

# "You're not a stranger but you are a stranger": Reflections from the Following Young Fathers Study

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10 June 2013

# Introduction

- Ethics- integral part of research
- Further heightened in Qualitative Longitudinal/QL approaches
- Reflective account – Following Young Fathers Study

# Following Young Fathers

- Baseline study 2010-12 ([www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk))
- ESRC funded follow up study (Nov 2012-Sept 2015)
- To explore the lived experiences and support needs of young fathers (under 25 years of age)
- Lack of dynamic research that can discern the transition to fatherhood and beyond within changing policy landscapes

# Research design: QL Methods

- Contextualises & explores
- Tracks continuity and change
- Importance of establishing rapport and trust
- ‘Walking alongside’ people as their lives unfold inevitably touches the lives of both participants and researchers (Neale, 2013)

# Sample Information

- 30 fathers (16-24 years old)
- Mixed recruitment routes
- Diverse circumstances, backgrounds, trajectories
- Different stages of fatherhood (pre-birth- 6 years)
- Varied contact with children
- In-depth qualitative interviews and activities

# Pro-active ethics

- Design stage
- Fully informed - transparency in research
- Consent freely
- Ongoing consent
- Confidentiality VS authenticity

# Methods used: Interviews

“I’ve enjoyed it [interviews], like coming and talking about it. Cause you don’t get chance to. It just feels good to like speak about it, get it all out of the way. I feel more relaxed and better than I did before.” (Simon, aged 16)

- In-depth
- Sensitive topics
- Blurring of relationships?

# Researcher's role

“Whatever I need to talk about, I can just talk about. I mean you're not a stranger but you are a stranger. So I can just say whatever really. . . It feels like you actually listen, It's better than talking to a counsellor, let's put it that way.” (Adam, aged 16)

- Support and reciprocity needs to be clearly defined
- ‘Friendly professional’ (examples of situated ethics)
- Sustaining relationships long term (Morrow, 2009)



# Un-blurring the encounter and relationships

- Interview site
- Protocol
- Formality
- Visual reminders
- Hard to reach samples- issues

# Generated activities in research

- Focuses on the individual: “I love it, I love it! It’s great. It’s like I’m special or summat” (Adam, aged 16)
- Looking back with mixed emotions: “I find it difficult emotionally looking back on negative experiences in my past. Or negative emotions I’ve felt. So yeah it’s, it’s difficult but I’m not gonna cry over it!” (Dominic, aged 18)

“At the moment regardless of any sort of ambition or what I feel I can do, it is just a case of keeping my job and maintaining a possibly not even a healthy social life.” (Dominic , aged 18)



# Leaving the field

- After-effects need to be considered (Cohen et al., 2007)
- Appropriate mechanisms in place
- Maintaining good relationships - “care and re-use” of sample
- De-brief/opportunities for closure

# Summary

- Pro-active and re-active ethical considerations
- Flexibility needed
- Important to reflect and engage in discussions with peers
- Failure to address ethical issues results from researchers who are ill-prepared to cope with the unpredictable nature of qualitative research (Batchelor & Briggs 1994)

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