

Timescapes Conference

Understanding & Supporting
Families Through Time

Following Fathers: The experiences
and support needs of young dads

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timescapes

An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study



Background

- YLT aims to explore ‘what matters’ to young people
- Follow the key transition points in the participant’s lives
- Young fathers recruited into the study in 2010 – ‘Following Fathers’
- To better understand the diversity of young people’s lives and experiences

Young father statistics

- A quarter of young fathers are aged under 20, around a half are 20 to 25 and a further quarter are aged over 25 (Swann et al., 2003)
- Young fathers are generally defined as males under the age of 25 (Fatherhood Institute, 2010)
- True extent of young fatherhood remains unknown

Literature

- Risk factors associated with teen fathering
- The impact of teen fatherhood on personal outcomes
- Fatherhood images
- Fathers involvement with their children
- Parenting skills amongst young fathers

Further studies needed

- The voices of young fathers are still not adequately represented
- Lacking qualitative insights
- How the lives of teen fathers unfold over time is unknown
- Limited data on father's negotiating their dual status as both young people and parents
- Impact of governmental interventions on fathers needs further exploration

Sample and Methods

- 10 fathers
- Aged between 16-22 years old
- Varied circumstances and backgrounds
- Different stages of fatherhood
- Varied levels of access to their children
- In-depth qualitative interviews

Findings to date

1. Identities of young men
2. Father-child relationship
3. Relationship with the child's mother
4. Cross generational relationships
5. Professional support

Fatherhood identities

- Identities of young fathers are complicated
- Positive experiences
- Sense of loss
- Importance of family

Father-Child Relationships

- Children were the father's main priority
- Aspirations of good parenting
- 'New fatherhood' VS traditional fatherhood roles

Relationship with the child's mother

- Relationships with the child's mother were often fragile
- Father-child relationships tend to be mediated initially through the mother
- Relationship breakdown affected fatherhood status and fathering involvement
- Physical, emotional and financial strains resulted for young fathers

Cross generational relationships

- Significance of grandparents
- Tensions between the generations
- Conflicting experience for young fathers

Professional support

- Specialist support crucial
- Flexibility and empathetic approaches were key
- Mixed opinions regarding other professional services
- Surveillance VS support

Specialist Learning Mentor Background

- Teenage Pregnancy Team Leeds
- Lack of Engagement
- Funding and Partnership

My Experiences

- Young Men
- Professionals
- Dads group

Challenges

- Young Men
- Professionals
- Young Mothers

Policy and practice

- Dissemination
- Champions
- Position Statement

Conclusion

- Working with the risk factors. The Young men are 50% of the solution
- Dispel the Myths around 'feckless fathers' and look at the reality 'feckless professionals'
- Helps to produce a better society

References

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