time-consuming process and at times it has been difficult to become familiarised with data generated by others. Retaining such a large amount of data without prompts from memory takes a great deal of patience and perseverance. It is also impossible to fully know the proximate contexts through which the data was generated as a secondary analyst. We can never fully access researcher bias and the intentions and assumptions of primary research teams. If possible however, secondary analysts can make the most of the resources available in their research environment in order to support the process of research design and this might include collaborating with primary research teams where possible, making the most of resources available in archives and adopting an organised and systematic approach.



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## APPENDIX 1

### *Invitation to a data sharing and knowledge exchange workshop*

Dear all,

I would to thank you all for meeting with me in the last few weeks and for taking the time to talk to me about your projects. On a personal level, you have all made me feel incredibly welcome and your enthusiasm for my research has been really encouraging.

As I have mentioned to you all I would like to run a data sharing and knowledge exchange workshop, a significant component of my methodological strategy for conducting qualitative secondary analysis on the data sets. I see this workshop as an opportunity to work really meaningfully across the project data sets, as well as to generate research questions and explore new themes and ideas. Key to this is bringing my own secondary researcher analytic reflections into conversation with yours as primary researchers.

Before you commit to the workshop, below I outline how I expect it will work and what you will need to commit to in order for the workshop to work effectively. I am aware that you are all busy and that I am asking quite a lot of you so I want to be open and honest from the outset about my expectations in order to be as respectful of you and your time as possible.

To provide context, my current research questions relate to continuities and change in men's care practices and how these are constrained and/or enabled in some way within low-income localities. The questions are as follows:

- 1) What are the routine care responsibilities of men in low-income localities and what resources and constraints affect how they 'do' family and care on an everyday basis?
  - a. Key Theme(s) – Care and masculinities
- 2) How do culture, gender, class and personal biographies impact on and give meaning to their experience of caring (giving and receiving) over time and how do these translate within family networks?
  - a. Key theme – Time
- 3) How might current policy and practice solutions be developed to create the conditions in which the various rewards of caregiving by men can flourish, including in economically deprived families?
  - a. Key theme - Context

I expect that these questions will be refined by building upon insights from the project teams that are gained during the workshop. At this stage however they are designed so that they 'work' across the two data sets.

#### **Prior to the workshop**

I would like to request that prior to the meeting each team nominates one or two participants from their data sets that they think can provide insights relating to the research questions outlined above. In order to guide you the following methodological questions (based on Irwin and Winterton's, 2011 methodological approach to QSA) should help to inform your choices and provide a structure for your thinking [Send attachment with questions listed]:

- 1) Do you think that the questions about men's care practices can be meaningfully addressed through your project data? Are there related questions we might also explore?
- 2) Can you nominate one or two participants whose data is particularly relevant? Who? Why is their data relevant (i.e. how does it help to address questions about men's care practices and care journeys)? Can it allow a different angle on men's care practices?
- 3) On what basis have you made the decision about which participant(s) to nominate?

- 4) How are you conceptualizing care when you think about which participants to select?
- 5) Can you supply notes about the 'case' and the evidence therein, and analytic reflections on both the participant(s) data and its relevance?
- 6) Is this case(s) typical or atypical of the broader themes in your data set?

It would be useful if written responses to these questions could be circulated prior to the workshop (most likely a few days or a week before) so that we can all begin to consider similarities and differences between the data sets, from which new research questions might arise.

### **At the workshop**

At the workshop we will use these questions as a structure and I will ask you to describe the case(s) that you have chosen and to explain your responses to the methodological questions posed above. Following these discussions the session will be more open so that ideas for moving forward can be discussed.

I would like to reinforce that I am sensitive to the amount of work that this requires you all to do to help me to become orientated to your data so I am sending this invitation as early as possible so that you have the time and space to think about the extent of your involvement. I hope to run the workshop before Christmas if possible so below is a link to a Doodlepoll to check everyone's availability. I expect the workshop will take up a full day.

[Link]

I also hope that you all benefit from taking part in the workshop. As well as broadening your own thinking about the data sets I think that it could be productive to think through the methodological and ethical affordances and challenges of qualitative secondary analysis, both for yourselves and I. I think that this process raises some interesting questions about the timing of when QSA is conducted and I would also be interested to know how you feel as primary researchers, having such direct involvement in the sharing of your data with me as a secondary analyst.

I really hope that you can be involved and look forward to hearing from you,

Regards

Anna