Secondary analysis and working across data sets and longitudinally

Sarah Irwin

University of Leeds

Qualitative Longitudinal Methods: Research into Practice
Sociology and Social Policy,University of Leeds, and
ESRC Timescapes. 17 Oct 2011.

Timescapes

- A qualitative longitudinal study comprising 7 primary empirical projects; a new archive of QL data (with connections with ESDS Qualidata; affiliate projects, training and other dissemination events; and resources for social policy, 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)

Why undertake qualitative secondary analysis?

- Utilise potential of archived and extant qualitative data sets
- To undertake exploratory analyses prior to new data collection;
- To supplement one's own primary data (through historical perspective; points of comparison);
- To gain insights into hard to reach populations or sensitive topics (eg Fielding and Fielding 2000)
- To generate new insights or findings through analysing 'old' data with a new lens (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Bornat 2010);
- Reconceptualisation of data; new questions and new interpretations, new analytic resources
- Generate new communities of users; enhance methodological capacity and resources

Debates about the value of qualitative secondary analysis

- (e.g. Mauthner, Parry and Backett-Milburn 1998; and cf. Hammersley 1997)

    Difficulties..

    – 'Being there' – researcher presence

    – Knowledge of context

    Hammersley (2009): on data, evidence and knowledge claims.

    Purposes of secondary analysts.

    We suggest:

    > *Primary analysts have a privileged relationship to the data they have generated, but do not necessarily have a privileged claim on the arguments that can be made from that data. …. 'being there' is not the final arbiter of the adequacy of [social scientific] understandings* (see Irwin and Winterton 2011a)

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS   LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY   CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD   THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH   The Open University   UK Data Archive   E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Secondary analysis in practice

- **Getting to know a project**
  - Understanding sample structure and developing logics for selecting data for analysis
  - Understanding the structure of the project data
  - Understanding context (the nature of data and the conditions of its production)

- **Developing analytic strategies**
  - 2 examples

Understanding sample structure and developing logics for selecting data for analysis

If qualitative research is not representative what does it matter how we subsample?

a) helpful to gain a sense of how people are situated within study samples,

b) Different approaches: primarily deductive, inductive, mix

c) Sample structure and how we sample within – as a strategy for illuminating diversity and helping to access the contexts underpinning such diversity, as well as understanding any individual 'case'.

Understanding the structure of the data

- What data is available? (e.g. many Timescapes projects have an array of data including different kinds of interview data, and a wide range of visual data; diary data).

- At points structured into Timescapes projects (YLT) are points of connection with other data sets (Irwin 2009 on survey data; Winterton et al 2011 on NCDS) *(see next slide for example)*

- Strategies for working with diversity across the qualitative projects, including insights into how data is produced, and ways different methods may be accessing different facets of people's experience

def expects to go to university * academic motivation * one or both parents went to uni Crosstabulation

one or both parents went to uni				academic motivation		Total
				positive	not positive	
No H.E. background	def expects to go to university	less likely, or no	Count	90	133	223
			% within def expects to go to university	**BILLY**	**SOPHIE**	100.0%
			% within academic motivation	64.3%	**JACK**	73.4%
		very likely	Count	50	31	81
			% within def expects to go to university	**EBONY**	38.3%	100.0%
			% within academic motivation	35.7%	18.9%	26.6%
	Total		Count	140	164	304
			% within def expects to go to university	46.1%	53.9%	100.0%
			% within academic motivation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
H.E. background	def expects to go to university	less likely, or no	Count	32	45	77
			% within def expects to go to university	41.6%	58.4%	100.0%
			% within academic motivation	34.4%	54.9%	44.0%
		very likely	Count	61	37	98
			% within def expects to go to university	**EMILIA**	37.8%	100.0%
			% within academic motivation	**KATIE**	45.1%	56.0%
	Total		Count	93	82	175
			% within def expects to go to university	53.1%	46.9%	100.0%
			% within academic motivation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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

  – Mundane changes within and across projects, and different 'framing' of questions shape data.. (well known to qual researchers, part of raison d'etre, 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 – perceptions of generation across different projects / The Oldest Generation: evidence embedded in method of its creation..)

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS   LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY   CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD   THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH   The Open University   UK Data Archive   E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Analytic strategies – how we generated questions; organised data, sought to build understanding, and to refine and develop our emerging concepts – examples in practice.

Analysis is not just about 'techniques', but inherently conceptual.

Examples have different ways of linking the particular and general

Analytic strategies, example 1

Working across data sets

– Approaching TS data sets as secondary analysts and working with common themes (across independent projects).

– Background: interest in issues of gender, changing commitments to work and care, time pressure and work life balance issues

– Focus on gendered experiences of time pressure grounded in (exploratory) readings of data. We built up a picture of internal diversity and different contexts in which time pressure was experienced (and managed), and the differences that gender makes.

– Mapped out different positioning of participants with respect to how they perceived managing time, and work/care commitments

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"

Since the gender dimension appears so strong, we might ask: how does this play out in different contexts?

Therefore considered women and men in different domestic divisions of labour; hypothesise that women more likely to be positioned to experience stress across range of circumstances where they do extensive paid work

- 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.

- 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....

... ..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

(Speculatively – 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 may need to consider how to translate our concepts across differently constituted projects.

Then seek to evolve and refine these concepts working within and across data sets.

Analytic strategy example 2: secondary analysis of qualitative longitudinal data

- 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.(e.g…). Temporal interplay allowed insight into how expectations evolve across different groupings
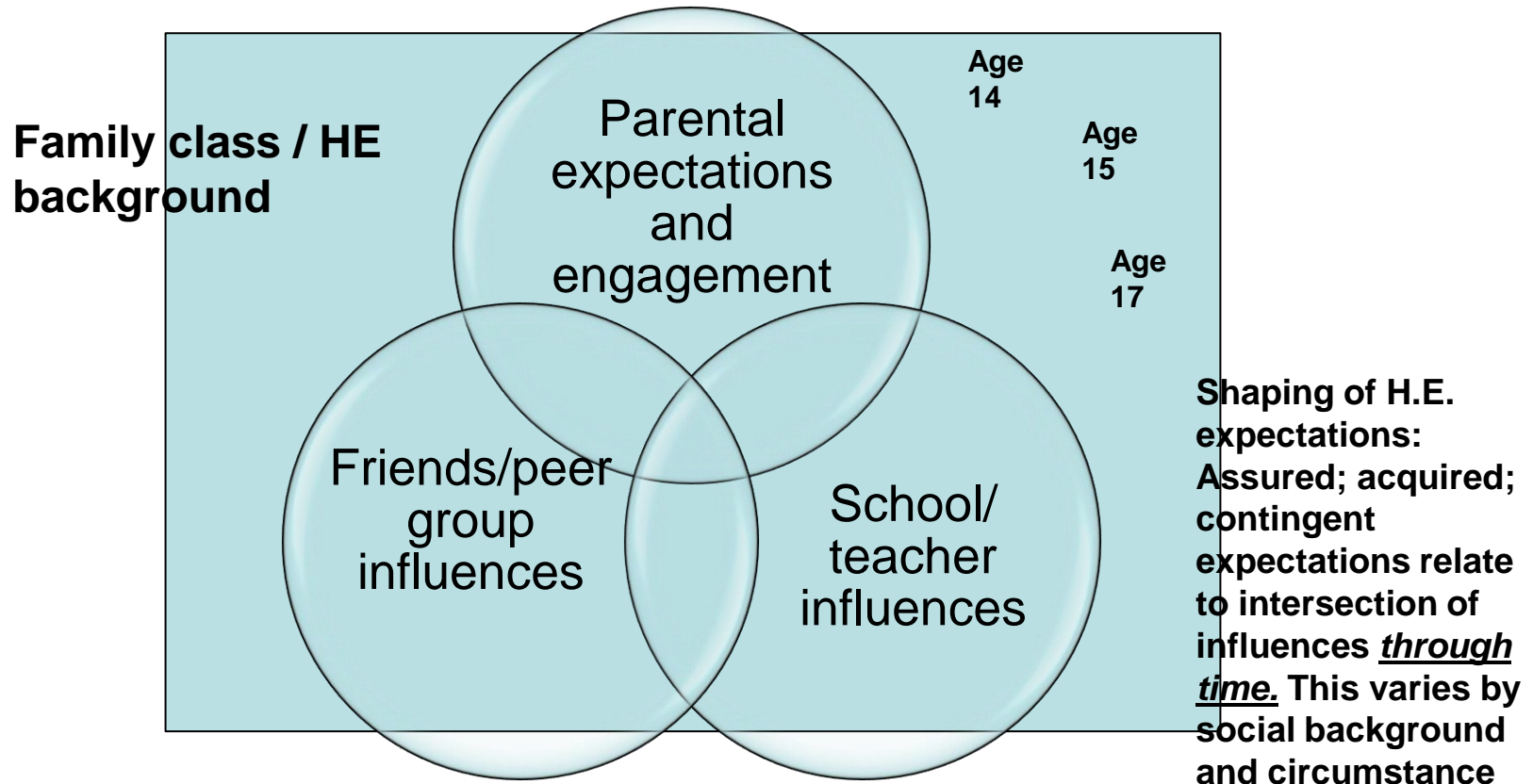
- As secondary analysts a sample structure may not be as we would wish it. Young Lives and Times had a sample quite heavily weighted towards middle class youngsters and towards privately educated youngsters, although some diversity.

- We selected for in-depth analysis a spread of cases chosen strategically to illuminate diversity in family background and resources; and young people's temporal experiences of family, school and peer influences in their evolving orientations to higher education

- We read all available data by cases (in this analysis a range of kinds of data and longitudinal interview data from the ages of 14 to 17/18).

- Case analysis of data across 3 waves generates a rough classification of expectations as *they evolve over time*, corresponding to different social groupings. KEY is the interplay of these factors over time, and how it varies for different social groupings.

- ILLUSTRATED (WITH APOLOGIES FOR 'TYRANNY OF PPT', AND MY INABILITIES TO BETTER REPRESENT OUR THINKING, EXPECIALLY THE ARGUMENT ABOUT PROCESS AND CHANGE) IN ONE DIAGRAM…..!

Consider how these interplay through time across different social groupings

timescapes
An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study

Family class / HE background

Parental expectations and engagement

Age 14

Age 15

Age 17

Friends/peer group influences

School/ teacher influences

Shaping of H.E. expectations: Assured; acquired; contingent expectations relate to intersection of influences _through time._ This varies by social background and circumstance

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

The Open University

UK Data Archive

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Overview of Timescapes and debates in QSA

QSA strategies in practice:

Understanding project data sets as a secondary analyst

1. Sample structure

2. Data

3. Context

Analytic strategies

1. Working across qualitative data sets

2. Working longitudinally: time and structure

Thanks.

References

- Please visit the Timescapes website. Some of the work discussed here is developed in current working papers on the Secondary Analysis pages of the website and in forthcoming publications

  http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/ - although soon to be updated