

Context in secondary analysis, working across QL data sets and reflections on QL analysis

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**Qualitative longitudinal data analysis: a workshop for
social scientists**

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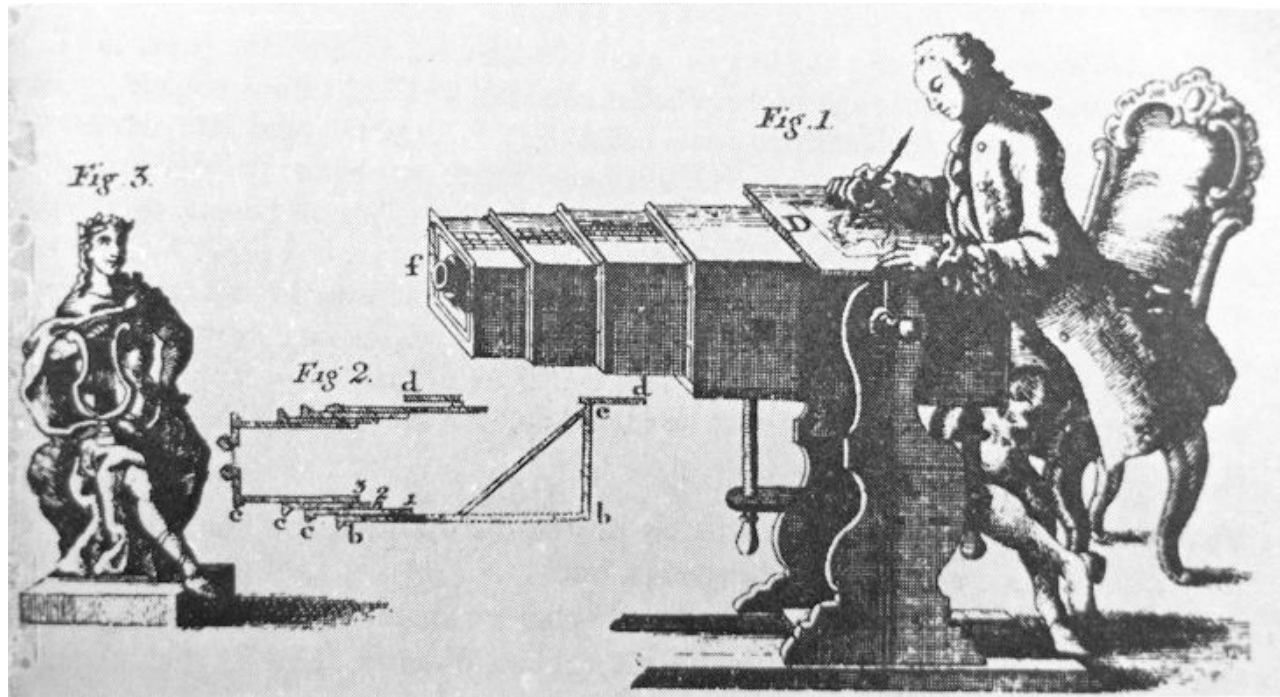
- Outline

- Reflections on analysis
- reflections on context, and embeddedness of data
- Secondary analysis, and working across data sets (if we cannot 'accumulate' data can we engender meaningful analytic conversations? – example of Timescapes secondary analysis
- QL analysis – reflections and two examples

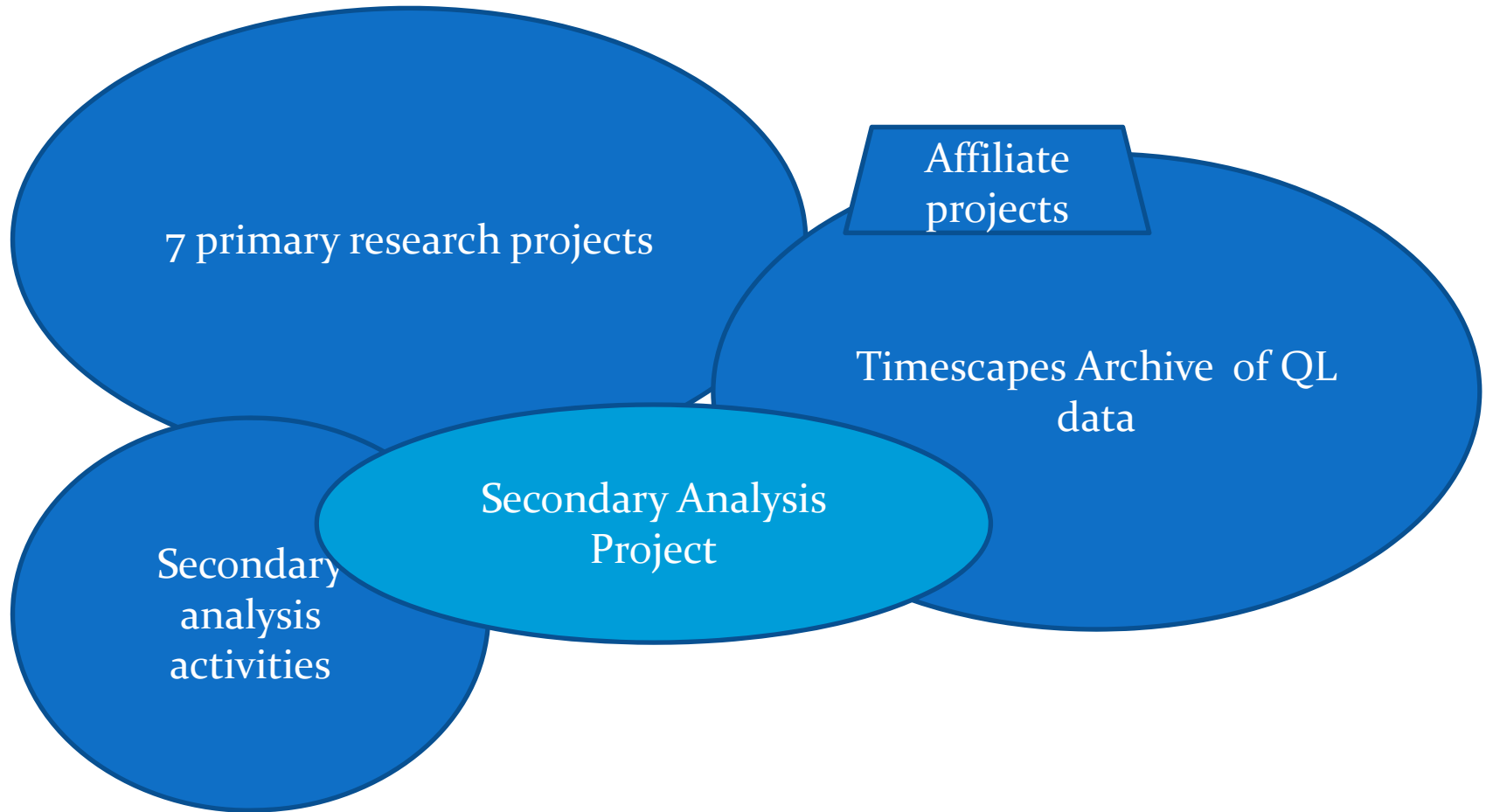
a) On categories which order data

- Mason (2002) argues, with reference to qualitative methods, that we should see ‘asking, listening and interpretation’ as theoretical projects:
- “...how we ask and listen are theoretical enactments of our assumptions around where the phenomenon we are interested in are located, and how the interviewee and interview can illuminate the issues” (Mason 2002: 233-4).

Understanding context (the nature of data and the conditions of its production)



ESRC Timescapes – SA example



Timescapes

- A qualitative longitudinal study comprising 7 primary empirical projects; a new archive of QL data; affiliate projects, training; and a programme of secondary analysis/dedicated SA project (last 2 years of TS)
- Substantive common interests in: Personal relationships and identities; family life, friendship; intimacy, care and support. Methodological and conceptual interests in time, biography, generation and historical time in qualitative longitudinal research.

Seven Timescapes Projects

1. **Siblings and Friends:** the changing nature of children's lateral relationships (Prof. R. Edwards (LSBU, Soton))
2. **The Crafting of Young People's Relationships** (Prof. B. Neale, Leeds)
3. **The Dynamics of Motherhood:** an intergenerational project (Prof. R. Thomson, Open)
4. **Masculinities, Identities and Risk:** stories of transition in the lives of men and fathers (Prof K. Henwood, Cardiff)
5. **Work and Family Lives:** the changing experiences of 'young' families (Prof Backett-Milburn, then Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Edinburgh)
6. **Intergenerational Exchange:** grandparents, social exclusion and health (Dr. K. Hughes, Leeds)
7. **The Oldest Generation:** Events, relationships and identities in later life (Prof J. Bornat, Open)

The question of context –

1. As historical and theoretical framing of research questions (Moore 2006; Savage; Walkerdine and Lucey 1988)
2. As immediate proximate contexts of data production (as in many discussions of secondary analysis: ‘what the researcher saw; felt; knew etc’)
3. Value too of sustained consideration of a set of ‘middle range’ issues regarding how contexts are conceptualised, and accessed within methodologies and thereby ‘present’ in data (Irwin and Winterton 2012). (e.g. assumptions about salient contexts are embedded within data collection strategies)

Issues in context:

- Mundane changes within and across projects, and different ‘framing’ of questions shape data (well known to qualitative researchers, part of *raison d’être*, but challenging issues for secondary analysis)
- Project designs: disciplinary concerns; sample; research design (e.g. who is interviewed; how people are oriented to project); research methods all shape data.

Example (a): – perceptions of generation across different projects and ‘The Oldest Generation’: evidence embedded in method of its creation.

Example (b): - strategies for allowing analytic conversation across data sets

Example 1: Working across data sets

- We evolved a series of questions through readings of metadata and transcripts across primary projects (see TS WP 4). Generated question areas and liaised with project teams. Firmed up a set of questions relating to issues of gender, work and care, time pressure and work life balance. (*Endnote 1*)
- We built up a picture of internal diversity and different contexts in which time pressure was experienced (and managed) (WFL and MAF)
- Mapped out different positioning of participants with respect to how they perceived managing time, and work/care commitments

Typical mothers with extensive work commitments:

“But the juggling, constant juggling, is always there. It’s just this background noise in your head” (Rachel)

Its the constant time pressure that I find really difficult... you feel like you’ve already done a day’s work in the house before you’ve left the house in the morning (Jan)

I do have a lot of guilt about being a bit crap (Debra)

Typical father with extensive work commitments:

I suppose being a dad is just how you slot into your routines, what you have to do, its interesting (Debra’s husband)

Atypical circumstance for mothers who work extensively but have husbands at home who do extensive practical support of children:

You feel like your spreading yourself thinly (Fiona)

I shouldn’t (feel guilty) because he’s got his dad there all the time (Sally)

That is we considered women and men in different domestic divisions of labour; and hypothesised that women were more likely to be positioned to experience stress across a range of circumstances where they do extensive paid work

Seeking to enable an analytic conversation across data sets..

- Consider, then, whether we can bring our evidence and analysis into conversation with data from another project. Worked with ‘Men as Fathers’, using a more deductive sampling strategy, identifying diverse circumstances in respect of household paid employment. Translate our research questions (e.g. into a context where only men are interviewed)
- Consider men in range of domestic division of labour circumstances, and include comparisons between men who are more ‘conventional’ (combining work and involved fatherhood) and those who desire extensive practical hands-on care of young children.

- Kenny (conventional division of labour)
 - *I mean I don't know what percentage out of the hundred that I'd hoped for, Michelle'd probably say it's less than she'd hoped for. I would probably say it's about as good as I can manage*
- 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*

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....

... ..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

(may tell us something about different male positions in work, but also perhaps differing assertions of authority or autonomy)

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; **and** where they have limited autonomy over their working time

- *Int:when I say time to you what do you think of?*
- *Malcolm: Not enough, not enough,... one thing I've not got enough.... Its not so bad at the moment but I never used to have enough time to complete me work and I'd come home and I'd look at it and think there's not enough time to have something to eat before I go to bed*

Women's remain 'stuck' with time stress ;
and men move towards it when they hold similar commitments:- evidence of entrenched gender differences.

In summary – working across data sets we need to consider:

- Embeddedness of data in diverse contexts (samples; disciplinary context; orientations of participants; methods...)
- How to *translate* our concepts and hypotheses across differently constituted projects.
- How to then evolve and refine these concepts working within and across data sets.
- *Analysis is not just about ‘techniques’, but inherently conceptual.*

Consider two different studies which have QL data designs

- *Both examples centre on case based analysis, comparison across cases and an understanding of the situatedness of cases*
- *And thereby reflect on relating QL data analysis to wider evidence on pattern and process*

example 2: secondary /QL analysis of Young Lives and Times

- Study of young people's evolving orientations to higher education through Young Lives and Times project.
- Analysis is a longitudinal case based analysis and cases were organised with reference to well documented processes shaping expectations.
- Reading and re-reading cases in comparison, and in relation to extant evidence, suggests youngsters' expectations influenced by interplay of key processes – whose temporal interplay appears different across social groups...

Processes shaping expectations and choices: current research

Importance of
Family background and:

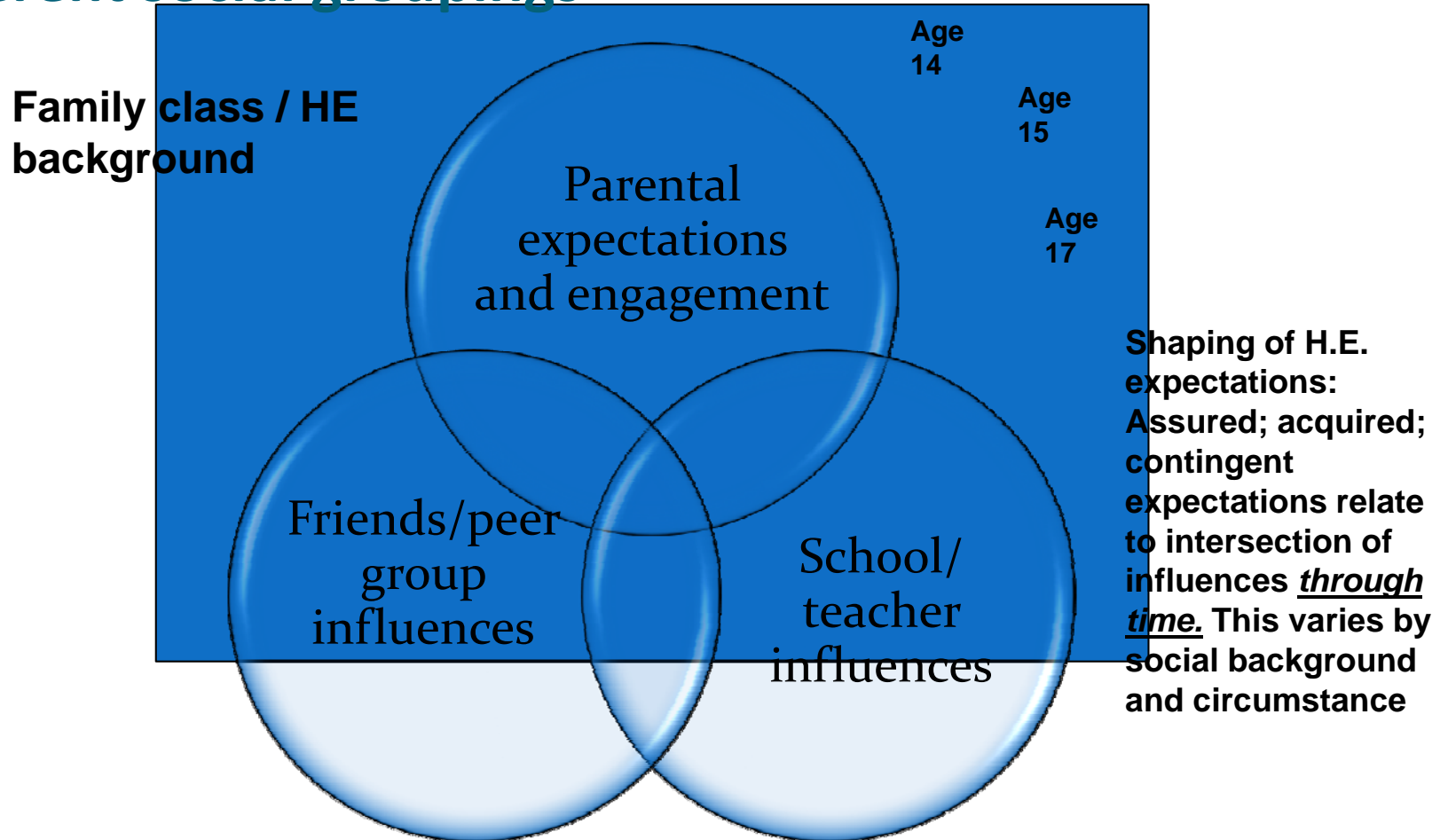
- Parents' expectations
- Schools / teachers
- Friends / peers



How do these influences work over time, as young people grow through their teenage years?



Consider how these interplay through time across different social groupings



Example 3: Family contexts, parenting and class related inequalities QL analysis of evolving orientations to children's futures

- Study of parenting and class inequalities.
- Survey n = 560, semi-structured interviews: 34 (2009/09).
 - (issues relating to parenting; values; orientations to care of children; nature of emotional support; children's education; ideas about continuity and change; expectations and hopes for the future).
 - Second wave of semi-structured interviews in 2011 (array of topic areas relating to parenting including expectations and hopes for the future)
- Parental expectations and modes of engagement with children's futures; diversity across and within classes in how parents perceive their own role in shaping their children's futures.

- Analysis

- thematic analysis built on case based analysis (e.g. whole cases were an important element in theorising parental accounts of their orientations to children's futures)
 - (e.g. theme of how centred on their children's education and future opportunities were parents across different class contexts)
- Comparison across longitudinal cases, also situated with reference to broader patterning – strategic sampling of cases
- Illustration: using QL data and 3 examples matched by child's age, gender, possible future occupational area, lack of academic interest. Allows lens on some ways in which material cultural (including educational) resources shape efficacy of parental determination

Samuel, middle class, son at private school (over years more concerned and 'strategic')

- reflected extensively on ways in which he could incentivize and motivate his son to access university and a graduate, professional career, and had tried to engineer improvements in his son's level of achievement, mobilisation of cultural and material resources

Nicky: intermediate class,

- *... after a long time of discussing it ... we came to an agreement that if he really wanted to do this then he should go in for a trade, ... and get some qualifications behind him. So that eventually if he came back into civilian life that he would have a trade behind him that he could use.*
- Nicky sought to channel her son's interests and capacities in a direction which would secure the best long-term outcome as she saw it: specifically one involving ongoing training and a future career. She adapted her ideas and support engaging pragmatically with her son's interests, and saw ongoing training as the key to a successful employment future

- Jenny, working class, prior theme of determination to shape decent futures for children,
- Son had unsuccessfully tried to secure an apprenticeship and was currently seeking to do a diploma course at a local college, in vehicle accident and body repair, having struggled to obtain his GCSEs.
- Jenny felt her son *'will just, he'll, he'll plod along. And he's got the brains but he just don't do it . . . And that's the frustration but I can't make him'*.
- In a context of severe constraint Jenny felt frustrated by her son's lack of ambition and drive. The context of recession and extensive unemployment further undermined her sense of efficacy in shaping her children's future. Asked if she was happy with her children's plans she said: *'I'll be just 'appy if they get a job'*.
- Strategic comparison across cases illuminates differential ability to mobilise resources across parents on behalf of their children as they approach end of school years.

- Summary

- Conceptualising context and embeddedness of data
- Strategies for working across different data sets
- Reflections on longitudinal qualitative analysis
- Reflections on situatedness of data and
- Analysis about constant conversation between concepts and evidence

- Irwin, S. and Elley, S. (2013) “Parents’ hopes and expectations for their children’s future occupations”, *The Sociological Review* 61 (1)
- Irwin, S. and Elley, S. (2011) ‘Concerted cultivation? Parenting values, education and class diversity’, *Sociology* 45(3): 480-495.
- Irwin, S. and Winterton, M. (2012) ‘Qualitative analysis and social explanation’ *Sociological Research Online* 17, (2) 4.
- Winterton, M. and Irwin, S. (2012) ‘Teenage expectations of going to university: the ebb and flow of influences from 14 to 18’, *J. of Youth Studies* 15 (7).

Endnote 1

Re: example 1. I am grateful to the Timescapes primary project teams especially those whose data we have drawn on here (Prof Karen Henwood and colleagues at Cardiff University; Professor Backett-Milburn and Dr Jeni Harden and colleagues at Edinburgh University; example 2: Prof Bren Neale at Leeds University. It should be noted that the analyses here are not necessarily shared by the primary project teams.

Re: examples 1 and 2. I am grateful to Dr Mandy Winterton who worked with me as a Research Fellow on the Timescapes SA project (2010-2011)