Qualitative secondary analysis: building intergenerational samples to understand men's generational identities in low income contexts

Abstract

There have been significant developments in methods of qualitative secondary analysis (QSA), prompted in part by growth in infrastructure for archiving and sharing qualitative data, facilitating reuse. Building from these developments, this article presents QSA that brings together subsamples of men in low income contexts from two qualitative longitudinal datasets produced under Timescapes, demonstrating the complex linkages between them, and addressing two key questions. First, in bringing these two datasets together, is it possible to build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts to further our understanding of their generational identities and intergenerational experiences? Second, what sorts of intergenerational, or intra-generational, analyses are possible? We conclude that it was not possible to build a straightforwardly vertical intergenerational sample, but our theoretical focus on generational identities has enabled insights into the dynamic relational processes productive of longitudinal experiences of marginalisation and vulnerability for men living in low income contexts.

Keywords: Collective secondary analysis; generational identities; low income contexts; marginalisation; men; qualitative longitudinal research; temporality; Timescapes; vulnerability.

Introduction

This paper reports on methodological work with two archived qualitative longitudinal (QL) datasets, using qualitative secondary analysis (QSA). Our main aims were to interrogate the complementarity and 'linked' character of these datasets, building on previous collective QSA activities (Tarrant et al. forthcoming), and to explore what new substantive insights might be possible into men's generational experiences and identities, living in low income contexts. The two datasets were from the studies Following Young Fathers (FYF) (Neale et al., 2015) and Intergenerational Exchange (IGE) (Hughes and Emmel, 2011). Both were conducted under Timescapes, a five-year programme of QL research, comprising seven linked QL studies with shared substantive interests and questions; a programme of qualitative secondary analysis; and the development of the Timescapes Archive (Neale et al. 2012; Neale and Bishop, 2012). The focus of IGE was the longitudinal experiences, identities and support needs of young fathers, aged 25 and under (Neale et al. 2015). The focus of IGE was the longitudinal experiences, identities and health needs of mid-life grandparents, aged 35-55 years (Hughes and Emmel, 2011). The two key questions driving the methodological work explicated here were; 1) in bringing these two datasets together, can we build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts to further our understanding of their generational identities and intergenerational experiences? and 2) what sorts of intergenerational, and intragenerational, analyses are possible?

We begin by describing the contexts of the two datasets, to explicate how they might be considered complementary and 'linked', and go on to discuss the QSA methods we employed. Worked examples are provided of how and whether we were able to build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts, and the sorts of inter or intra generational analyses that were possible. We conclude that it is not possible to build a 'vertical' intergenerational sample

by bringing these two datasets together, but were instead able to research men in different generational positions, and gain insight into their relational experiences of these generational identities (son, brother, father, grandfather, uncle). We did this through what we term intra generational cohort analyses. In bringing original study findings to bear in these analyses, we observed dynamic relational processes productive of longitudinal experiences of marginalisation and vulnerability in the lives of younger and older men. Finally, in a policy climate driven by the rhetoric of working class men as 'absent' fathers, our intragenerational cohort analyses brought men in low income contexts back into an analytic 'field of visibility' (Foucault, 1985). This also enabled us to observe how encounters with formal health and social care providers contribute to experiences and definitions of 'present'/'absent' fathers in the families of these men. This paper therefore presents the possibilities of QSA for substantive development.

Timescapes and the datasets

The work we describe here builds on the methodological developments and orientation of Timescapes, in additional to early QSA work. Both authors have been involved with Timescapes in various capacities and at different times, Kahryn as Director of IGE, and Anna as a researcher funded to explore the possibilities of bringing the two datasets together to understand low income fatherhood (Tarrant, 2016).

FYF and IGE built out of a growing tranche of work on the affordances of QL research and methodology and the linked activity of QSA (e.g. Moore, 2007; Thomson et al. 2003; Henderson et al., 2012). Both studies ran concurrently for a short time, although the timeframe for FYF extended beyond the lifetime of Timescapes and included a separate funded period. FYF (2012-2015) included baseline data from research conducted from Young Lives and times (2005-2012). The young fathers in FYF were interviewed across five data sweeps, from which a subsample of ten cases were selected based on their identification by the FYF team as highly disadvantaged, and having some engagement with service providers (Neale et al. 2015). IGE (2005-2012), included baseline data from research conducted from 2003-2005. The eight cases of mid-life grandparents in IGE were interviewed across four data sweeps (Hughes and Emmel, 2011[1])[2]. Both studies were conducted in the same UK city, and the subsample from FYF included people who lived in similar places and conditions to those of IGE, namely low-income contexts. Anna's analytic work for MPLC suggested these datasets could be described as contextually and thematically 'linked' and identified opportunities for a gendered analysis of men in IGE, not part of IGE's original research concern (Tarrant, 2016; Tarrant et al. forthcoming[3]). In this way, early analytic work conducted as part of MPLC, provided sufficient evidence to support further QSA to explore the degree of linkage and complementarity of the datasets; to ask whether it would be possible to build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts; and to explore their generational and intergenerational identities.

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[1] Further details of the study samples can be found in Emmel and Hughes (2010) and Neale et al. (2015).
[2] In both studies, case materials included thematic life history interviews, and in-depth semi-structured interviews, with the participant/s; interviews with gatekeepers to these participants, family tree diagrams, or time lines, produced by participants, field notes and team meeting notes. They also included metadata such as health ward statistics for the locality in which the participant lived.
[3] This included two collective QSA workshops with members of the original teams, whose contributions prompted some of the work reported on here, and is discussed elsewhere (Tarrant et al. forthcoming).

Confirming data 'linkage' and complementarity

There are three key areas of linkage and complementarity between the datasets. These are the shared geographical contexts of the research and research participants; the shared thematic concerns of the original research; and the shaping of these datasets, as a result of their formulation under Timescapes via their shared orientation towards questions of time. Context includes the shared salient socio-economic and geographical factors of the participants sampled from both datasets, such as living in similar low income localities with similar health ward data profiles; their inclusion in research within a similar timeframe; and research access through gatekeepers working in comparable organisations in these localities (Emmel and Hughes, 2010; Neale et al. 2015). More specifically participants' socio-economic and geographical contexts were materially similar with regards to life expectancy, high prevalence of teenage births, and high rates of miscarriage and neo-natal deaths (Emmel and Hughes, 2010; 2014). Population heterogeneity across the samples drawn from the two datasets for this analysis reflects broader population heterogeneity across the localities in which these participants live. This addresses a key challenge in QSA, namely the question of how far selected cases from extant datasets are expressive of the contexts of their production, or how far they are distinct from them.

Findings from both studies published in a range of outputs provided a thematic context for our QSA. These included the persistence of poverty over the lifecourse; how little room there is for change and diversity in low income circumstances; and how limited the scope is for alternative lifecourse trajectories, albeit with different implications and manifestations for men of different generations (Tarrant, 2016). Findings also indicated the importance of support services and legal systems in ameliorating or exacerbating vulnerability in the lives of those living in low income contexts. In particular, these outputs indicated that support services provided access to crucial resources for peoples' everyday needs, and in some cases resources that enabled the participants to flourish (Neale et al. 2015; Emmel et al. 2007). Where support and/or services were not available in this way, young men in FYF were sidelined or surveillanced (Neale and Davies, 2016), and mid-life grandparents were frequently exposed to 'shocks' that tipped whole families into chaos (Emmel and Hughes, 2014).

These contextual and thematic linkages between the datasets were more profoundly underscored by the shared orientation towards temporality of projects under Timescapes. The three particular timescapes of interest were biographical, generational and historical (Neale, 2012). All Timescapes projects shared questions that privileged the temporal phenomena in people accounts, such as futures, turning points, tipping points and transitions (Neale, 2015). This temporal framing thus ensured both studies produced data orientated towards specific temporal subjects, and. reflecting a shared QL sensibility (Thomson et al. 2014). This enabled us to work across multiple layers of time and temporality in the life trajectories of the sampled participants. When time is recognised as an irreducible aspect of data, and of the research process as a whole (Bornat, 2006), analysis can be flexible in new ways (Akerstrom et al., 2004; Henderson, et al. 2006). Thus, concurring with Sarah Irwin that differently constituted datasets cannot be compared straightforwardly, we brought the two datasets into 'meaningful analytic conversation' (Irwin, 2013a) via the participants' thematic life history narratives on their definitions of family, and family identities. Specifically, these life histories facilitated an exploration of familial generational time, generational identities and the specificities of genealogical transitions in the life contexts of the study participants. Our focus on familial generational identities was driven by the methodological and substantive questions presented

earlier, around whether it was possible to build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts by bringing the datasets together; whether this would further our understanding of men's generational and intergenerational identities; and to explore what sort of intergenerational and intergenerational analyses were possible. In addition to these three linkages, the researchers themselves were not 'at a remove' from the contexts of the research (see Irwin, 2013b) through their various involvements with both studies. Thus, subtle aspects of our own 'embeddedness' in the contexts of these studies inevitably inform our analyses, although we are critically reflexive of how and where this shapes our findings.

QSA: our approach

Our work builds out of an increasing drive towards reusing data in the social sciences, prompted in part by the advances in electronic infrastructure for the ethical archiving and sharing of data (Bishop, 2009; Bishop and Neale, 2012; van den Eynden et al. 2011; Irwin, 2013a). This trend in data reuse has also been driven by innovation in early methodological advances that facilitated multiple interpretations of the same data (Holland et al. 2006). The varied and creative ways in which existing data are being re-constructed and re-contextualised to produce new insights and knowledge stands testament to the social scientific value of QSA (see, for example, Savage, 2005; Moore, 2007; Irwin and Winterton, 2011a, b; Duncan, 2012; Haynes and Jones, 2012; Bornat et al., 2012; Neale, 2017). A less developed strand of this debate, however, concerns the complexities and affordances of bringing multiple datasets from different research teams into 'meaningful analytical conversation' and translating evidence across them (Irwin et al. 2012)[4]. The potential benefits 'of having multiple but linked qualitative studies' (Irwin and Winterton, 2011a; 4-5) have been seen as providing the opportunity to 'scale up' data in new and novel ways (Neale 2013), although for Irwin and Winterton 'scaling up' is better understood as extending understanding and explanation of social processes (ibid.). These claims are in response to ongoing questions about whether QSA 'can contribute to understanding the generalizability of findings from qualitative studies, [and] potentially enhancing the scope for findings from qualitative research to be cumulative (e.g. Fielding 2004 cited by Irwin 2013a).

Our analyses address these two questions. First, we explored the generalizability of the original research findings from each study in two collective QSA workshops, described elsewhere (Tarrant et al. forthcoming), interrogating the extent of thematic linkage between original project outputs and analyses using emblematic cases sampled from each study. Second, and in the work for this paper, we reworked the question about how far these findings can be cumulative beyond the lifetime of the original research, and asked instead how far QSA enables us to broaden our empirical field of enquiry. We examine how far we are able to build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts and what new insights our analyses might generate around men's experiences of persistence of poverty, engagements with health and social care services, and their experiences and understandings of familial generational identities across the lifecourse. Thus, we advance the existing corpus of QSA where the main attention has been to how these processes of data recontextualisation (Moore 2007) may be managed within research studies, by considering how data may be recontextualised in relation to other datasets (see Irwin et al. 2013a; see also Geraghty and Gray, 2017).

Situated and emblematic casing

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[4] A disposition towards this way of working is evident in more recent work (Geraghty and Gray 2017; Weller et al. forthcoming).

In the workshops 'emblematic cases' (Thomson et al. 2012) were identified by originating team members in a process of theoretical sampling (Emmel, 2014). Taking these emblematic cases as our starting point, we brought new questions to these cases and the datasets more generally, to see which additional cases might be suitable for our analyses, why they were suitable, and why other cases within the datasets were not. Specifically, we explored how the emblematic cases allowed us to examine the generational identities of men of different familial generations in low income contexts; how these identities are sustained, challenged and negotiated in engagements with health and social care services; how and whether we were able to build an intergenerational sample of men in low income contexts; and what sorts of inter or intra generational analyses were possible. The different layers of contextualisation described earlier situated the emblematic cases we selected. These were selected because of their expression of the complex linkages across the datasets more generally, and their exemplification of the core substantive themes we wished to explore further. In exploring these themes, our analyses worked 'backwards' and 'forwards' (Gray et al. 2013) reconciling the slightly staggered timeframes of the original studies. We explored retrospective accounts in the data, and worked towards a contemporary point, namely the current day focus of FYF, to which we anchored our analysis (see Geraghty and Gray 2017). Unlike Geraghty and Gray (2017), however, we did not used birth dates to situate and classify an historical generation, but used familial generational identities (son, father, grandfather, stepfather) both as generational identifiers and generational identities as subjects for inquiry.

Bringing emblematic cases together

MPLC, the impetus for our substantive analyses, focuses on men's patterns of care across the lifecourse in low income contexts, interrogating questions around men's 'absence' and 'presence' in families (Tarrant, 2016). Men are often perceived as 'absent' fathers when they are no longer in relationships with the mother, and/or where their access to their children is challenged (Reynolds, 2009; Mincy et al. 2015). A significant context in which men negotiate their identities as 'present' fathers is in encounters with health and social care services, where family tensions and disputes about men's roles, responsibilities and rights in connection with their children coalesce and are supported, refuted, or denied. This is especially important in the lives of the participants in studies 1 and 2, findings from which chimed with existing research identifying high rates of formal health and social care intervention in the lives of people on low incomes (Emmel and Hughes, 2014; Neale et al. 2015). Encounters with health and social care services are not necessarily straightforward or always unproblematic. Our focus on generational identities elaborated findings from the original studies: that policy focus on one generational identity over another, serves to marginalise, disempower or sideline an individual; and that people have to negotiate with health and social care services in securing or privileging one generational identity over another (e.g., young men as fathers) (Neale et al. 2015; also see Tarrant, 2016). Thus generational identities cannot be taken as a biological given, but must be seen as sustained and supported over time in sometimes challenging statutory contexts, amongst others.

Here, we focus on two young fathers, Karl (FYF), and Will (IGE) who is described from the perspective of his grandmother[i]. While Karl (16) and Will (14) ostensibly occupy similar generational positions, their slightly different ages produce different institutional responses and challenges to their identities as fathers. We consider how Karl might be a prospective case for Will, and how definitions of 'generation' held by formal service providers materially impact on young men's ability to father. The discussion in this section focuses on how the daily

routines, and longer-term trajectories through fatherhood of both young men intersect with the requirements of health and social services. Here, we utilise the temporal sensibility underpinning both studies and draw on the concept of 'timescapes', where time is not just a linear linking of past to future but a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that, in part, 'locates individual and family lives in the wider frames of external events, environments and political landscapes' (Adam, 2004: 7).

In this first extract, Margaret discusses how her grandson, Will, became a young father (unplanned) just after he turned 14. At the time of this interview, Will is still at school, where he has contact with the mother of his child, although is not in a relationship with her. Margaret describes how Will's access to his son is challenged by the maternal grandmother, who implies he is not to be trusted with the baby. There was never any discussion that Will would have residential care of his child. Don, mentioned frequently, works in a voluntary organization that provides support to Margaret:

... it's a funny situation at the moment with them... She won't let Will see his child ... the mother of the daughter, of the girl, won't let him see his son.... but I says to our Ellen [Will's mother], "I mean you've got your own kids. And you know what to do. So why can't she trust you?" So I were talking to somebody, and they says, "She can't call the shots, her mother can't. For the simple reason, it's because with them being under-aged they're under Social Services. And if they say that Will can have him on his own, that's alright". ....

So I told Ellen this. This bloke's supposed to be coming out to see 'em. And he's gonna sort it. But Don also got Will on board for these young parents things. And, erm, he asked if we'd go with him. And we said, "Yeah." ... cos Don asked me if he'd [Will] be able to get out of school *in school hours. ... So I've talked to our Ellen and she said, "Yeah, er, as long as you get a note," so Don could just give 'em the note, you see, so he can get out of school. But he wants* me and his granddad to, to go with him.
Margaret, (47 years at time of interview), two granddaughters resident, IGE, Wave 3

From Margaret's account, it is clear that Will needs help from his mother, his grandparents and Don, in attending a support group for young fathers, namely in the form of a note so that he can be excused from school[ii]. The stakes for Will are extremely high, especially where social services involvement is necessary to sustain contact with his son.

Will's generational identity is not straightforward. His identity as a father requires support from social services in the context of the baby's maternal home. Because he is under the age of 16, social services protect Will's right to see his child even in the face of opposition from the maternal grandmother. However, the 'off time' of Will's fatherhood collides with the everyday time frames of his school and family. The school constrains Will's everyday ability to participate as a father, or access support as a young father, by framing him generationally as a child. However, when Will turns 16 and has more access to his child, it is likely he will leave school and lose daily contact with his child's mother. Simultaneously, he will need to renegotiate his rights with social services to see his child, as his 'generational' responsibilities from those of a child to those of a parent. Thus at the very moment Will loses contact with his ex-partner, any formal support for his involvement with his child disappears (see Karl below). Will's case confirms findings in IGE, where service focus on a particular individual, in a particular generational position, serves to obscure the many other possible 'generational positions' they could take (we explain this further in Victor's case below). The 'off time' character of Will's becoming a parent, is reinforced through particular health or social care

interventions, whether negatively through school rules, or positively through social worker support. Thus, Will's case exemplifies how his identity as a father is reconfigured through a complex landscape of health and social care services. Karl's case below illustrates some of the potential longitudinal material and socio-legal consequences of such reconfiguration for Will and his family.

Karl, in FYF, is also an 'off time' father. At wave 1, he lived with his father and, at the age of 16 was required by social services to meet their service requirements in the same way as a parent. Karl is not in a relationship with the mother of his two-week-old baby (unplanned) that had been taken into care after the mother failed a care assessment. Karl had only one hour after the baby was taken into care to get a solicitor to make any claim to paternity. He had limited access to a midwife and social workers pre-birth, and once his baby was born, contact was supervised. Here he describes the regular supervised contact his partner and her relatives got, usually for longer periods than him, and how his own family had not been able to have supervised contact with his baby at all. Karl reflects on the challenges he faces in meeting requirements by social workers to have supervised contact with his child:

They tell you like to be, like really stupid places .... It's like tomorrow I'm over in, I'm at [area of city] about 9 miles away and *they expect me yeah ... at nine o'clock in morning. So it's like I get up for bus, I have to get up about half past five in morning. And I get ready and it's off at six o'clock, six o'clock bus but sometimes I'm late ... and ... if I'm later they start quest*tioning *but I can't do anything cause they've got cars. I'm on the bus. ....*

...that's why I ain't doing my college course or nowt cause I won't be able to work round that. Cause if they are saying to me 'you need to be here, like on Tuesday at half past nine', it's like if I do my college course cause that's three days a week, that means my college course is gonna have to work round that. So it's like I'm gonna have to do like a day on Monday and then like a day on Wednesday and like a day on a Frid*ay. But it still ain't gonna work.*
Karl, FYF, Wave 1

Karl's ability to prove himself to be a good father is challenged by the contradictory need for him to attend his college course, yet simultaneously attend supervised contact at times and in places decided by social workers. Such decisions are made without regard for the consequent difficulties of balancing care responsibilities with his education. In effect, he is seen to occupy a parental generational position, regardless of the fact he is still in education, and only 16. Later in the interview, Karl discusses how social services insist on contacting him through his father, therefore subverting the emphasis on Karl's own status as father through focus on his generational position as 'child' in relation to his dad. This reflects findings in IGE where individuals in their family contexts are disadvantaged through disproportionate service focus on specific family members (Emmel and Hughes, 2014). Thus in comparison to Will the different service perceptions of Karl's generational position have differential effects for Karl.

Both Karl and Wills' efforts to sustain a parental (father) identity demonstrate how access to children, as well as identities and family relationships, are structured in particular familial and biographical timescapes that often do not mesh with other statutory timescapes and practices (Emmel and Hughes, 2014; see also Elliott et al. 2016). Karl's experiences as a father, and the processes through which he might be rendered 'absent', depends on how far he is able to meet with professionals. Our analyses suggest that competing statutory timescapes (college, social services) are often situated in tension with each other, shaping how he is viewed as a father and rendering him vulnerable to losing access to his child. By bringing Will and Karl's narratives

together, we can see that while formal service involvement may be difficult, leaving formal service supervision may also have negative consequences for young fathers in these contexts.

These two cases have a high degree of complementarity. The contextual features of their access or otherwise to their children demonstrates the importance of their ability to manage and balance the multiple and competing demands of various service contexts, with particular relational consequences (for grandparents, and other family). In the context of service provision, the slight age difference between the two fathers becomes meaningful, further underscoring the complex processes producing 'off time' experiences of generational identities. Will's access to his child is still supported at the time of Margaret's interview, while Karl's access to his child is fraught with complications. This positions Karl as, potentially, a 'prospective case' for Will, namely a young father that must meet service demands to secure access to his child. Moving from Karl's case to Will's, it is possible to anticipate that the requirement for Will to demonstrate his fitness as a father by attending a myriad of meetings, will become increasingly difficult, and therefore his longitudinal experiences as a father will become similarly fraught.

There is the risk we may 'extend' people's biographical and generational trajectories through selective sampling, and the over-emphasis of particular narratives of social services involvement. However, our analyses are nested within and build on the findings of of the original studies, and analyses of context and social process across the broader datasets. While we have selected these two particular cases to tell this particular story, it is repeated in various forms across all both studies. This discussion contributes to a longitudinal process of knowledge generation and an accretion of linked data, made possible through longitudinal research design (Neale, 2017).

Building an intergenerational sample?

Our next step was to explore whether or not it would be possible to build an intergenerational sample (Tarrant et al. forthcoming). We were alerted to Victor's narrative through Anna's QSA in preparation for MPLC. His case was identified as emblematic of the new themes of masculinity, poverty and intergenerational exchanges of care addressed in MPLC. It demonstrates how overlooked cases in IGE thematically relate directly to cases in FYF (Tarrant, 2016). In addition, Victor has held a number of generational identities: 'absent' father, 'young' dad, step father of a second family, step-grandfather, and foster parent, amongst others. Victor's life history thus chimes with the accounts of young fathers in FYF, as originally a young father, but also as an 'absent' dad (from his first family). The following extract discusses Victor's relationship with his son by his first marriage:

...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... 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, ... the Child Support Agency, although I had four stepchildren, dismissed [names step-children with Carolyn, his *new partner] and said that they, and they actually wrote to us...They said, "They do not count,* *you are an absent parent." It meant Carolyn was worse off and her children were worse off* than before I moved in, and I thought that was intolerable.

Victor, (44 years at time of interview), re-partnered father (IGE)

Victor shared similar concerns about the requirements from the Child Support Agency (CSA[5]) as some of the young fathers in FYF (Tarrant, 2016). Further thematic similarities across both studies also included how men's stories become more rehearsed over time when engaging with professionals; insights about the micro-management of money; and fear and frustration experienced in interactions with social services (Tarrant, 2016). Additionally, Victor describes how he is rendered 'absent' as a father through the gatekeeping of his ex-partner, and through policy discourse from the CSA in the context of his ongoing financial responsibilities to his first family. This double framing, by Victor's account, has both the potential of rendering his second family more vulnerable, but also excludes him from the life of his son through his inability to financially provide for him. Victor's narrative describes how he makes strategic choices, choosing to provide for his second family, and continuing to be absent from his first (Tarrant, 2016).

We recognized similar accounts from the standpoint of the adult 'sons' in FYF, where their fathers had moved out and repartnered. Some young fathers were the sons in their dad's second family, and their dad had moved into a third. Findings from FYF identified how young fathers were developing new moral scripts around their parenting (Neale, 2016; Tarrant et al. forthcoming), selecting certain male relationships as exemplars of role models, or cautionary tales, i.e., those people whose behavior they compared unfavourably to their own (uncles, fathers, older brothers in both). Jason's case was emblematic in the second QSA workshop, and continued to be se in our subsequent analyses for this paper. His account included precisely this story of having an 'absent' father whose parenting Jason refused to copy, and a half-brother who chose to stay with his partner to avoid the loss of his children.

... I'm the oldest, I've got a younger sister then an even younger brother. They are like full brother and sister. But then before my dad met my mum he had a few children to some other *woman. And I only ever see one of those. She's a right nice lass. But the other guy [Jason's* half-*brother in this first family] [laughs], he's in same boat as me. He's got two children to* this woman. And he has a choice. He can either be with her and see his kids or not be with her *and not see 'em. And he chose to be* with her and accept that. So no-one sees him. Not even his *own full blood sister....And obviously he did that to see his kids but that's stupid in my eyes. You don't have to live with a woman. But he must have grown, he must have feelings for her* obviously *and learnt to love her or summat for sake of his kid. I don't, I don't have a clue what,* I feel sorry for poor lad.
Jason, (20 years at time of interview), FYF

Jason's account describes complex relational histories of involvement, absence and emotional choice inter and intragenerationally. Jason is critical of his father, and in the sentence after this extract says he refuses to be like his own dad and not be involved in the life of his son simply because his relationship with the mother of his child has broken down. Yet he is critical of his half-brother for staying with the mother for the sake of the children. Jason presents a subtle set of judgments around the emotional qualities of relationships that underpin his own efforts towards being a 'present' father who is not in a relationship with his child's mother.

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[5] The CSA is the British service responsible for securing financial provision for children where one or other parent has left the familial home. It is now named Child Maintenance Service.

In analyzing Jason's case, we asked whether Victor could be a proxy for Jason's dad as an absent father, and in this way provide an intergenerational case to sit alongside Jason's. However, we were unable to access enough of Jason's dad's experiences of being absent or present through Jason's account, to enable us to compare his experiences with Victor and so develop a robust empirical basis for comparison. Beyond Jason's case, findings from FYF also identified the limited contact the young fathers had with their own fathers when parents were separated (Neale and Lau Clayton, 2014). In this way, these data are not in the FYF dataset, because of its original substantive focus, the life experiences of the young men, and the constraints of the sample. We then moved on to consider whether we could build an intergenerational sample in which Victor could be a 'future' case for Will, Karl and Jason. Similarly, however, Victor's case lacks enough data on his experiences of being a young father because of the focus of IGE on his identity as a grandparent. In order to ask such questions we conclude that we would need new research with an expanded focus and sample.

However, the similarities in familial generational experiences across both studies prompted us to explore how these might be fruitfully analyzed. In this exploratory work, we developed intragenerational cohorts from both studies and generated insights into men's generational identities across the lifecourse.

Intra-generational cohorts

IGE includes cases where young men of the same generational position as Jason responded to questions about their experiences of vulnerability and marginalization in low income localities. Within their reflections on their own constrained lifecourse trajectories, these young men described efforts on behalf of younger relatives to navigate what they considered to be the structural constraints of their locality (Emmel and Hughes, 2010). This was especially the case for Sheila's sons, Dean and Phil who described efforts to stop their youngest brother (approximately seven years younger) doing what they had done, which included getting into trouble with the police. When asked more about their protective strategies, Dean explains:

Stopped him from knocking about with wrong people basically, ... well the younger brothers *from the lads what I knocked about with you know what I mean that's already into crime wave* and that, ... I felt really all you could do was give him advice, ... *you're probably even talking* to wrong one about crime and that cause my younger brother he was worst [Steve, only two *years younger], he's just come out of prison.*
Dean, (24 years at the time of the interview) Sheila's interview, round 1, IGE

In a subsequent interview with Sheila, Steve himself remarked:

My kids are not following in my footsteps...I've been to prison so my kids won't be following in my footsteps.
Steve (28 years at the time of the interview), Sheila, round four, IGE

In the same way Jason reflects 'back' on his life and declares he would be a better father than his own father, Steve reflects 'forward', saying his daughter will not make the same mistakes as he has. His brothers similarly engaged in both 'backwards' and 'forwards' reflection in their desire to change the life chances of their youngest brother. Thus, young men in both studies have developed longitudinal narratives of specific generational responsibilities (as fathers, older brothers) in shaping the lifecourse trajectories of younger generations. Working across cases from the younger intragenerational cohort, we identified further commonalities such as

similarities in the volatility of relationships with partners of their young children; insecurity of work and worklessness, and nepotism around securing casual work, such as through family and extended family relationships; and similar difficulties with maternal grandmothers as gatekeepers not only to their children but also to other resources such as employment.

In our consideration of the older intra-generational cohort of men, we build on earlier analyses from IGE (Emmel and Hughes, 2010), by exploring substantive examples of men's experiences of marginalization, such as going into care when young, living with kinship carers when mothers or fathers are deemed incapable of caring adequately; of accounts of violence in families, and the longitudinal exacerbation of work insecurity. In bringing the two cohorts together, while not building an intergenerational sample, we are nevertheless able to identify how experiences of marginalization and vulnerability are enduring. Analyses of the younger male cohort identify similar vulnerabilities with the addition of zero contract hours work, temporary labour, commission–based pay, withdrawal of community funding and facilities, austerity and the withdrawal of the welfare state (see also Neale, 2016). Further, the accounts of the younger cohort of men of their own fathers are often extremely critical and ostensibly seem to support ideas of absent fathers. However, working across this sample of men of different ages and at different generational stages brings them into view again in family and caring contexts. Effectively, by focusing within their own family experiences, the younger male cohort often ignore their fathers' contextual constraints, which they themselves are struggling with. Karl and Will are, in effect, being absented from their children via such contextual constraints as interactions with services.

Conclusion: Intergenerational time – men's generational identities over the lifecourse

Our intention at the outset of this QSA work was to explore whether we could build an intergenerational sample using the archived datasets from FYF and IGE. We have confirmed linkage and complementarity between these datasets in three ways; contextual, thematic, and shared temporal orientation. The depth data on participants' experiences, perceptions and meanings of their generational position in both studies, led us to foreground generational time, including questions around the character of the participants' intergenerational relationships and whether they can be accessed through multiple perspectives within and across the datasets.

Our analyses of this specific set of concerns has confirmed that it is not possible to build an intergenerational sample, or to fully understand the familial intergenerational relationships between these two groups of men of different ages. Our endeavors towards theoretical refinement highlighted how the boundaries of these studies limited the extent to which we could explore new and emerging questions. However, despite not being able to assemble a vertical intergenerational sample, our analytic work has proven both substantively and methodologically fruitful. We have been able to observe how generational experiences continue to unfold and work through historical moments simultaneously, through considering how accounts from different generational positions articulate with each other within and across generational cohorts. In bringing the datasets into analytical conversation, we have assembled simultaneous multi-perspective views from the participants, from a range of generational identities, on a range of different generational positions. Further, we have been able to identify contextual constraints in experiences of sons, fathers and grandfathers moving through similar historical moments, and yet into different generational positions. In so doing, the analyses we present here demonstrate that these identities are fragile and frequently challenged or undermined in health and social care contexts, especially those relating to services which resource or privilege one generational identity (school child, teenage parent) over another (e.g.

father, grandfather). In bringing these accounts together and showcasing a form of QSA, we gain access into some of the dynamic relational processes productive of longitudinal experiences of marginalisation and vulnerability for men living in low income contexts. Men are often described as 'absent' fathers. However, engagement with men's familial generational identities over the lifecourse means they reappear as new fathers, stepfathers, or step grandfathers in different families, or at different life stages. Facilitated by the longitudinal character of both studies our analyses demonstrate how QL data provide an additional analytic dimension in research.

However, we would conclude with a number of cautionary points. We suggest that QSA has enabled us to engage with questions of generalizability, in that it has confirmed previous findings on the problematic consequence of narrow health and social care service views, that privilege one generational identity over another, thus producing notions of 'off time' generational experiences (becoming a young dad, becoming a young grandparent). We suggest that these insights move beyond cumulative findings, as they broaden our field of enquiry. However, such generalisabilty is limited. These cases provide rich thematic insight and afford complex analyses, but we identified the need for new and dedicated empirical engagement to emerging questions. Such questions clarified the boundaries of our sample, and of the contexts of the original research. We are unsure of the extent to which it might be possible to observe the processes identified in this paper in other datasets with different theoretical focus, albeit with study participants sampled from similar localities and obviously cannot make claims in this direction. We would also ask whether it is possible to successfully conduct the sorts of analyses we describe with datasets that are not so closely linked. Additionally, we question how far the linkages that we have developed would still be achievable, had these studies occurred further apart in time, albeit in the same places.

QSA also raises more pragmatic considerations. The analytic work we present here has taken us nearly three years. This is not easy work, but is rewarding, and has allowed us to set theoretical agendas for new research. This collaboration has been facilitated through Anna's Fellowship funding for MPLC, and we note such funding opportunities are becoming increasingly rare. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the quality of relationships necessary to do the work we describe. Bren Neale was, from the outset, incredibly generous with her intellectual work and expertise, fostering an atmosphere of sharing and mutuality. The originating team members were similarly generous with their time and reflections. It is clear that we have been working in a community of researchers, where the aim has been to 'hand on the torch' (Elias, 1992; Gabriel and Mennell, 2011).

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[i] All participant names are pseudonyms and any identifying details have been anonymised.

[ii] This is one example of how schools, in the pursuit of clean attendance records for their Ofsted reports, may exacerbate the riskiness of young parenthood.