

Current Work – Masculinities, Identities and Risk: Transition in the Lives of Men as Fathers

Temporal: Our work seeks to foreground issues of time, highlighting the centrality of temporality to the experience of fatherhood. We have looked time as a topic of study by exploring the salience of men's imagined futures in relation to their current circumstances (Shirani and Henwood, 2011a), as well as the methodological implications of time as a vehicle of analysis (Henwood and Shirani, in press). Fiona Shirani has explored temporal issues further in her linked PhD on 'The 'Right Time' for Fatherhood.

Methodological: In addition to 'researching the temporal', project work has provided detailed evaluation and discussion of the use of visual techniques in qualitative research (Henwood, Shirani and Finn, in press; Henwood, Finn and Shirani, 2008) indicating how the additional insights provided by invoking a range of techniques can further analytic developments. In addition, the project work has highlighted the benefits of QLL research by illustrating the contribution such an approach can make to substantive topical issues, such as father involvement (Shirani and Henwood, 2011b). A collection of working papers has provided further detailed discussion of issues facing researchers in qualitative longitudinal research (Shirani and Weller, 2010). Current work is focused on the ethical dimensions of QLL research following from discussions at the Cardiff Timescapes residential and conference, and a contribution on this topic will form part of the editorial to the Timescapes special issue of 'Qualitative Research'.

Psychosocial: Current work includes reviewing contemporary literature on fathering, developing the project's psychosocial work on men's identificatory dynamics, intergenerational transmissions, and energised flows. This work assumes the relevance of two key psychosocial concepts: intersubjectivity and relationality, which we are exploring in relation to multiple conditions and flows of time. The term 'psychosocial temporalities' has been coined by Karen Henwood and Mark Finn (2009) to foreground our developing interest in the dynamic (continuous and changing) multi-modal constitution of masculine identity and paternal subjectivity. We have worked on a QL and psychosocial case based analysis which examines the ways in which intergenerational transmissions of classed masculinities affect men's experience of becoming a father (paper for Qualitative Research). We explore the influence of the past on the present (classed masculine transmissions and inherited paternal identities) and the ways the present mediates the past (e.g. focusing on the ways novel experiences - such as caring for a new baby - and 'new' socio-cultural and relational contexts can prompt a recasting of inherited paternal identities as a means of seizing new opportunities or to accommodate change). The longitudinal lens afforded by the study allows us to track fathers' attempts to reconcile 'old' and 'new' discourses and identities as they respond to the opportunities, demands and concerns arising out of particular circumstances. This longer term perspective allows us to shed light on the dynamics of continuity and change in fathers' experiences and subjectivities, including the ways fathers arrive at particular 'settlements' between past, present and future over time.

Contemporary parenting culture: Project work has contributed to contemporary debates about parenting by exploring issues such as father involvement (Shirani and Henwood, 2011b) and men's relationship to intensive parenting culture (Shirani et al, in press). Data has also been used to comment on the impact which significant historical moments – such as the economic downturn – have on individuals' daily lives and anticipated futures (Henwood et al. 2010). We are currently working on an analysis of home-working and stay-at-home fatherhood in light of trends towards greater prevalence of such arrangements, and assessing whether analysing continuities and changes in men's risk experiences and understandings over time will further illuminate our work investigating questions about fathering identities and public and private masculinities. We are also exploring cross-project collaborative opportunities with our Timescapes colleagues with the aim of extending and enriching analytical work on gender and intensive parenting culture.

Public and Policy dissemination: In addition to the academic outputs described above, the project has made efforts to engage interested parties more widely. Our 2009 report on Men's Experiences of Antenatal Services (Shirani et al., 2009) has been used to inform practice for service providers engaging with men. The project team (in conjunction with a summer placement student) have developed a project brochure and leaflet which are currently being disseminated. We are now using these resources as a basis for our user engagement work, one aim of which is to generate insights informing our policy implications work. The project team have also written a policy briefing with key insights from the project research to-date, which was launched at the Timescapes conference: Understanding and Supporting Families over time.