



# ‘Following Fathers’: Findings and Research Methods

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# Overview



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1. Research findings
2. Methods used
3. Implications for practice

# Background



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- Following Fathers → YLT project → Timescapes
- YLT aims to explore ‘what matters’ to young people
- Young fathers recruited into the study in 2010 – ‘Following Fathers’
- To better understand the diversity of young people’s lives and experiences

# Young fathers statistics



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- A quarter of young fathers are aged under 20, around a half are 20 to 25 and a further quarter are aged over 25 (Swann et al. 2003)
- Young fathers are generally defined as males under the age of 25 (Fatherhood Institute 2010)
- True extent of young fatherhood remains unknown



- Risk factors associated with teen fathering
- The impact of teen fatherhood on personal outcomes
- Fatherhood images
- Fathers involvement with their children
- Parenting skills amongst young fathers

# Further studies



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- The voices of young fathers are still not adequately represented
- Lacking qualitative insights
- How the lives of teen fathers unfold over time is unknown
- Limited data on father's negotiating their dual status as both young people and parents
- Impact of governmental interventions on fathers needs further exploration

# Sample and methods



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- 12 fathers
- Aged between 16-22 years old
- Varied circumstances and backgrounds
- Different stages of fatherhood
- Varied levels of access to their children
- In-depth qualitative interviews

# Activities



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- Self portraits
- Timelines (present, past and future)
- Relational maps
- Updated at every interview point
- Part II



# Findings to date



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1. Identities of young men
2. Father-child relationship
3. Relationship with the child's mother
4. Cross generational relationships
5. Professional support

# Fatherhood identities



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- Identities of young fathers are complicated
- Positive experiences
- Sense of loss

*“I wouldn’t be in this job. I most possibly would be at University. I’d have the freedom to put time into what I wanted to do, whether that’s writing or teaching. The only person I’d have to look after is myself. Whereas with a child there’s a minimum price you pay” (Daniel, aged 18)*

- Importance of family

# Father-child relationships



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- Children were the father's main priority
- Aspirations of good parenting

*“It don't matter about items. It don't matter what you buy them. It don't matter about money. It's just about love, care and obviously being there. And being able to say ‘yeah I'm there all the time’. That's what matters” (Dave, aged 21)*

- ‘New fatherhood’ VS traditional fatherhood roles

# Relationship with the child's mother



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- Relationships with the child's mother were often fragile
- Father-child relationships tend to be mediated initially through the mother
- Relationship breakdown affected fatherhood status and fathering involvement

*“She owes me three years of the kids lives” (Tyronne, aged 21)*

# Cross generational relationships



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- Significance of grandparents
- Tensions between the generations

*“Like we can feed him and dress him and bath him on us own but just like when he cries she’s [partner’s mother] always there straight away. Like when my girlfriend is trying to rock him to sleep and that, her mum comes in, she doesn’t say nowt, she just goes ‘what’s wrong with him’. As if to say we’re hurting him. And she just goes ‘gives him here’” (Jake, aged 16)*

- Conflicting experience for young fathers

# Professional support



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- Specialist support crucial
- Flexibility and empathetic approaches were key
- Mixed opinions regarding other professional services
- Surveillance VS support

*“I don’t want to make a wrong move. I’m scared to make the wrong move” (Alex, aged 16)*

# Summary



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- The circumstances and life experiences of teen fathers are complex and varied
- Teenage fathers face a raft of challenges in entering and sustaining parenthood
- Young men benefit from professional involvement that is impartial and flexible and that offers emotional as well as practical support



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# Part II Research Methods



# QL methods



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Contextualises and explores

Sensitive data

Flexible approaches

Opportunities for participant's reflection

Voice for fathers

# Interview reflections



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- One to one VS group interviews
- Personal engagement through being listened to
- Enjoy making a positive contribution to research

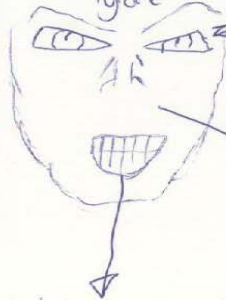
*“Just get the s\*\*t off me head, off ma mind and that. Cause if not it just keeps on going up and up and up. And then I end up losing it.” (Reece, aged 16)*

# Self portraits



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Myself  
Tyron



eyes are clean  
but far from  
mean friendly  
middle aged  
~~adult~~ adult

Talk a cheer  
but so am I  
let be friends so  
we can get by  
(meeting  
new  
people)

Knows what boundrys to cross  
and very carefull about sourrounding im in

Family Important so Important that it makes  
me who I am now!

Great on Impressions  
good with kids  
good with single dads who  
struggle with society and drugs  
use

mature at times  
but im not a kid  
~~hang hole~~

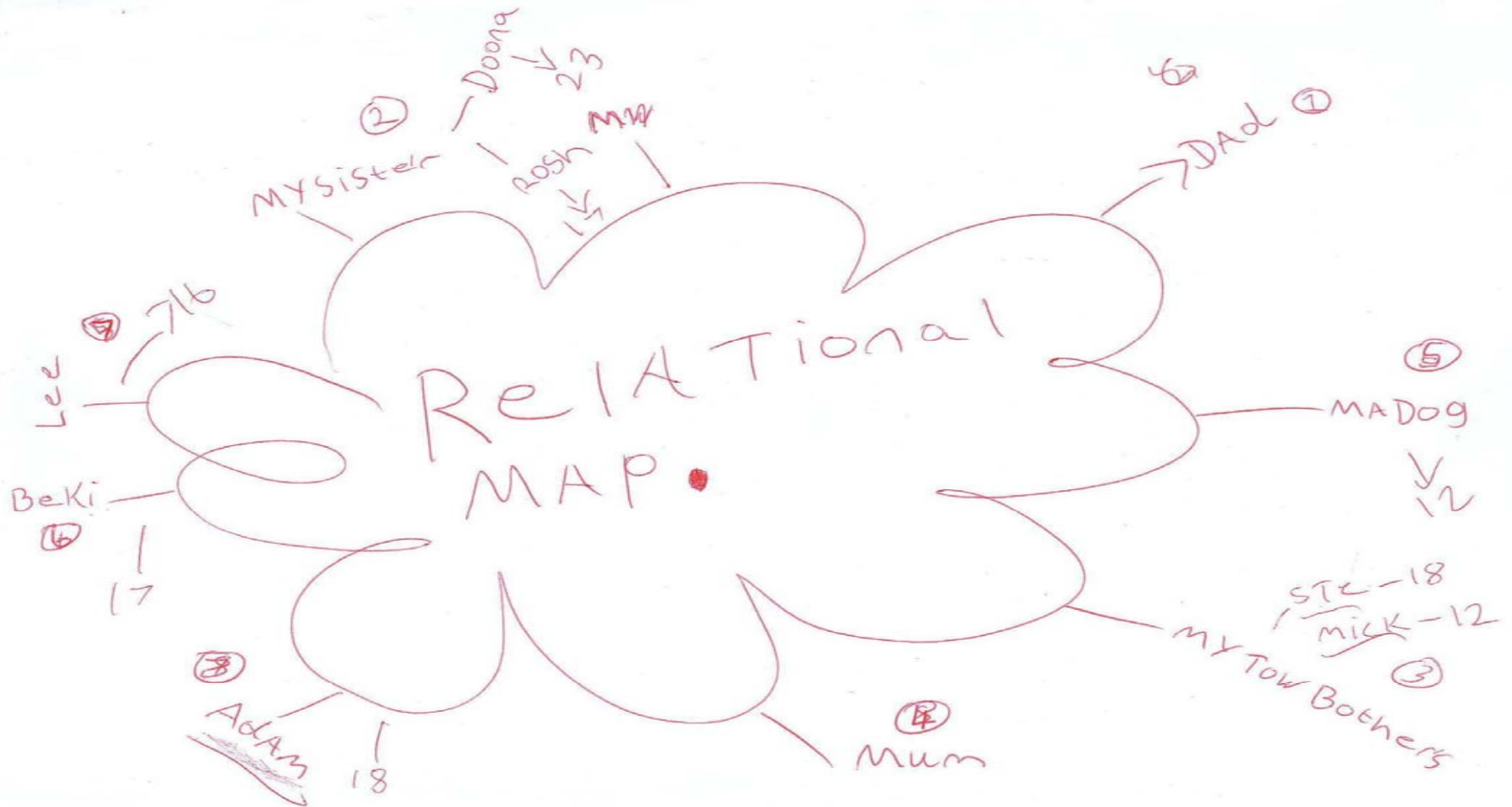
Well not talkative  
kind with people  
does things on own  
~~anath~~ Inattive

Likes football, wrestling  
, horses, swimming  
Pictures, art, music

# Relational maps



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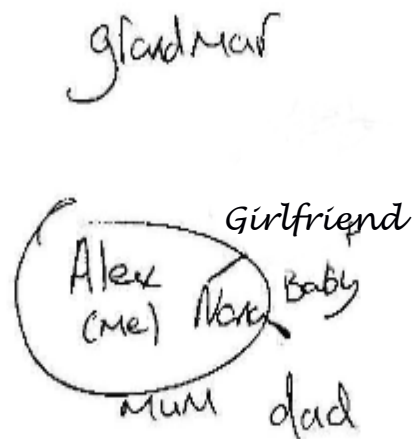


# Changes in relationships

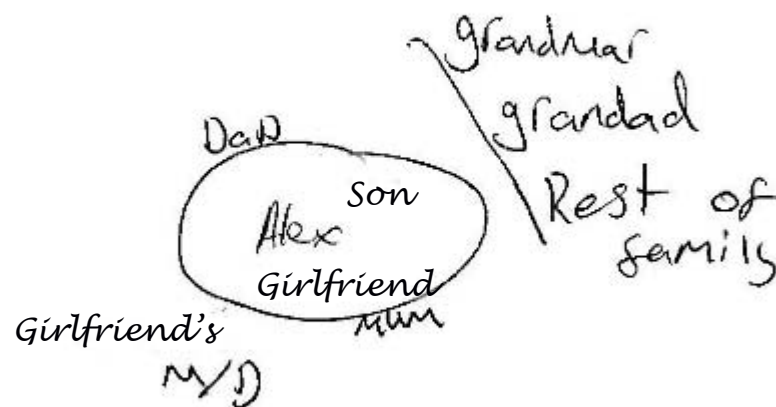


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## Wave 1



## Wave 2



# Timelines



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Age of 6 had operation | Age 9 new home | Age 11 high school | Age 12 lost virginity | Age 12 started sneaking  
| Age 15 found out pregnant with twins | Age 16 college | Age 16 lost contact with twins | Age 18 new college course | Age 18 re-gain contact  
~~Age 19~~ | Age 18 new girl friend | Age 18 new flat |

# Activity reflections



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- Reminders
- Effective: *“It's like better to like explain than like just coming out with it. Cause you feel stupid” (Kyle, aged 16)*
- Focuses on the individual: *“I love it, I love it! It's great. It's like I'm special or summat” (Alex, aged 16)*
- Mixed emotions

# Methodological advantages



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- Ice breakers and a 'way in' (Morrow 1998)
- Documents as data (Bagnoli2009)
- Thick descriptions (Shenton 2004)
- Audit trail (Farrall 2006)



# Working with practitioners



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- Close collaborations with local services
- Research based practice
- Practitioner informed research
- Replaces earlier models

# Conclusion



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- QL approaches effective
- High level of engagement
- Working with local services
- Implications for research and practice

# Exercise



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- Spend 5-10 minutes completing a 1) timeline, 2) relational map or 3) self portrait of yourself.
- Reflect on how revealing and useful such activities can be in practice with young parents?
- Group discussion

# References



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