

Fathers and intergenerational transmission in social context

Julia Brannen, Violetta Parutis, Ann Mooney and Valerie Wigfall

Revised 3 October 2010

Abstract

This paper takes an intergenerational lens to the study of fathers. It draws on evidence from two ESRC-funded intergenerational studies of fathers, one of which focused on four generation British families and the other which included new migrant (Polish) fathers. The paper suggests both patterns of change and continuity in fatherhood across the generations. It demonstrates how cultural forces and material conditions need to combine to facilitate change in fathers' exercise of agency and how social class and the conditions of being a migrant shape fathers' practices. It argues that in seeking to recast the public debate about parenting, it is necessary to penetrate below the discursive level of talk about parenting to examine the habitual nature of many family practices, an endeavour to which an intergenerational approach is well suited. This approach enabled us to tease out the horizontal pull of within-generation influences on fathers, the vertical pull of inheritance from older to younger generations and the material and cultural conditions of fathers' current locations, all of which shape their practices. This analysis also alerted us to changes in conceptual language - from fatherhood to fathering - but also to the historical resilience of the concept of childcare as reserved largely for the role and practices of mothers.

Much of the public discourse on parenting is normative, with 'normative' denoting the processes by which dominant discourses of the 'normal' are constructed - framed in terms of what 'should be' rather than what 'is'. As Suissa and Ramaekers propose (this Issue), parents are increasingly positioned in relation to what they ought to do and how they ought to interact with their children and, in accordance with the latest scientific knowledge, they are required to professionalise themselves. Moreover, contemporary debates about parenting largely discuss parenting in gender neutral terms although fathers have recently begun to attract greater attention in terms of their potential to become more involved in the 'educational project' of creating 'responsible and active parenting' (DfES a and b).

While research studies of family life report that parents' responses reflect normative discourses of parenting (Ribbens McCarthy et al 2000), with people under reporting 'bad' behaviours and over reporting 'good' ones, many parenting practices are typically habitual and routinised. One way to address this is through the use of an intergenerational framework in which members of different generations within a single family are interviewed. An intergenerational focus is suited to an endeavour in which family practices are not always open to reflection - and hence are difficult to study - what Thompson (1995) refers to as 'habits of the heart'. This methodological approach provides insights from a number of perspectives: it encourages and encompasses the viewpoints of both sides in a relationship (in this paper fathers and sons) and generates an understanding of the processes ~~by which assets, values and habits are of receiving and~~ ~~transmitting cultural (?) resources~~. Hence it provides more of a handle on the dynamics of

Comment [s1]: I think it would be helpful to be explicit about how "resources" is being used here.

family life and family relations than would be achieved if only one family member or generation was interviewed.

This is the approach we adopted in two studies of fatherhood. One study focused on white British families consisting of four generations and the other included families whose lives were shaped by migration (from Poland and Ireland). The studies address two research questions: What resources and practices do current fathers inherit from their own fathers? How far do they adopt new discourses of parenting and create new types of fathering practice, thereby placing their own 'mark' on fatherhood? Through these studies we hope not only to explore the extent of continuity and change in parenthood but also intersections with gender, class, culture, and ethnicity.

Furthermore, in these two studies we employed a particular interview approach - the biographic-narrative interview tailored to our own useⁱ (Wengraf 2001) which was particularly helpful in transcending aspects of family lives which informants might have taken for granted or failed to remark upon. This approach encouraged each member of a family generation to give an account of their own and their family lives while the researchers sought also to elicit the biographical 'facts' from this life story and in a subsequent set of follow on questions. This enabled us as analysts to tease out the structural features of a life from interviewees' post hoc interpretations given in the context of the research encounter.

We took as a starting point in these studies that fatherhood/ parenthood is shaped by the opportunities and resources available in particular social and economic contexts and by what people inherit from their own parents, and also by the ways in which children themselves contribute to their upbringing. The biographical method situated lives in context; enabling us to understand lives in relation to the historical and cultural and economic conditions of the times and by including the perspectives of different generations to compare and contrast accounts of fathering across generations.

This is also a method which generates rich narratives and interpretations of men's experiences as fathers and sons. As Thompson (1995) suggests, family stories are the 'coinage' of exchange between generations and a form of intergenerational transmission. 'Such stories are not only remembered fragments of a real past, not only clues to collective consciousness and personal identity, but also a past that is still active in the present: signposts' (Thompson, 1995, p14).

British fathers: a four generation study

The first study was conducted between 1998 and 2000 under ESRC's Research Programme, The Future of Work (Brannen et al 2004). The Four Generations Study focused on twelve case studies of white British families consisting of four generations; it covered both fathers and mothers (between 5 and 8 members of each family were interviewed, 71 interviewees in total). It set out to examine continuities and discontinuities around work and care across the generations. Thirty one fathers were interviewed (including seven great grandfathersⁱⁱ). Because the sample design had very specific criteria the men were not necessarily biologically related. The great grandfathers were born between 1911 and 1931 and most became fathers in the interwar years. Grandfathers were born in the post Second World War period (1937-1953) and parented in the

1960s. Those currently bringing up children were born between 1962 and 1980, growing up in neoliberal Britain, and becoming parents during the downturn in the economy in the 1990s. The study therefore covered a vast panorama of social change in Britain over the 20th century. Cases were mainly selected via the grandparent generation and an equal mix of occupational statuses was achieved.

Fathers across three generations in Polish, Irish and UK origin families

The second (ESRC funded) study is currently in progress. We set out to examine how different generations and ‘ethnicities’ engage in fathering and the experience of being fathered; how migration influences fatherhood; and the processes by which norms, values and practices of fathering are transmitted. Case studies of three generational chains of men are being carried out; eight chains of first generation Polish (migrant) fathers, their fathers (living in Poland), and their sons (plus 2 chains of second generation Polish fathers); ten chains of second generation Irish fathers, their fathers (born in Ireland) and their sons; ten chains of white British fathers, their fathers (born in the UK) and their sons. As in the Four Generation Study, among the Polish chains which is our focus here, the grandfather generation was born between 1932 and 1953 and the fathers in the 1970s. The third (youngest) generation is aged between 5 and 18 years of age, a somewhat wider age range than the youngest generation in the first study. So far we have only completed a preliminary analysis of the material of the eight chains of first generation Polish migrant fathers. Our research method again employed a modified version of the biographic-narrative method while a range of qualitative methods, for example, drawing and visual methods for younger children and an interview schedule for older children have been developed for use with (grand)sons depending on age, preference and competencies. One of us (Violetta) is Polish speaking; she translated the research instruments into Polish, carried out the interviews in Polish and translated them into English. The interviews with the grandfathers were carried out in Poland.

First, it is necessary to say something about the concepts of generation and transmission before we turn to the study of fathers in the two intergenerational studies.

The concept of generation and intergenerational transmission

In times of significant change generation becomes an important lens for understanding differential relations between age cohorts and life course phases and statuses. Moreover, generational relations and tensions vary by country and culture and they also vary according to the field in which they occur. Bourdieu points to the significance of the idea of generation within the field of education, suggesting that the mere fact of experiencing the educational system in different periods means that people will get less out of their qualifications than the previous generation (Bourdieu 1996, p100-1 cited in McLeod and Thomson 2009). The British grandparents in the Four Generation study occupy the status of the ‘generation of abundance’ (Attias-Donfut 1995); they grew up in the golden age of post-war Britain with high rates of employment, a robust welfare state and educational opportunities following the 1944 Education Act. Some working class origin grandfathers benefited educationally and were upwardly occupationally mobile (compared with their own fathers). Such occupational mobility was less available to the current generation of British fathers despite the huge expansion in higher education in Britain.

As Mannheim (1952) suggests, generational time is not only about individuals occupying a similar historical location, it is also about the creation of collective cultures through which continuities and discontinuities are transmitted intergenerationally. Periods of slow change, he suggests, may produce a culture in which the young as collectivities look to their elders; in times of rapid change the old may be more receptive to the young; while the generation in the middle may experience themselves as 'stuck' (cited in McLeod and Thomson p110). Moreover such cultures express the tensions between synchronic and diachronic dimensions; the ways individuals make connections with others horizontally on the basis of belonging to the same age cohort while also relating to and responding to other generations across historical time (ibid.).

However, what passes between generations, or is passed on, is often taken for granted; transmission is embedded in routine everyday practices and relationships and so may not be recognised as such. The processes involved do *not* necessarily represent conscious projects or calculations in which individuals and groups engage, for the cultural transmission of class and family cultures can be implicit as well as explicit (Bernstein, 1996). This idea is also captured in the concept 'family habitus' (Bourdieu 1990). Habitus denotes a set of 'dispositions related to particular practices' which may lead to regularities in patterns of transmission across family generations (ibid.). Habitus may involve 'reasonable or commonsense behaviour' - forms of 'spontaneity without consciousness', carried out without reflection or fuss by people who are operating according to a 'practical logic', an embodied 'feel for the game' rather than an explicit plan or strategy (Bourdieu, 1977). In the sense that habitus involves 'produc[ing] history on the basis of history', the dispositions of individuals and groups are cumulative (p.56) and hence may become evident in a study that transcends family generations (Brannen 2006).

The concept of transmission, as with the concept of family practice (Morgan 1999), implies both actions and beliefs. Following Finch and Mason (1993), cultures do not determine transmission; they are created and recreated in the **transmission processes of giving and receiving resources** and as a consequence of a variety of conditions and considerations. Culture is the bundle of meanings which are part of practices and which are transmitted as families over time hold on to, enhance and deplete resources. Cultural transmission also creates, reproduces and transmits family identities. Cultures are not stable; they change over the life course as family members and different generations seek to differentiate themselves from one another. While parental practices and the values accorded to them may be transmitted, that which is transmitted may alter as each generation makes its own mark upon what has been passed on to it (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997). In this process ambivalences may be generated as a new generation uses resources passed on, as in the case of high educational aspirations, to adopt dispositions and habits which differ from those of previous generations.

Moreover, when one considers broad processes of cultural and other forms of transmission in families over time, it is also necessary to pose theoretical questions about whose 'interests' govern this transmission, especially where material and educational transfers are concerned. Thus a strong investment may be elevated to a belief in safeguarding a family heritage especially in families who possess considerable material capital and who seek to reproduce their social class position. A particularly strong investment in the transmission of a sense of cultural and personal identity may be evident also among those who fear the loss of their cultural identities,

Comment [JB2]: I have deleted here as I do not get on to this term until next para

Comment [s3]: Again, I think the term "resources" here is being used too vaguely. I

as in the case of those who have left their countries of origin and migrated to a new country (Delcroix 2000).

Concepts relevant to processes of intergenerational transmission include aspirations, values, world views, domestic skills and taken for granted ways of behaving. Bengston et al (2002) highlight three types of intergenerational influence: status inheritance; social learning; and parent-child relations. Parents' socio-economic status plays a key role in the transmission of values and aspirations (Bengston et al 2002); through the internalization of parents' outlooks on life; through communication practices (Bernstein 2000); through investments in children's human capital (Bourdieu 1986, 1990; Vincent and Ball 2006). Children's inheritance from parents is also individual as children model themselves or seek to identify with and differentiate themselves from one or both parents through bodily and visual forms of (dis)identification (Mason 2008). Issues of gender identifications are also relevant here. In addition, the emotional quality of parent-child relationships plays a part; directly through psychological support and closeness and, indirectly, through mediated constraints such as low socio-economic status.

As discussed above, the exploration of processes of transmission is made possible methodologically when several family generations are investigated. It is important to consider also that transmission is a bi-directional process, both up and down the generations. As also already noted, it is shaped in particular social, economic and historical contexts. Thus grandparents speak from their current life course phase and the present historical moment as they witness their own sons' parenting and look back with the benefit of hindsight on their past experiences as fathers. Contemporary fathers, on the other hand, speak from their present life course phase and current responsibilities. Historical period is therefore confounded with life course phase influencing beliefs about family practices and obligations. Moreover, given that in empirical research family practices such as parenting are typically accessed through the research interview, they generate 'accounts' and justifications which need also to be interpreted in relation to the research encounter.

Before turning to the studies of the transmission of fathering it is important to outline some features of the contemporary UK context in which fathers are situated.

The changing social context of fatherhood in Britain

In Britain, the bourgeois or strong breadwinner model dominated the last century, based on the ideals of a male breadwinner family and the mother as the primary caregiver in the home (Lewis, 1992). In the post-Second World War period, companionate marriage and women's the relegation of women to full-time housewifery weakened men's links to their children (Gillis 2000). In practice though, the breadwinner *ideal* of the husband as the sole earner, to which much social prestige was attached, was rarely achieved except in middle class families; mothers have long contributed to income generation, albeit often on a discontinuous and part-time basis (Brannen et al 2004). In contrast with mothers, fathers' employment has remained overwhelmingly continuous, full time and allied to the role of main breadwinner, with contemporary research continuing to report this (Warin et al, 1999; Lewis, 2000; Brannen et al 2004; Brannen et al 2004; O'Brien and Shelmit, 2003).

Comment [s4]: This phrase needs to be explained.

What of the contemporary context in which men father? There is some evidence including time use data which suggest that fathers have become more involved with their children. From the 1980s, with the growth in mothers' employment (notably those with young children), men took more responsibility in the home and for younger children (O'Brien and Shelmit, 2003), albeit such adaptation involved a time lag between the rise in women's employment and men's increased responsibility (Gershuny 2001:198). However, mothers still spend more time with children (Lader et al 2006). What fathers do with children has been much less investigated and may have been subject to less change. On the other hand, both parents report devoting more of their time to their children, compensating for the time lost through employment (O'Brien and Shelmit, 2003) in accordance with the new 'professional parenting' norms.

Comment [s5]: Please explain

Comment [s6]: Could you refer to some literature on this?

Comment [JB7R6]: This is all time use data I think. Are there any references in your work or other papers?

Any behavioural change among fathers needs to be interpreted in context, in particular the restructuring of the British labour market from the 1970s. This has had a big impact on the lives of some groups of men. The major growth areas of the economy have been in non-manual work and in the service sector, providing employment opportunities that are disproportionately taken up by women. The decline in manual work, especially unskilled jobs, has eroded the employment opportunities of some working class men and limited their potential to become 'family providers'. The low skilled, low paid service jobs that have replaced the old manual jobs, many in manufacturing, have instead been taken up by the new migrants, especially from Eastern Europe. During this period reference is made to the 'crisis of the breadwinner father' (Gillis, 2000).

Another characteristic of the contemporary social context, evident in the last decade, has been the continuing pattern of fathers' long working hours both for the highest and lowest socio-economic groups: at 50 plus hours on average (Warren 2002), UK has one of the highest proportions of men working long hours of all EU countries (cited in O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003) while fathers work longer hours than men without children (Lader et al, 2006). This has occurred despite the introduction of limited family friendly employment policies which are more effective in the public sector (see Wood et al 2003 for the health care sector). For example, significant differences have been found in rates of take up of paternity leave by occupational status: 27% for managers and professionals as opposed to 14% of manual workers (Smeaton 2006). Typically men are penalized if they try to adapt to family needs (Gambles et al 2007); for working hours are largely constrained by employers' expectations (Fagan 2001a; Perrons 2003). Moreover flexibility is limited in many manual jobs since the work cannot be taken home (Houstan and Walmsley 2003).

Some studies have found that the most egalitarian fathers in terms of shared household and child-care work are those in households where both parents work full time (O'Brien and Shelmit, 2003). On the other hand, research suggests that fathers (and mothers) who work long hours feel that they lack sufficient time with their children and that long hours negatively affect relationships, including with adolescent children (Milkie et al., 2004; Crouter et al., 2001). Working atypical hours, especially Sunday working, appears to affect time spent with children and also the activities such as reading, playing and homework help (La Valle et al., 2002).

On the other hand, as cases in the Four Generation Study demonstrate, a lack of employment prospects can provide an opportunity for some working class men to become full time carers

and/ or engage positively in ‘hands on fathering’ (Brannen and Nilsen 2006), challenging hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell 2005).

Despite these trends, British public policy has been slow to address fatherhood beyond an insistence that fathers take on the financial responsibility of their children, notably in the context of separation and divorce, with young fathers becoming a new focus for policy attention under the last Labour government (DfES, 2007a and b). In the past, public policy has ignored gender and more recently has placed emphasis upon parents as ‘workers’ and on parenting as a ‘professional’ project. The result is that it has ignored the context in which parenting especially for fathers is carried out. This is in marked contrast to the public debate on mothers where the focus continues to be on the deleterious consequences of their employment for children.

Fatherhood in the Four Generations Study

The analysis of this study extended over three generations (great grandfathers, grandfathers and fathers) and suggested both change and continuity in fatherhood. It suggested changes in the timetabling of fatherhood in men’s life course. The middle, post war generation stood out from the older and younger generations in becoming fathers at a younger age and in having a shorter transition phase so that marriage, parenthood and labour market transitions all occurred within a very few years. In contrast, the current generation achieved fatherhood over a longer period and via a pattern of staggered life course transitions *before* they embarked on fatherhood. This trend is reflected in public discourses which prescribe the ideal conditions in which it is ‘fitting’ for contemporary men to become fathers, that is, after they have completed education, found work, got married and established themselves on the housing ladder.

Comment [s8]: Could you give an example of this?

In examining men’s accounts of fatherhood/ing and changes in patterns of breadwinning over the generations, the study suggested that some models permeate all generations, notably the work-focused father. However among the current generation of men in higher status jobs, we found that long hours, a sense of increased job insecurity and work intensification (Webster 2004) meant that they invested considerable effort and time in paid work and had less time for family life than they might have done had they been born a generation earlier. While they reported that involvement with their children was very important to them, their work was a major constraint on this. For the older generations of better qualified men including skilled workers, their working hours conformed to what was then considered ‘the normal working day’ (nine to five). While these men described themselves as ‘family men’ their involvement was constrained by the mores governing masculinity at the time. By contrast for the current generation of fathers, the decline in job opportunities for unskilled men at the bottom of the occupational and class hierarchy, together with the rise in mothers’ employment, provided new opportunities for greater involvement in the care of their children.

From the twelve four generation families, we identified four cases of ‘hands on’ fathers, all but one from the current generation. The hands on fathers had spent some time caring for their children on a full-time basis. These fathers all lacked qualifications. We focus here on one of these cases. Nick was born in 1976, a third son in a family of five; he grew up in London and moved with his parents and four siblings to the countryside in his teens. He and his father and grandfather left school early without qualifications; the oldest and youngest generation missed large amounts of schooling (the oldest because of the Second World War and the youngest

because the family was constantly in search of housing). All married young and had children young though only Nick became a father in his teens (aged 18). Unlike his father and grandfather, in the 1990s Nick was no longer deviant in having a child outside marriage; he married on the eve of his second child's birth. Nick did not join the labour market until he was forced to find a job under the New Deal for Young People when his youngest child was nearly 5.

Nick demonstrates a strong commitment to care and, as yet, a weak work ethic. Nick used his lack of paid work as an opportunity to do other things including the chance to share in his children's upbringing on an equal basis with his partner. Such decisions were unheard of during the time when his parents and grandparents were bringing up children. His model of fathering represents a radical change within his family. However Nick's innovative practice is not only about fathering, it is also about himself. Seen in the context of broader family relations, Nick's project is transformative (Bertaux and Thompson 1997) and it also contains elements of reparation – in the way he seeks to provide for his own children 'better' conditions than those he experienced as a child. Nick's account is suggestive of a 'personal project' reflecting the trend of many young people in the West who seek to express and develop themselves in ways unthinkable in previous generations. Nick and his brothers set up a band when they moved to the countryside. Later, Nick turned to painting and art. Nick described developing relational skills and a positive sense of self which he drew upon both as a father and in other relationships. Significantly, his first job was in customer services (in a supermarket). Nick proved therefore to be an innovator in his family in several ways and was very far from being a 'victim' of the changing world of work. At the point of interview, the fact that Nick's young wife also took on some of the breadwinning - indeed she appeared more committed to paid work than Nick – was also enabling.

Cultural and structural features of employment and labour markets, gender relations and family life shape men's identities and how men act as fathers. They affect individuals and families differently. In the study we show that in some families the move is in a progressive direction while, in others, fathering/hood takes a step back to an earlier generational (traditional) model (Brannen et al 2004). On the other hand, cultural transmission is a subtle process so that each generation puts its own mark upon that which was passed on to it (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997). Nick's account of fathering contrasts with those of his father and grandfather. On the other hand, it is also clear that the two older generations of men were very supportive of their sons in many material and practical ways – they 'backed' their sons, suggesting powerful forces of transmission as well as change within this family. While the two older men interpreted our interview questions on fatherhood largely in terms of 'breadwinning', Nick ignored this aspect. But the fact that for his generation, the work ethic, in its traditional sense, may not have been as strong as it was in earlier times (Bauman 1998) is only part of the story.

The case of Nick also draws attention to the *legitimacy* of new cultural resources whereby men's active and equal involvement in their children's lives is, in Finch's terms, 'the proper thing to do' (Finch 1989). For Nick used the decline in traditional labour market opportunities available to men of his social class to bring about change in his family practices, albeit the state took away the means to do this [see Lewis 2000; Henwood 2001]. Nick and the other 'hands on fathers' in the study engaged in fathering as a meaningful and rewarding activity – involving relational and expressive aspects of care as well as fathering as 'doing'. In reflecting upon Nick and his family, we would agree with Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame (1997) in their discussion of the agency-

structure dilemma that the deployment of a new resource is key to understanding agency and gives a new slant to understanding ‘determination’:

‘...socio-structural components may be found in those decisions and acts apparently most clearly powered by will.. the idea that a life trajectory may be determined – or rather, conditioned – much more easily by the supplying of a resource than by the imposition of a constraint lends an entirely new content to the concept of determination: one which includes both the socio-structural dimension and praxis’ (p95). For Nick, a new model of fathering constituted such a resource and was transformative for his identity.

Fatherhood and migration

As in the Four Generations Study, there are themes of both continuity and change in the transmission of patterns of fatherhood/ fathering between the Polish fathers and grandfathers in the second study, suggesting similarities and dissimilarities across the two studies.

The Polish grandfather and father generations living in Poland are both similar to and different from their British counterparts in the study just discussed. Born around the time of the Second World War, most grandfathers grew up in rural settings with strong ties with the land; when they had children several continued to be part time farmers working small plots of land but, unlike their fathers, worked in other occupations. Like their British counterparts they lived in times of high employment which prevailed under communism in Poland. However, the arrival of a market economy in the late 1990s disturbed the equilibrium of ‘jobs for life’ (many of which were in the state sector), particularly for their sons. Unlike their British counterparts, under communism women were expected to be in employment (often full time) including when they had children. Like their British counterparts, the grandfathers’ educational and occupational statuses varied; occupations included bus driver, policeman, engineer and builder. Also, like their British counterparts, marriage came relatively early in the life course and children followed within a year of marriage. Family size was also small, especially compared with the generation in Poland which came before. In contrast to the British working class men in the Four Generation Study however, these fathers appear to have had greater access to educational opportunities; upper secondary education, vocational training, and higher education (including the opportunity to go to university later in the life course on a part-time basis). Another difference is that in Poland it was not uncommon to build a family house and for other male family members to be involved in this enterprise. This reflects local traditions and the local context of semi rurality but also the political context in which under communism mortgages were difficult to obtain and loans were regarded as risky; building materials were rarely available and could only be accessed through their (state) employers.

Especially for the Polish fathers born in the 1970s who migrated to the UK, contextual change is much more emblematic: the political changes that occurred at the end of the 1990s with the transition to a market economy were followed in 2004 by Poland’s entry into the European Union. These changes in turn brought in train the migration of a cohort of young Poles, many of whom came to work in the UK. Even more so than their fathers, this generation had access to higher education; four of the eight men had Masters degrees, for example. However, once in the UK, Polish fathers experienced downward occupational mobility. For example, one father who was a PE teacher in Poland became a swimming pool attendant in Britain; another who was a

policeman in Poland became a caretaker and part-time taxi driver; yet another who was a qualified welder in Poland worked in the UK as a delivery driver.

For both Polish generations, the strongest theme in their discourses around fatherhood focused on the values of being a good provider for their families and the importance of a strong work ethic. If we were to look only at the generation of migrant fathers, we would not find this surprising in view of the fact that those who migrate bring with them a strong incentive to maximise their incomes. However, the importance of breadwinning and a belief in hard work also typified the Polish grandfathers' approach to life; these were the values they were most proud to have transmitted to their sons, together with the importance of teaching their sons practical skills such as fixing and building things. In part this is tied to a masculine work ethic, but it also reflects the necessity to be 'independent' in the context of not being able to afford to pay for specialist services, as several of the men interviewed pointed out. Such skills, they thought, would also serve their sons well later in life, and indeed this proved to be true in the context of their sons' migration and their need to turn their hand to whatever work they could find. Yet from present vantage points, namely an awareness that parents today behave rather differently and wit their sons and grandchildren now living in the UK, some grandfathers expressed regrets about not having spent more time with their children when they were young.

This is not to say that the Polish grandfathers and fathers did not define fathering in other ways also. However their reference to relational aspects and child-focussed/ professional models of fathering are rather muted; there were no cases of hands on fathers among the Polish grandfathers. A few grandfathers described occasions of taking care of the children and being there to talk to them although childcare, they said, was largely delegated to (employed) mothers. Several grandfathers mentioned spending more time working with their sons as they got older; they engaged in shared interests such as fixing cars, helping with construction and working on the farm. On the whole the relational aspects of parenting in terms of the expression of love or the pleasure of being a parent were little articulated by grandfathers. Some stressed the importance of inculcating family, religious and / or patriotic values while most mentioned the importance of encouraging sons in their education.

The Polish fathers in the UK largely supported their fathers' accounts; they confirmed the ways in which their fathers had influenced them, with one or two striking exceptions in which different perspectives were given. However, their own fathering practices and concerns in the new context were somewhat different from those of their fathers. For one thing, unlike their fathers, some of the migrant fathers were sole breadwinners and with one exception of a father who followed his wife to the UK, they were all main breadwinners. This in part reflects their inherited models of masculinity and their belief that childcare is the 'proper role' of women. But it also reflects the difficulties these parents experienced post migration; language barriers; problems of fitting jobs around children; lack of support networks in Britain; and lack of money to pay for childcare. In addition, they stressed it was important to have one parent on hand to look after children; this was motivated by a feeling that they needed to protect their children from what they saw as a hostile environment (a large multi ethnic city) and also the antagonism expressed towards migrants. Like their fathers, migrant fathers expressed high educational aspirations for their children regardless of their own level of educational achievements.

In general, they believed that their children would have better prospects in the UK compared to Poland, a belief which fuelled their motivation to work hard and helped them to deal with their loss in social status. Some fathers were actively involved in selecting schools for their children, prioritising Roman Catholic schools, which they saw as offering not only educational opportunities but also additional benefits such as 'strict discipline and Christian morality'; the latter they considered a reliable means to 'keep their children safe' and away from 'drugs and inappropriate lifestyles'. One striking issue which again relates to the families' status as new migrants is the concern that fathers expressed about ensuring that their children retained their cultural (Polish) roots. This involved ensuring children took part in Polish activities and cultural institutions - Saturday schools, churches and scouts. They also encouraged their children to speak Polish at home, organised extended summer holidays in Poland with their grandparents, and identified Polish friends for the children to spend time with.

For most fathers, the move to Britain represented a disruption to transmitted patterns of fatherhood. The following case is not atypical. Pawel C (aged 39, a university educated father of 3 children) resembles his own father in his concerns and values as a father. Both expressed a strong male work ethic, even entering similar occupations (driving buses and lorries) and engaging in similar political interests and expressing strong religious values. Pawel described working alongside his father building two family houses. However, Pawel is regretful about what he sees as the loss of old models of masculinity which were tied to men's work identities. '...there are no role models, no ideals of fathering'. Moreover he considers fatherhood to be a 'very neglected' topic; 'fathers are omitted'. When it comes to influencing his own children he feels that the 'old values' transmitted to him by his parents - that it is best to strive to have/ build your own house and to work for a state company - have been superseded. He then goes on: 'And nobody promotes simple fathers, for example, John the postman, or Frank the driver. These things are not shown or promoted. You can't hear about them. They live in their own quiet homes. Even in the church, I will probably use bad words here, but even the church doesn't promote role models which one would like to look up to as a father. I think that nothing much has changed here but times have changed drastically.' Pawel is at a loss in the new context. Locked in a vicious circle of long working hours, with no time to learn English and an unemployed wife putting pressure on him to spend more time with his children, he is fearful about advising his children to start a business or indeed about starting his own business. He is uncertain about influencing his sons to follow his path, namely to conform to his father's desire for him to go to university. Rather for Pawel, 'transformations' at the macro level have overtaken his own capacity to develop new ways of fathering; as Pawel says, the changes are 'happening so fast'.

This latter case stands in contrast to the case of Nick discussed earlier whose own identity and way of fathering represented a generational transformation in his family. Although Nick is an atypical case even in the British context, his case shows how new cultural resources in the form of a different model of fathering are embraced and the particular context in which this took place. The differential access to social welfare between migrant and nonmigrants in the UK would have mitigated against this form of fathering being open to Pawel, had he even considered it. None of the Polish fathers seeks Nick's model of hands on fathering. Moreover, as new migrants, they came to the UK to increase their income generation; a key part of their inheritance

from their fathers was to put great store by hard work. On the other hand, some of their accounts are suggestive of a relational or nurturing discourse of fathering.

For example, Stefan (aged 33, two young children, a delivery driver in the UK, trained as a welder in Poland) is the family's sole breadwinner. He wants to be different from his own father whose only way of influencing his children he says was through force (his father's story was a little different). Stefan seeks to be both a better provider and a better father in other ways also. He emphasises the importance of spending time with his children by limiting his working hours to a standard working day but at the same time, reflecting his father's practice, explicitly states that children and home are primarily his wife's responsibility. Yet Stefan presents himself as an understanding, patient and calm father who seeks to balance discipline with guidance; he says he explains things to his children, but also shouts at them and even smacks them if other methods are not effective. Significantly, he says he constantly reflects on ways to improve his skills as a father. In contrast to his own father who did not have any aspirations for his children, Stefan has ambitions; he says he 'searches for talents' in his three year old - buying him drums and a laptop. 'I want him to be able to manage in life as well as I do. But to be something more, so that he wouldn't be a van driver but the owner of the van. That's what I would like for him.... To be able to use a hammer and use a laptop. Because I can use a hammer, prepare wood for the fireplace but I can't use the computer.'

In conclusion

Based on evidence from two intergenerational studies of fathers, in this paper we have provided insights into the types of resources (grand) fathers provided for their own sons and the resources sons inherited from their fathers. The studies demonstrate how resources for and models of parenthood are passed on from older generations but also how new generations orient themselves to and seek to make their own mark on fatherhood in the current UK context. We have suggested how these are shaped by opportunities relating to social class and by migration. Both cultural and material resources can serve to facilitate or constrain men's parenting practices. Moreover they can forge horizontal connections within a generation, as in the creation of new fathering norms and practices, or reinforce vertical generational patterns and traditions of fathering.

The intergenerational perspective adopted in these studies proved to be a fruitful lens for examining change and continuity in the way fathers practice and talk about fathering. These studies suggest that hands on models of fathering are only likely to emerge under particular material and cultural conditions and that current trends in the labour market – relating to being a migrant (worker), low pay, long hours, job insecurity and work intensification - make this form of fathering difficult for many fathers.

By way of conclusion there are several points worth making about taking an intergenerational lens to parenthood. The first is that while normative accounts of parenthood are both prevalent in public and private discourses of family life – in the policy and professional arena but also among parents themselves - much of what parents do is routinised and habitual and not readily open to reflection. An intergenerational approach, through its focus on time, tends to highlight continuity and change across generations and often enables the interviewees reflect on the taken for granted. A focus upon normative discourses should not lead us therefore to overestimate the

amount of change that is occurring in parenting practices. At the discursive level, sometimes change may appear to be happening but what may be more decisive in creating change are the structural conditions as they impinge on individuals' lives at particular periods of time.

A second, related, point is that the intergenerational lens we adopted was attentive to social context and to historical context in particular. As discussed elsewhere, in studies which rely on interview methods and discursive forms of analysis there is a tendency for context to become invisible because the actors take it for granted in their narratives (Brannen and Nilsen 2002, Brannen et al 2002). Thus the approach used here not only serves to provide multiple perspectives on family relationships held by different generations and family members - in particular insights into the processes of giving and receiving paternal care - but also suggests the material and cultural conditions in which men's identities as fathers are formed and reformed. A study which examines intergenerational patterns of fathering in the context of migration has therefore to pay equal attention to the resources that migrants bring with them from their own families and countries; the new social spaces in which these fathers are seeking to bring up their children; and the resources which they are going to need in the UK context, whether from the state, employers or the community.

A third point is that an intergenerational framework on fathers sensitised us as social scientists to slippages in the conceptual language between fatherhood and fathering. On the one hand, 'fatherhood' is construed as an important social status and social institution, a concept which 'fits' with the experiences of many of the older British men and both older and current generations of Polish men. Among the older generations, employment as a male sphere, a strong commitment to the work ethic and a hegemonic ideology of masculinity combine to shape men's practices and experiences as 'good providers' and role models for their children. On the other hand, 'fathering' denotes a set of proactive practices and includes nurturing or relational aspects of parenting. This latter aspect of the concept of fathering fitted with accounts of many of the current generation of fathers, including some Polish migrant fathers, even though they experienced major constraints upon the time they could spend with their children and also retained a strong gender ideology concerning motherhood. Again, this points to the tension that exists between normative ideas of parenting and habitual practices.

While fathers' accounts suggested expressive or nurturing aspects of parenting, the concept of 'childcare' is one which offers a poor fit with many fathers' lived experiences. Therefore 'hands on fathering' is a concept we have applied here rather than 'childcare'. For current fathers in their pursuit of 'good fathering', their aim was to spend (more) time with their children. The concept of childcare in much social science, as among fathers, still connotes mothering. Yet coaching four young sons in sporting activity several nights a week, as Nick's grandfather did, or teaching his son practical skills, as Pawel's father did, can be thought of as 'care', even if we or the fathers did not consider it to be so. For care as a notion attracts different connotations and meanings over time (Waerness 2000) and has been associated in men's minds with the antithesis of masculinity. Moreover, care is denoted as those social practices and institutions that we *as researchers* consider care to be at any one moment in time. In exploring fathering through the accounts of both fathers and mothers from different generations, the gendered aspects of care need to be viewed through the lens of history – the notions and practices that guide people's lives and life course in different family and historical contexts (Brannen and Nilsen 2006). In seeking

to recast debates about parenting we need therefore to be careful neither to overestimate nor to underestimate what fathers do with and for their children, albeit many of their practices remain firmly grounded in 'traditional' male gender identities. Importantly we need also to consider anew the resilience of the concept of childcare as reserved largely for the role and practices of mothers.

References

Bauman, Z. (1998) *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bengtson, V L, Biblarz, T J and Roberts, R E L (2002) *How Families still Matter: A longitudinal study of youth in two generations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bernstein, B. (1996) *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique*. London: Taylor and Francis

Bertaux, D. and Bertaux-Wiame, I. (1997) 'Heritage and its lineage: a case history of transmission and social mobility over five generations' in D Bertaux and P Thompson (eds) *Pathways to social class: a qualitative approach to social mobility* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bertaux, D and Thompson, P in Bertaux D and P. Thompson (eds) *Pathways to social class: a qualitative approach to social mobility*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Bourdieu, P (1986) The forms of capital. In J. E. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory for Research in the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brannen, J. and Nilsen, A. (2002) Young people's time perspectives: from youth to adulthood. *Sociology*, 36(3) 513-537.

Brannen, J., Lewis, S., Nilsen, A. and Smithson, J. (2002) *Young Europeans. Work and Family Life: Futures in Transition*. London: Routledge.

Brannen, J (2006) Cultures of intergenerational transmission in four generation families, *Sociological Review* 54(1): 133-155

Brannen, J, Moss, P and Mooney, A (2004) *Working and Caring over the Twentieth century: Change and continuity in four- generation families* ESRC Future of Work Series, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Brannen, J (2006) Cultures of intergenerational transmission in four generation families, *Sociological Review* 54(1): 133-155

Brannen, J and Nilsen, A (2006) From fatherhood to fathering: transmission and change among fathers in four-generation families, *Sociology*, 40, 335-352

Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Department for Education and Skills (2007a) *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families*. London: DFES and HM Treasury.

Department for Education and Skills (2007b) *Every Parent Matters*. Nottingham: DFES.

Finch, J. and Mason, J. (1993) *Negotiating Family Responsibilities*, London: Routledge.

Delcroix, C (2000) The transmission of life stories from ethnic minority fathers to their children in C Attias-Donfut and S Arber (eds) *The Myth of Generational Conflict: The Family and the State in Ageing Societies*, London: Routledge/ESA

Gambles, R, Lewis, S and Rapoport, R (2007) 'Evolutions and approaches to equitable divisions of paid work and care in three European countries: A multi-level challenge' in R Crompton, S Lewis and C Lyonette (eds.) *Women, Men, Work and Family in Europe* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 17-34.

Fagan, C (2001a) 'Time, money and the gender order: Work orientations and working-time preferences in Britain' *Gender, Work and Organization* 8 (3):239-266.

Finch, J. (1989) *Family Obligations and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gershuny, J (2001) *Changing times* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gillis, J (2000) Marginalisation of fatherhood in western countries *Childhood*, 17 (2) 225-238.

Houston, DM and Waumsley, JA (2003) *Attitudes to Flexible Working and Family Life* Bristol/York: The Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Lader, D., Short, S. and Gershuny, J. (2006) *The Time Use Survey, 2005: How we spend our time*, Newport: Office of National Statistics.

La Valle, I., Arthur, S., Millward, C., Scott, J. and Clayden, M. (2002) *Happy families? Atypical work and its influence on family life*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Lewis, J (1992) Gender and the development of welfare regimes *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2(3), 159-173

Lewis, C (2000). *A man's place is in the home: Fathers, and families in the UK*. York: Rowntree Foundation

Mannheim, K. (1952) *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

McLeod, J and Thomson R (2009) *Researching social change*, London: Sage

Milkie, M.A., Mattingly, M.J., Nomaguchi, K.M., Bianchi, S.M. and Robinson, J.P (2004) 'The Time Squeeze: Parental Statuses and Feelings About Time With Children, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66: 739.

Mason, J (2008) Tangible affinities and the real life fascination of kinship *Sociology* 1 29-47

Morgan, D. H. J. (1999) Risk and family practices: Accounting for change and fluidity in family life. In E. B. Silva and C. Smart (eds) *The New Family*. London: Sage Publications.

O'Brien, M and Shelmit, I (2003) Working fathers: Earning and caring Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

Smeaton, D (2006) *Dads and their Babies: A household analysis* Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Perrons, D. (2003) 'The new economy, labour market inequalities and the work life balance' in R. Martin and P.S. Morrison (eds) *Geographies of Labour Market Inequality* London: Routledge. pp. 129-148.

Ribbens McCarthy, J, Edwards, R, and Gillies, V (2000) Moral tales of the child and the adult: Narratives of contemporary family lives under changing circumstances, *Sociology*, 34(4) 785-803

Thompson P (1995) Transmission between generations in J Brannen and M O'Brien (eds) *Childhood and Parenthood: Proceedings of the International Sociological Association Committee for Family research Conference* London: Institute of Education

Vincent C and Stephen Ball (2006) *Childcare, Choice and Class Practices* . London, RoutledgeFalmer. and Ball 2006

Waerness, K (2000) *Hvem er hjemme? Essays om hverdagslivets sosiologi*. (Anybody home? Essays in the sociology of everyday life). Bergen:Fagbokforlaget

Warin, J, Solomon, Y, Lewis, C and Langford, W (1999) *Fathers, work and family life* London: Family Policy Studies Centre.

Warren, T (2002) 'Gendered and classed working time in Britain: Dual-employee couples I higher/lower-level occupations', in G Crow and S Heath (eds.) *Social Conceptions of Time: Structure and process in work and everyday life* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 88-108.

Webster, J (2004) Working and living in the European knowledge society: the policy implications of developments in working life and their effects on social relations. Report for the project Infowork: Social cohesion, the organization of work and information and communication

technologies: Drawing out the lessons of the TSER Research Programme and Key Action on Socio-economic Research'

Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. London: Sage.

Wood, S. J., de Menezes, L. M. and Lasosa, A. (2003) 'Family-friendly management in Great Britain: Testing various perspectives' *Industrial Relations* 42 (2):221-250.

ⁱ This is a variation of the biographic-narrative approach (see Wengraf, 2000) in which each interview was divided into three parts. In the first, respondents were invited to give an account of their lives from childhood onwards, with a minimum of guidance and intervention from the interviewer. This provided an opportunity for the respondent to present his or her own *gestalt*. In the second part, the interviewer invited the respondent to elaborate on salient events or experiences that had figured in the initial narrative. Finally, using a more traditional semi-structured interview approach, additional questions were posed relating to the specific foci of the study. Interviews lasted on average three hours.

ⁱⁱ Great grand fathers' life expectancy was lower than for great grand mothers and so many had died