

Timescapes Conference

Understanding & Supporting
Families Through Time

Gender, values and
commitments: continuity
and change in parenting

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timescapes

An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study

Outline

- UK Timescapes and the qualitative secondary analysis project
- Context: transformations in gendered relations to work and care; time squeeze and gender inequalities in 'absorption' of work-family conflict
- Working across some Timescapes data sets to analyse gendered experiences and orientations to time and care
- Conclusion

Timescapes, and the Secondary Analysis Project

- Secondary analysis as a methodological strategy
- Timescapes Secondary Analysis project – to exemplify and promote scope for data re-use; to develop methodological insights; to make headway working *across* data sets.
- 7 component QL projects, with common set of interests including longitudinal orientation; interest in time; focus on aspects of life course and generation; focus on relationships; identities; family contexts and life course transitions. But: independent projects with different teams, objectives, research questions and methods etc.
- Timescapes SA project

Issues in gender and work / family conflict

- CONTEXT: late 20th century transformations in women's (and men's) employment –
 - Erosion of male breadwinner pattern, increase in dual earning amongst parents of young children;
 - Linked time squeeze and work life balance dilemmas. UK context of economic liberalism: lack of infrastructure for familial / childcare support;
 - Tensions in managing family life, mutual support and care;
 - On women's and men's different positioning within 'asymmetrical' social arrangements

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- Linked rise in work life conflict as both parents more likely to work (many cross-national Qn studies). Weight of this falls disproportionately on women
(Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Edlund 2011; Kan et al 2011; Craig 2006)
- *“Despite their widespread entry into employment, women still undertake a greater share of caring and domestic work, and we might therefore anticipate higher levels of work-life conflict among women than men”* (Crompton and Lyonette 2006, 384).

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Women and men have very different experiences of parenting. Women positioned as flexible and main care providers; but also within this context:

- Women manage the *work* of work life balance, including scheduling, and managing discrepant timetables, and being ready to 'step in' (e.g. Morehead 2001; Forsberg 2009; Perrons et al 2005; Edlund 2011)
- Women and men typically experience time differently, women feel more compromised whilst men are more likely to retain more autonomy (e.g. Kan et al 2011; Rose 2011; Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Craig 2006)
- Women's standards for work life balance tend to be ensuring needs of others are met (Rose 2011).

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People make choices, but they:

“work within a ‘dominant cultural script’.. That posits men’s involvement (in childcare) as laudatory but still voluntary” (Vincent et al 2004, p.383).

Practices still ‘fall out’ in a very gendered way, such that:

“..mothers .. remain the key figure through the heat and noise of early childhood, even if they themselves are also engaged in paid work” - and that they continue to work with and around contradiction (Vincent et al 2004, p. 585).

(see also e.g. Maher 2009; Forsberg, 2009; Bianchi and Milkie 2010; Thomson 2010; Vincent et al 2004).

Some evolving research questions with reference to extant Timescapes data set

- How do mothers and fathers with dependent children experience time, particularly time pressures (across varied work and family contexts)?
- Are gendered differences manifest in parents' accounts? How? How does this shed light on how gender differences are 'made' and remade in contemporary working families?

Some tentative hypotheses (evolved through readings of data):

- Women 'manage' family time and scheduling of work and care differently to men. This corresponds to, but also goes wider than, differing work circumstances.
- Women and men experience family time squeeze differently. Women's accounts relate conflict and compromise much more than men, who tend to maintain greater control and autonomy over their time scheduling.

An evolving analysis...

- Working comparatively within projects; then building and extending analysis across projects
- Confronting risks of a ‘gender model’ of analysis: particular value in developing understanding of contexts in which different, gendered, experiences and orientations are manifest.
- Identifying ‘typical’ and ‘atypical’ cases and circumstances: a comparative strategy seeking to shed light on processes shaping gendered experiences of time.
- Our approach to SA analysis – researchers’ roles

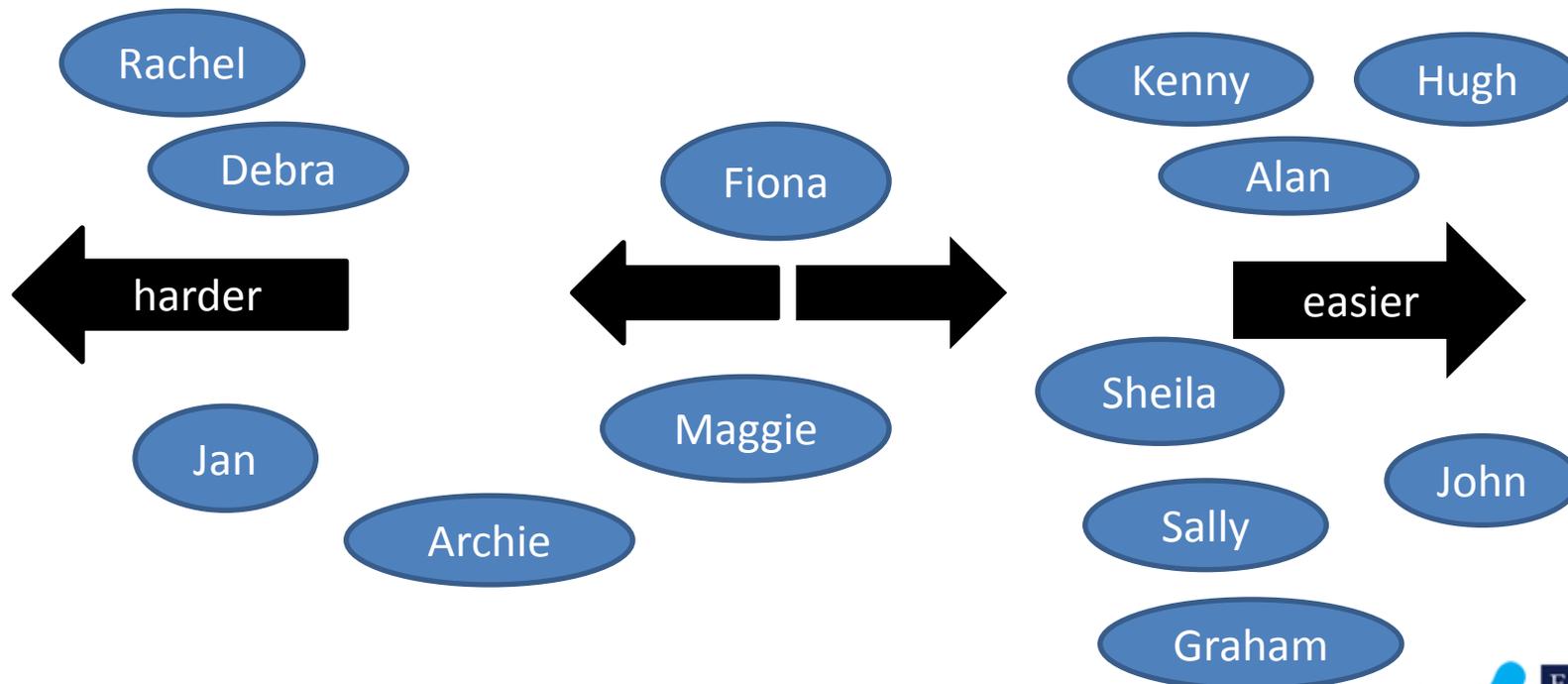
Our evolving analysis centres on data from Work and Family Lives study (Backett-Milburn; Maclean, Harden and colleagues University of Edinburgh); and Masculinities, Identities and Risk: Transition in the Lives of Men as Fathers (Henwood, Shirani and colleagues, University of Cardiff) and, we intend, Making of Modern Motherhood (Thomson and colleagues, Open University)

Gaining insights from secondary analysis: some methodological issues

- (General – see Irwin and Winterton 2011a, b: Timescapes WP4, 5)
- Some specific issues salient for current analysis:
 - Asking (and answering) secondary analysis research questions;
 - Diverse project designs generate data on different facets of people’s experiences of ‘the same thing’;
 - Additional scope for comparison and extending analytic reach by working across diverse contexts

How is day to day time and scheduling of care and work commitments experienced?

Work and Family Lives (SA analysis)



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Experiences of managing day to day time and scheduling of care and work commitments? – typical responses in time squeezed contexts

I: Okay. Let's get started. So to open it up first of all, I just wonder if you can tell me what being a mum is like for you?

Jan: It's really hard. It's a lot harder than I thought it was going to be. It's great fun, but it's much harder and I think it's becoming... well, it's obviously becoming increasingly harder as we've had the baby as well, and we don't have family support round about. So although we get a lot of fun being a family, the practicalities, the day to day, not having anybody to fall back on, that's been quite hard. ... So yes. It's two extremes. It's really, really good fun and it's very kind of noisy, and lots going on. But on the other hand it's just exhausting [laughs].

Rachel, talking about her work identity and how she manages it refers to the juggling which is a theme of many women's accounts:

"But the juggling, constant juggling, is always there. It's just this background noise in your head"

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- Things are harder to manage when there is a lack of local (typically familial) support. We see evidence that how this is handled is gendered, and reflects women's (often under-recognised work) of managing work of work life balance. Interestingly in this example it also involves managing relationships ...
- Jan: *...as I said, neighbours in the street, but @@John## and my other neighbour, work from home, so it's never a problem for them. It always just seems to be sort of us that are having to ask for help and I don't like doing it. I know they don't mind, but I don't like doing it.*

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- Where men are working they tend to be less likely to provide accounts of compromise or conflict, and to have greater autonomy over time

Graham (start up business, full time work from home)

- when he son comes into the bedroom at 7.15 in the morning “*I say, go away, I’m working*”.

...sometimes he comes up to me when I’m at home and doing something, and he says, ‘can you play with me?’, and I’m going ‘no I cant’. So what I try to do then is have strict timelines.... I suppose if you negotiate it.. I think the key is not to have to negotiate things all the time, so agree in advance a timetable and say ‘right don’t work on a Saturday, but I do work on a Sunday. So we’ve just decided we’re going to do skating on a Sunday now. So, I don’t know how I’m going to manage that.

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Experiences of managing day to day time and scheduling of care and work commitments? Responses in non-standard or atypical circumstances

- Fiona – has 3 children (11, 9 and 5) and married to John who retired early through ill-health and is the home-maker; she works full time as a project manager in public sector. She talks about the fact that she is not in a traditional mum's role and her husband does a *“lot of the houseworky things”*, yet she says being a mum is *“a kind of competing demands all the time”* and that *“..wherever I am , I'm always thinking that I should be doing something else”*
- Working mothers retain extensive responsibility / commitment for managing care and the domestic domain and give accounts of compromise. This obtains even where their partners have capacity to do extensive practical caring work.

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- As secondary analysts how do we bring other data sets into conversation with Work and Family Lives data? – the ‘Men as Fathers’ data (Karen Henwood and colleagues)
- Here we also observe a typical pattern in which men desire extensive and involved fatherhood but in terms of practicalities, and their orientations, they echo typical men and mirror typical women in WFL . However, a number of men stand out as desiring a more extensive and shared primary carer commitment for their children.

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- Bruce (school teacher, HoD at W3, partner full time work as director of her own company); he desires extensive practical caring involvement –

Int: do you feel you have a different role to (your partner)

Bruce: I think it is interchangeable as far as the sort of caring is concerned, I mean I think that probably we are not the average couple..... I think we are interchangeable and.. I mean its hilarious but it is that I am more of a mum and she is more of a dad.there is almost a role reversal in the traditional roles

Facilitated by resources and buying in nanny, and by his role at work, including his orientation to, and authority over, his time:

Bruce (w3):

Actually I have re-organised my working patterns I suppose, and I am also now much less worried about missing minor deadlines. You know in some ways I am rather more robust and about things at work....

And it would be wrong again to say that work has become less important because I have always taken it very seriously, but I certainly don't take things as personally. You know it would be wrong to say that I don't care about it but I don't let things get to me ..I used to be very assiduous.. It had to be right and now you know well you know if something works well fine and that will do

Evidence on continuities and change through biographical time

What are the conditions for sustaining different ways of doing care?

General conditions press towards more conventional settlement

Example (a): Conditions and (father's) preferences correspond: (a 'typical' settling into conventional division of labour)

Kenny is unemployed, has flexibility as a self employed chiropodist; expects himself and wife will both work part time when she goes back to work, but by wave 4 interview she has given up work; he works full time, developing his private practice. In answer to question about being an involved caring father, looking back over 8 years, he says:

"I mean I don't know what percentage out of the hundred that I'd hoped for, Michelle'd probably say its less than she'd hoped for. I would probably say about as good as I can manage"

Example (b): Conditions and (father's) preferences do not correspond.

A minority of fathers describe compromise and conflict in managing their time across work and home life. This arises in contexts:

- where they hold an ongoing determination for an extensive 'hands-on' carer role;
- where they have limited autonomy over their working time

Jason: I sometimes think, 'cause when on certain shifts I'm really tired and grumpy I would say ..., I do honestly think they look at me and think I'm the grumpy old man in the corner, ... and on earlies I fall asleep in the evening and on nights I'm like a ..bear with a sore head"

summary

- Typically women and men provide very different accounts; which relate to social arrangements and linked norms about gender appropriate roles. Women tend to manage the work of work life balance (scheduling; relationships; practical and emotional readiness to accommodate difficulties) and provide accounts of experiences of compromise and juggling.
- Through lens of ‘atypical’ circumstances:
 - Women and partners in role reversal situations: evidence suggests such women retain management of domestic sphere; and experience a positioning as carer as well as worker;
 - Men desiring and enacting extensive practical involvement. If this is not supported, and if men have limited autonomy over time, their accounts suggest experiences of conflict and compromise (echoing accounts much more typical of women).
- Data reveals some of ways in which social conditions and pragmatic responses, press towards (and reinforce) conventional gendered divisions of labour.

conclusion

Methodological:

- Scope for secondary analysis of data - not necessarily collected for specific questions under examination - and for testing and building knowledge by working across data sets.

Substantive:

- Without significant change in contexts and conditions of parenting and caring for children – then routine practices tend towards the reinforcement of gendered inequalities, and reflect severe constraint in options about how to best raise children.