Exploring the influence of intergenerational relations on the construction and performance of contemporary grandfather identities

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ABSTRACT

While research on grandparenthood has flourished in recent years, few studies have focused specifically on grandfathers. Existing knowledge is informed by uncritical and dated theoretical approaches or based on gender and generational biased data from women and grandchildren. As a result little is known about how men experience being a grandfather and construct their grandfather identities, or how intergenerational relationships influence this, particularly in the contemporary context. To gain more comprehensive knowledge about the influence of intergenerational relations on grandfather identities, 31 in-depths interviews and two participant observations were undertaken in the Lancaster District, UK, with men who are currently grandfathering. A key finding that emerged from the empirical data is that grandfathers perform a variety of different practices in various spaces and this is influenced by the quality and character of intergenerational relationships with both children and grandchildren. Diversity between the men's personal and familial circumstances influences men's involvement with grandchildren and where they grandfather, and consequently how they perform and construct their identities. This suggests that grandfather identities are multi-faceted, heterogeneous and not easily reducible to existing essentialist conceptions of grandfather identities.

This thesis further argues that a synthesis of multiple theories of identity construction adopted by human geographers, including practice, performativity and intergenerationality are required to interpret the empirical data, to generate critical understandings of contemporary grandfather identities and the influence of intergenerational relations on these identities; grandfather identities are analysed as practiced and relational identities. This reveals that in order to understand the nature of men's identities as grandfathers and the ways in which they are produced in

practice, the effects of their unique intergenerational relations with both grandchildren

and children, and their personal and familial contexts need to be understood.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND PLATES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Exploring contemporary grandfathering from a relational perspective

This thesis examines how intergenerational relations in the family, influence the construction and performance of grandfather identities in contemporary Britain. Several recent, yet currently disconnected developments, in academia and in wider public rhetoric, provide a rationale for this study. Significantly, there has been a proliferation of interest in grandparents and more nuanced understandings about their role in family life have been developed, particularly in the UK context (Clarke and Roberts, 2002; Dench and Ogg, 2002; Mann, 2007). The UK government for example, has continued to portray grandparent involvement as a positive influence on contemporary family life (Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2010; Home Office, 1998), the media has highlighted concerns about the lack of support the welfare state provides for grandparents who care for their grandchildren (Coughlan, 2009; Haurant, 2009), and multiple charity organisations are influencing the development of family policy and grandparents rights (e.g. Age UK; Grandparents Plus, The Grandparents Association).

Advancements in a number of interdisciplinary academic literatures also indicate that there is a renewed interest in grandparents, and debate centres on the effects of the social, demographic and economic trends that are structuring the contemporary social context and implicating grandparent involvement (Kemp, 2007; Uhlenberg and Kirby, 1998). The experience of being a grandparent in an everyday context and the way in which it is identified as a facet of identity, has received more limited attention (see

Reitzes and Mutran, 2004), although Kitzinger (1997) has stated that becoming a grandmother confirms a woman's identity and is an assurance of her existence.

1.1. Why grandfathers?

So what about men and their experience of grandfathering? Being a grandfather is clearly about being a grandparent and is shaped by all of the contextual trends implicating grandparents and what they do. While currently unacknowledged in an explicit way, these trends also affect men and how they grandfather. It is important that this is recognised in grandparent literatures because at an analytical level being a grandfather is a gendered and generational signifier that infers a specific identity differentiated by gender and generation. At present, there is a paucity of literature regarding grandfathers and the particulars of their roles, identities, practices and personal experiences; the literature that does exist is both dated, and divorced from the contemporary context, or is not specific to grandfathers. This is despite the growing interest in grandparenting in contemporary society discussed above, and that several studies have found that grandfathers' involvement in the lives of their grandchildren is equal to that of grandmothers' (Tinsley and Parke, 1987; Waldrop at al, 1999; Leeson and Harper, 2009) if not only different.

Bates (2009) attributes this dearth of interest in men, to issues with grandparenting research more generally. He states for example that existing empirical data foregrounds the views of grandmothers, parents and grandchildren, to the absence of grandfathers (Bates, 2009). Past studies justify this however by arguing that they have found that grandsons and granddaughters perceived their grandmothers to be more influential in their lives (Roberto and Stroes, 1992), while Baranowski and Schilmoeller (1991) argued that men were more difficult to recruit for studies on

family issues, creating a methodological bias in their findings. Family and kinship studies also suggest that gendered constructions of the family and family roles influence this lack of attention to men. Women are considered 'key keepers' in family life (Harper 2005) which has led to the neglect of interest and theorisation about men and their family roles more generally (Morgan, 2004). Furthermore, more powerful forms of masculinity and male identity ('prototype' or 'hegemonic' masculinities) have been more strongly associated with paid work (Connell, 1995; Wilton and Davies, 1995), a space traditionally constructed as a gendered binary to the home (McDowell, 1999).

At the same time, grandparent is considered synonymous with 'old' to the extent that they have become sociological 'forgottens' (Attias-Donfut and Segalen, 2002). While not all grandfathers define themselves as old, this association and a lack of theorisation about older men and their ageing more generally (Calasanti 2004; Hearn 2007; van den Hoonard 2007), has contributed to their absence. Cunningham-Burley's (1986; 2001) more negative portrayals of grandfathers as distant, disinterested and uninvolved figures in family life (Cunningham-Burley, 1986; 2001) have also proved pervasive in that so far they have not been warranted further academic attention.

While these findings cannot be ignored, several recent papers have now begun to highlight this absence and establish grandfathers as an important contemporary social category, significantly suggesting that the roles and relationships of grandfathering and their meaning and significance to men are being underestimated (Mann 2007; Mann et al 2009). This argument is supported by more recent findings that men are involved in family life (Leeson and Harper, 2009) and also through a convincing review of the existing, albeit limited literatures focused on grandfathers (Mann 2007).

4

These papers highlight that earlier research about grandparenting is gender biased towards women and has been approached through a feminised lens (Scraton and Holland, 2006) that belies the complexities and realities of grandfathering, as a role and identity in its own right. Ando (2005) and Mann (2007) for example both argue that grandparenting is differentiated by gender and age, to the extent that masculinities and age identities contribute to a qualitatively different experience of grandparenting for men in comparison to women. Davidson et al (2003, pg 178 – 179) go as far as to suggest that:

> An important and potentially paradoxical new role for older men is that of grandfather. It is paradoxical because, on the one hand, men may be exhibiting a 'gentler', more nurturing relationship with a grandchild than they had with their own children but, on the other hand, may still be viewed, and view themselves, as having the traditional patriarchal role as 'sage' or 'wise man'.

Clearly, academic interest in grandfathers as a social category in their own right is beginning to flourish; men's identities are theoretically interesting and paradoxical and being a grandfather is an important role many men can now expect to experience at some point in their lives. Therefore while existing knowledge about grandfathering is based on limited and dated empirical evidence and lacks theoretical rigour, emerging scholarship provides a basis from which to develop questions about the contemporary experiences of grandfathering and how this influences men's identities particularly in the contemporary context. It is these identifications that have resulted in the development of the research questions for this study (see Section 1.3).

1.2. Framing a study of grandfather identities

Chapter Two of the thesis confirms the argument that there is a lack of adequate theorisation about grandfather identities in social science literature to date. This

prompts the development of an appropriate conceptual framing that can fully capture the complexities and multiplicities of grandfather identities that men construct, as well as the practices and performances of grandfathering that inform their identities. A series of theoretical approaches developed by social geographers are deemed most relevant to grandfather identities and are therefore reviewed in the literature chapters. It is evident that being a grandfather is an identity because it defines a generational position (biological and sometimes social) and also consists of various intersecting axes of difference including gender and age that affect the experience of grandfathering (Ando 2005; Mann 2007), and are determined by what men do. However it is also important to consider how existing theoretical approaches to identity can generate more nuanced understandings of identity construction, as well as develop a conceptual framing that accounts for how grandfather identities are constructed and performed in contemporary societies.

The conceptual framing that emerges from the review includes theories relevant to identity construction, starting with Connell's (1995) theory of multiple masculinities, which suggests that gender, is a social practice. This is followed by a review of Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) performative reconceptualisations of both gender and age. I argue that this approach nuances Connell's (1995) theorisations of gender and age as social practices by exploring the performative nature of identities. Finally I suggest that these conceptualisations of identity can be complemented by intergenerationality (Hopkins and Pain 2007) which is of relevance to grandfather identities and forms the development of a unique conceptual approach to understanding familial identities. Connell (1995) and Butler's (1990; 1993) theories in particular emphasise the importance of practice and performance in the doing of gendered identities and this

prompts an exploration of what men do with grandchildren and how this informs their identities. Practices are a useful way of examining grandfathering as action-orientated (Bates, 2009) and are empirically accessible through narrative discussion and observation. Narratives however are deemed most important as the main form of data for this research because the men's relationships with grandchildren and how they construct this as influential on their identities and practices are the central focus of the thesis questions presented in Section 1.3.

There has also been a marked development in social geography that has challenged existing perspectives about how age and generational identities are theorised and understood. Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue for a more relational approach to age identities that encompasses wider understandings of age as located in the lifecourse, as intersectional, and as intergenerational. In particular, intergenerationality has been developed as a critical and effective concept for examining the identities of young people and children, not only to add layers of understanding to the ways in which their identities are produced in relation to other generational identities such as parents, but also about how their identities are produced in specific contexts and at particular times as a result of their generational position in childhood (Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2007).

A common critique of this approach however, is that research has focused almost exclusively on the implications of generational difference for young people and children (Costanzo and Hoy, 2007; Maxey, 2009), with more limited focus on the family, parents and extra-familial positions such as grandparents (e.g. Aitken, 2000; 2009; Holloway, 1998; Hopkins, 2006; Vanderbeck, 2007). Despite their increased implication in family life, grandparents, (but more specifically, grandfathers) have

received little attention, including by social geographers (Tarrant, 2010). I argue that intergenerationality is also required to make sense of how intergenerational relations and belonging to a particular generational group such as grandfather influences men's practices of identity later in the lifecourse.

The thesis will therefore synthesise these theories and explore how they can work together to create a more comprehensive and powerful analytical framework that not only accounts for how contemporary grandfather identities are constructed, performed and influenced by intergenerational relations but also refines existing approaches to identity construction in social geography. It does this by arguing that in order to understand how generational identities are produced in practice as Connell (2000) and Butler (1990; 1993) suggest they are, it is also important to understand the nature of an individual's intergenerational relations. Becoming a grandfather is an identity typically associated with, and acquired, later in the lifecourse and the processual approaches of the concepts account for how identities are not only performed at particular times and places, but are also relationally produced.

1.3. Aims and research questions

The empirical aim of this thesis is to explore how grandfather identities are practiced and performed, and to evaluate the influence of intergenerational relations in the family on contemporary grandfathering and grandfather identities using multiple theories to interpret the data. It is anticipated that the conceptual approaches that will frame the data analysis (developed particularly in review chapters Three and Four) will account for the various factors that shape grandfathering and grandfathering identities such as the quality and character of their intergenerational relationships, the men's personal and familial circumstances, and the contexts within which they

grandfather. Four research questions have been formulated that attend to this aim and have informed the research design and process:

1. What practices are men who are grandfathers engaging in with their grandchildren and where do they grandfather?

2. What are the meanings and significance of these practices to the men?

3. How do the men's intergenerational relationships and personal and familial circumstances influence the practices and identities revealed in questions 1 and 2?

4. How does the empirical data collected from men who are grandfathers inform existing theoretical approaches to identity construction in social geography?

In order to answer these questions I had to deal with a number of challenges; methodological, conceptual and analytical. Initially however these questions informed the methodological design of the research. Grandfathering research is empirically limited so one of the key contributions of this thesis is a data set that just includes men who are currently grandfathering, to avoid a feminised bias to the data. It should be mentioned that by foregrounding men's voices, this thesis is not an attempt to reify their voices over young people and women. This would be to the detriment of important work that has significantly challenged individuals previously considered subordinate. Examining men, of a particular gender and generation means this research has feminist sympathies. It critically examines the doing of difference as a grandfather and the implications of their gendered and generational identities that are inherently relational in nature.

For convenience sake, men have been recruited from the Lancaster District area in the north west of England. Due to the nature of the research the methodology is qualitative in approach because it seeks to understand the reasons behind the variance

in men's performances of grandfather identities as a result of their intergenerational relationships with other generations and their personal and familial circumstances. This is also appropriate because the data is not intended to be representative of grandfathering as a whole but to provide evidence of the diversities of grandfathering and the complexity of intergenerationality and its individual influences. The methods and methodology and justifications for its design are discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.

In order to demonstrate how the research questions and various challenges were met and dealt with to inform the outcome of the research, the following section outlines the thesis structure and provides a brief overview.

1.4. Thesis structure and overview

Chapter Two outlines the contemporary UK context within which grandfathers are now grandfathering. This is important because according to existing debates in grandparent research this context shapes and influences grandparenting (as Section 1.1 outlines) and therefore consequently shapes and influences grandfathering, grandfather identities and intergenerational relations with grandchildren. In particular the key trends influencing the age of grandfathers, family structures and the geographies of grandfathering are explored. Chapters Three and Four explore the insights that practice, performativity and intergenerationality can separately add to understandings of contemporary grandfather identities and how they are informed by intergenerational relationships, concluding that multiple theories of identity are required to account for the complexity of grandfather identity construction. In each chapter concepts relevant to grandfathers are identified from each literature and are discussed, as well as illustrative examples of how they have been applied in practice

to empirical research. Chapter Five describes, and provides a rationale for the research methods used, in the field and to analyse the data. It also considers my reflexivity and multiple positionalities as a young female researcher researching men of an older generation throughout the research process, as well as issues that needed to be taken into consideration when undertaking research with older men.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight present analysis of the empirical findings and are structured to respond to the first three research questions and aims. Chapter Six particularly attempts to answer the first of the research questions but as a result of the outcomes of the analysis is structured around the various contexts in which men practice grandfathering, from the body to spaces created by communication technologies. This not only demonstrates that men want to be involved in interactions with their grandchildren but also highlights that the variation in practices between the men in the sample is spatially differentiated and creates difference between grandfather identities. Chapter Seven explores why men want to be involved in relationships with their grandchildren, considering the meaning and significance of being a grandfather for men. This reveals that the character and quality of intergenerational relationships also varies across the sample. Chapter Eight builds on the findings of the previous chapters by exploring how the men's intergenerational relationships influence their practices and consequently their grandfather identities. This chapter differs from the previous two chapters in that it explores the nuances of these influences using four specific vignettes chosen from the research sample. This aims to test the strength of the con ceptual synthesis and also to develop deeper understandings about the diversities across and within the sample of participants. It reveals that the men must negotiate various barriers and dynamics of their contexts

and relationships with other generations in order to perform as an involved grandfather.

Finally Chapter Nine discusses the main conclusions and findings, responding in particular to research question four by reflecting on the quality and usefulness of using multiple theories to understand not only grandfather identities but also identity construction in social geography more generally. I also reflect upon the research design, discussing where the research could have been different, as well as suggesting potential avenues for future research and implications for policy.

CHAPTER TWO: The twenty first century grandfather

2. Introduction

It is true that there is a paucity of literature that focuses on grandfathers themselves as Chapter One argues. This invisibility is further replicated in official data, especially in the UK which has no structures in place to collect data specific to family structures, including those that go beyond the parental generation and the household. This raises questions about why this may be the case and answers may be found in the existing grandparent literature, which is revealing of the complexities of the contemporary context in which men are grandfathering and constructing their identities. This context, contributes to the difficulty in defining who a grandfather is and as Chapter Three argues has consequences for the ways in which men construct their identities in multiple and varying ways. This has the potential to further influence the practices they engage in with their grandchildren, and also affect the strength and quality of intergenerational relations.

This chapter focuses on the key social and demographic trends that are shaping the current UK context and are implicating grandparents, and subsequently grandfathers, in family life. In particular, the increased diversity of age and family structures are discussed as well as contemporary geographies of grandparenting because these are considered to either facilitate or restrict grandparent involvement in family life and construct increasingly diverse identities. There will also be discussion of how these geographies are being potentially expanded as a result of technological advancements. This chapter also acts as a precursor to developing the conceptual framing of the thesis, a frame that suggests context is a key structure in the construction and

performance of grandfather identities. Finally, to prove the point about paucity, literatures that focus specifically on grandfathers are reviewed.

2.1. The context of grandparenting

2.1.1. Age and familial structures of the twenty first century

The 21st century family is demographically diverse in comparison to 100 years ago. Several researchers have argued that this is a result of key trends shaping an increasingly dynamic social context. In particular, grandparents are more likely to know their grandchildren and even great-grandchildren because of increased longevity, (both men and women are living longer as a result of medical advances), and alterations to age population structures, affected by lower fertility (Kemp 2007). The form and characters of families are also increasingly diverse because of higher incidences of divorce which are creating fragmented families, but also because of re-marriage, the creation of step-families and the increased prevalence of co-habitation (Bengston and Martin, 2001; Kemp, 2007). These societal trends have implications for contemporary family life and have marked effects on grandparent involvement.

As the population has aged, more than ever before in history it is likely that grandparents will play more significant roles in the lives of their grandchildren (Uhlenberg, 2004). Generally, grandparenting has become a role that bridges middle and old age (Wilton and Davey, 2006) and while there are no statistics specifically pertaining to the average age of becoming a grandfather or grandmother in the UK, studies conducted in the UK indicate that the average age of becoming a grandparent is 50 years old (Grandparents Plus, 2009). This is still an age when people are in employment, an issue likely to affect grandfathers more so than grandmothers (Mann

et al, 2009), particularly as retirement ages in the UK are projected to rise (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006).

As well as ageing, the structure of intergenerational relations has altered vertically as a result of lower fertility rates, so that long thin family 'beanpole' structures (characterised by smaller generations with longer lengths of time between them) have replaced traditional pyramid shaped structures (Bengtson et al, 1990). This means that more equal numbers comprise the age groups in families, with fewer grandchildren per every grandparent. This can either improve the quality of grandparent-grandchild relations or as Costanzo and Hoy (2007) suggest can create potential for conflict between generations because societal norms and change have become more pronounced and can be the cause of distance and disagreement in relationships.

Alongside population ageing, divorce rates are considered to have a significant influence on diversifying family structures, often implicating grandfathers and the role they are expected to adopt in family life (Ferguson, 2004). Due to the increased incidence of divorce and separation, the normative nuclear family structure is being reconfigured to the extent that there is a higher prevalence of step-families, co-habiting couples and various other family forms. This has not only altered family structures but also caused speculation and concern about the importance of family and kinship ties in people's everyday lives. In relation to grandfathers, this raises further questions about the role of reconstituted families in men's lives and the context it provides. Mann et al (2009), for example, highlight one possible scenario. They suggest that it is increasingly likely that the situation will arise whereby fathers leave their first family (an increasing number of men are reported to be 'leaving' fatherhood as a result of divorce (Kay, 2006)), become father's later in life in their second family

and then become a grandfather as a result of the children in their original family becoming a parent; thus they simultaneously have to balance being a father, grandfather and employment. Of course this is not specific to men who leave their families as a result of divorce and is increasingly a possibility for men who remain married. The implications of this need to balance employment and multiple generational relationships for grandfathers is not explored in the literature but this scenario does characterise the circumstances of one of the participant's recruited for this study, and is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight in Gerald's vignette.

As well as the fracturing of the nuclear family as a norm, the family as a space of heterosexuality is also being challenged in contemporary societies; 'traditional ideas, expectations, and hierarchies are being reworked' (Valentine et al, 2003, pg 479) and this is thought to provide opportunities for individuals to live freer lives and for more openness in sexuality (Valentine et al, 2003). This also has relevance for grandfathers. Fruhauf et al (2009), for example, examine the case of gay grandfathers; men who have come out later in life once they have had children. They suggest that greater numbers of Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Transsexual (GBLT) cohorts are also likely to experience grandparenthood in years to come, both biologically and socially. While their key findings were that the grandfathers adopted different approaches to coming-out to their grandchildren, and that this process was often mediated and normalised by their grandchildren's parents, this coming out later in life reflects how family and attitudes to sexuality are beginning to change over time.

Acknowledging these demographic changes and their influence on contemporary families is important because there remains a lack of understanding about how together, they affect and influence men who are and become grandfathers. An ageing

society, which is the consequence of lower fertility rates and increasing life expectancy (Grant et al, 2004) can mean that men with families are more likely to live to see their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. However, low fertility rates can also exclude some men from being fathers and grandfathers as a result of increased childlessness. This is not the case for all men and the increased incidence of reconfigured families and flexibility in family formations does mean that men can become grandfathers through social relationships. The varying effects of these demographic changes suggest that the experience of grandparenting for men is more diverse than previously imagined and not necessarily a biological reality, something that the analysis chapters of the thesis explore.

2.2.1. Geographies of grandparenting and new technologies

While the ageing population may create opportunities for men to engage in intergenerational relations with their grandchildren and play more active roles as grandfathers, their involvement is however offset by the geographical dispersion of families (Mann et al, 2009). This stretching out of families across space also affects grandparents and relationships with grandchildren because in the UK only a small percentage of grandparents live in the same household as their grandchildren. Lack of spatial proximity between adult children and their older parents in western contemporary societies in particular, is a key trend, and several studies report that increased geographical proximity between family members results in a significant decline in the instrumental support or face-to-face contact between family members (see Mulder and Kjlimjin, 2006; Mulder and van der Meer, 2009). While geographical distance cannot be linked directly to the strength of emotional bonds between grandfathers and their grandchildren, wider discussions of geography and

relationships suggest that proximity is the key influencing factor for contact between grandfathers and grandchildren (Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1986). Mulder and van der Meer (2009) have discovered that living at further distances from family is particularly a problem for fathers as opposed to mothers, suggesting a gender differentiation in the provision of support and contact men get from family as a result of distance. However, age was a variable in this in that younger grandfathers (aged 65 – 74) were found to be more likely to be able to provide support to their families than older, divorced or widowed fathers, despite geographical distance. Taylor et al (2005) confirm this gendered analysis as a similar pattern was found to affect the relationships between grandparents, and grandchildren who had moved to the United States from another country to study at university. They found that relationship satisfaction was maintained despite the increased geographical proximity of the 70 college students because contact with their grandparents continued (Taylor et al, 2005). Contact with grandmothers was found to be more likely however because they were more frequently defined as the 'closest' grandparent by their grandchildren.

While grandparents are more likely to live at a geographic distance to their grandchildren, advancements in technology and an increase in the use of new communication technologies create an environment in which families can be more creative about how they maintain their relationships across distances (Mason, 2004a). Literatures suggest that there is a digital divide between old and young generations (Gilligan et al, 1998; Quadrello et al, 2005; Walker, 1990), and that those between the ages of 50 – 64 are considered less interested in computers than younger groups (Richardson et al, 2005). This power imbalance may influence the processes and experiences of intergenerational relationships between grandparents and grandchildren

because young people are generally considered to be more competent and knowledgeable about new technologies than older people shifting authority between the generational groups (Wilk, 2000). However it has been found that many grandparents and grandchildren enjoy their relationships (Quadrello et al, 2005; Wilk, 2000), and as a result of increased geographical mobility and decreased proximity, some are complementing face-to-face interactions with the use of new forms of technology and ICT (Quadrello et al, 2005) suggesting that older generations do have the competence to learn to use new technologies.

Several researchers, including some social geographers (Binnie, 2000; Valentine, 2006: 2008) are beginning to recognise that technologies have the potential to influence intimate ties (for example 'living apart together' couples have been researched by Borell and Karlsson, 2003; Holmes, 2004; Levin, 2004) and also familial intergenerational relations (Wilk, 2000). Norms of family structure and intimacy are being challenged by the availability and incorporation of new technologies into everyday practices and intimate family ties are being extended beyond the boundaries of the home (Borell and Karlsson, 2003). There is little research about the direct implications of technology for intergenerational research with grandparents, although Madge and O'Connor (2006) suggest that the increased use of ICT's can affect the extent that parenting practices (and I argue grandparenting), identities, meanings, and consequently their intergenerational relationships with children will evolve.

2.2.2. Discussion

Overall, it is evident that dynamic trends are shaping the contemporary UK context, suggesting that grandparents are likely to enact, perceive and construct their identities

as grandparents very differently, depending on their circumstances. At the same time, the context in which people are grandparenting and negotiating their family relationships (Kemp, 2007) has specific influences on men who are grandfathers, although these effects need to be teased out of the literatures that specifically mention grandfathers and the ways in which gender affects their role because at present much of this literature is not gendered in approach.

What this brief review of the contemporary UK context also suggests is that the character and quality of grandfathers' relationships with other generational groups may be influenced by the key processes that facilitate or restrict involvement between grandparents and grandchildren. The character and quality of intergenerational relations is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. This differentiation however is emergent because of specific geographies (i.e. distance and proximity in terms of where people live) and the ability to either contact grandchildren or interact with them face-to-face, or indeed both (Quadrello et al, 2005). Increasingly it is also about having access to technologies in order to communicate with grandchildren across physical space. The lifecourse is also implicated because relationships, particularly with grandchildren, can be developed over much longer periods of time, thus affecting their quality and meaning.

What is also apparent is that the context of grandparenting influences how men (and indeed women) experience grandparenting differently; in gendered ways. However there are few literatures specifically about grandfathers in these contexts that are based on empirical findings that can critically establish and confirm how grandfather's roles and identities are shaped by these trends. This highlights that there is a dearth of research about grandfathers in their own right. To prove this further, the following

section briefly explores some of the limited literature that attempts to assess the gendered nature of grandparenting, with a particular focus on grandfathers. This review reveals that theorisations about grandfathers are inadequate and dated, leading to Chapters Three and Four which attempt to develop a conceptual framing appropriate for exploring contemporary grandfathering, their identities and the influence of intergenerational relationships.

2.3. Literatures about grandfathers

In justifying why grandfathers are the main focus of this study in Section 1.1 it was argued that there is a paucity of research concerning grandfathers as a social group in their own right and that this is a result of limited engagement with men in research methodologies, creating a feminised bias in data collected from grandparents. This invisibility of grandparents and grandfathers belies the diversity and variation in grandparent identities in a contemporary social context. At present and based on these data, these literatures have developed specific ideas about the types of role men conduct and are expected to fulfil to the extent that static normative discourses construct what a grandfather should be. These responded to Clavan (1989 pg 656 cited by Hanks, 2001 and Wilton and Davies, 2006) who argued that the grandfather role is ideological because 'there are no normative rights and obligations attached to it'. This understanding did not explain how grandparents negotiate this lack of clarity or use agency to construct their identities. Following this, interest in the gendering of grandfathering grew, for example Cunningham-Burley (1986) described men as less interested in grandparenting than women, although Spitze and Ward (1998) point out that this is an issue of research design in that the questions being asked may not have encouraged answers pertaining to what men do.

Despite these conclusions, in a useful review of studies relevant to grandfathers, Mann (2007) illustrates that grandfathers do feel obligation to grandchildren and so adopt grandfather roles. These roles have been constructed in the grandparent literature as gendered in nature in that they express a functionalist gendered dichotomy; men adopt instrumental roles (a male attribute) and women adopt emotional and caring roles (a female attribute). Men for example have been found to prefer to adopt roles in the family that are task orientated (Hagestad, 1985) as opposed to caring. This resulted in expectations that they perform a 'minister of the state', or 'head of the family' role (Roberto et al, 2001); essentialist conceptions of grandfather identities in the family that reflect rigid gendered boundaries. In a research climate where men's identities as fathers are continually being questioned and considered multiply constructed (explored in more detail in Chapter Three), these understandings are no longer viable.

There has been some advance of understandings of grandfather identities in recent years however. In research specific to grandfathers, it is being recognised that men are adopting more nurturing roles than role theory originally acknowledges (see Davidson et al, 2003; Roberto et al, 2001; Thompson et al, 1990). In a study that only included grandfathers for example Waldrop et al (1999) found that while men emphasised educating and mentoring grandchildren, they also valued these relationships and the positive influence they have on their identities. This argument of involvement has been nuanced however in a rare contribution to leisure studies by Scraton and Holland (2006). They found that as grandfathers, men were involved in their grandchildren's lives, but that this was shaped by a gendered ethic of care. In their study some of the men were unwilling to break with the care patterns they had set with their own children and of the 12 men interviewed for the study, only one had been the main

carer for his children and consequently was an involved grandfather. While this study is revealing to some extent about the gendered nature of grandfather involvement with grandchildren in leisure spaces it is based on limited empirical evidence and, as Scraton and Holland (2006) argue, raises more questions than it answers, particularly in relation to the age specific nature of diversity between grandfathers.

Scraton and Holland (2006) do confirm that the lived experiences of grandfathers cannot be fully accounted for by the current lack of research and clearly, roles are very static and functionalist, and provide uncritical and limiting knowledge about the difference and diversity of grandfather identities. While they do reveal that the gendering of grandparenting creates differences between men and women, these tend to generate gendered binaries that belie men who are grandfathers the possibility of choice and agency and do not account for the complex social contexts within which men's identities are formed.

It is evident that past approaches to the grandfather identity have become dated and offer little theoretical rigour. Having examined the contemporary context in which men are now experiencing being a grandfather, and criticised these existing normative discourses it is evident that it is much more difficult to define being a grandfather than has been previously considered. Gr andfather identities are not permanent but are shaped by a changing global context and the dynamic and fluid nature of contemporary demographic trends. Men can become grandfathers both biologically and socially, they can become a grandfather at different stages of their lives and be situated in a variety of complex family formations, all trends that have the potential to influence men's identity construction in diverse ways.

Having acknowledged the messiness of grandfather identities and the difficulty in defining them in a contemporary context, a unique, multi-disciplinary approach is required to understand and investigate contemporary grandfather identities (Bates, 2009; Wilton and Davey, 2006) and their diversities. If considered as a gendered and relational identity, being a grandfather has real and material effects on what men do, and what men are expected to do when they become and experience grandfatherhood, because they are both male and of a certain generation and are also situated within a diverse contemporary context. The following review chapters respond to this critique, by reviewing existing approaches to identity deemed relevant to grandfather identities. Because the grandfather identity is specific to men, Chapter Three examines relevant theorisations about male identities, drawing on approaches from across the social sciences. This chapter argues that a performative approach is one way in which to develop more critical understandings of grandfather identities but is not comprehensive enough to account for how the grandfather identity is influenced by intergenerational relations. Chapter Four therefore reviews geographical literature that conceptualises approaches to age as relational and also accounts for generation as a social identity, arguing that multiple theories are required to understand contemporary grandfather identities.

CHAPTER THREE: Applying relevant theories of identity to grandfathers – conceptualising gender and age

3. Introduction

In the preceding chapters it is argued that being a grandfather is an important identity for men; one that is located in a generational and familial structure shaped by context, and as several more recent theorists have suggested is a complex and often paradoxical intersection of gender and age identities (Ando, 2005; Davidson et al, 2003; Mann, 2007). However little is known about how these identities interact and shape the everyday lives and experiences of men who are grandfathers in diverse ways.

This chapter reviews how existing literatures of identity relevant to grandfathers conceptualise gender and age identities thought to be central to constructing the paradoxes of grandfather identities. In particular there is discussion of how these approaches might account for and improve upon the shortcomings of past theoretical approaches to grandfathers that have a weak theoretical basis. Key theoretical concepts are explored across the Chapters Three and Four (namely identity, masculinity, space and intergenerationality) that can contribute to offering dynamic insights into men's everyday gendered identities and lived realities as grandfathers.

3.1. Conceptualisations of gender and masculinity

In the past twenty years or so an important multi-disciplinary literature has emerged that addresses more explicitly the ways in which men are gendered (Jackson, 1991) and how their gendered identities are performed, produced and interpreted in numerous contexts (Vanderbeck, 2005). Theoretical insights, particularly drawing

upon post-structural perspectives challenge existing essentialist assumptions about men as one-dimensional (McDowell, 1999), offering viable arguments that men adopt multiple expressions of masculinity (Hearn, 2007) that are structurally organised in a hierarchy of gendered power relations (Connell, 1995; 2001). Connell (1995) has been the most widely cited and prolific in developing multiple masculinities theory further, suggesting that as a practice, masculinity does not stand alone (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003) but is differentiated by and connected to gendered relations of power; the most powerful described as hegemonic. Thus not only are there distinct power relations between men and women, but between groups of men as well; characterised as subordinated, marginal and complicit to hegemonic masculinity. This is an important consideration for grandfather identities that, as Chapter Four argues, are relational and constructed in the context of relationships with other generational groups including sons and grandsons. The notion of hegemonic masculinity makes possible an attempt to understand the multiplicity of discourses of masculinity (van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2006) and to problematise male privilege by critically exploring 'the socially constructed aspects of male dominance over women' (Calasanti, 2004, pg 307) and other men. Thus, this framework provides a space in which to analyse specific masculinities whilst recognising that each type is a 'configuration of practice that is generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships' (Connell, 2005, pg 81). This provides insight into grandfather identities as male identities because it suggests that while grandfathering, men can practice varying masculinities that create this multiplicity and that are shaped by the men's relationships including with grandchildren.

The approach to identities as emerging from practices or 'doing gender' in a culturally specific way (Connell, 2005) has been particularly useful in studies of fathering. While grandfathering is distinct from fathering (Mann, 2007) men who are grandfathers are generally fathers first and watch their own children become parents as well. In contemporary societies new ideologies of fatherhood emphasise a 'new father' who is more active, present and involved in family life than his own father (Cohen, 1993; Wall and Arnold, 2007) but traditionally, in the space of the normative heterosexual family home (Gorman-Murray, 2008) men's identities have been described as 'master of the house' or the 'breadwinner' (Chapman, 2004). However Burghes et al (1997) warn of the risks of oversimplifying and consequently masking the diversity and heterogeneity of father's roles that are considered specific to a particular historical epoch. There are concerns that the culture of fatherhood changes more quickly than the actual conduct and practice of fatherhood (LaRossa, 1988). Aitken (2000a, pg 582) reiterates, 'much of the institution of fatherhood hinges on an 'idea' that does not embrace the 'fact' of fathering as a daily emotional practice that is negotiated, contested, and resisted differently in different spaces'. Smith and Winchester (1998) for example also suggest that the home is a key place in which men can contest ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

These understandings of fathering as a practice demonstrate that male, generational identities are interpreted within a broader social structure or discourse of gender, that constructs what fathering should entail and how it should be performed in particular spaces. This has application to grandfathering because not only are men who are grandfathers, still fathers, subject to the same expectations as contemporary fathers, but there are also gendered expectations of men who are grandfathers and how they

should behave and practice masculinities, as Cunningham-Burley (1986) suggested. The expectations of these performances are rooted in culturally and temporally specific expectations, of gendered and familial identities that influence what people do in their everyday lives and relationships. While this is revealing of men's identities as fathers however, there is little discussion in this literature of the influence of men's relationships with children on what they do and how they perform their fathering.

There are also intense critiques of the concept of hegemonic masculinity for describing the multiple layers of masculinity and masculine relations men encounter (Berg and Longhurst, 2004; Coles, 2007; Connell and Messerscmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2004), particularly for its original lack of focus on the geographical contingency of masculinities (Berg and Longhurst, 2004) and the fact that many men rarely achieve the hegemonic ideal in their everyday lives and do not want to (Coles, 2008). This creates uncertainty about the explanatory power of masculinities as a concept. Collinson and Hearn (1994) for example argue that hegemonic and multiple masculinities are still too static and blurred and Whitehead (2002) suggests that a more post-structuralist approach that emphasises the discursive nature of masculinity is required (something that Butler's theory does, see Section 3.2).

As well as this, conceptualisations of masculinities and understandings of male identities are based predominantly on young men as opposed to older and ageing men. As an interesting parallel to the arguments being made in this thesis about grandfathers for example, past research has focused on particular age groups (rather than generations) such as the young, white working class man or the 50 – 60 year old 'discouraged worker' (McDowell, 2000) as distinct and homogonous social groupings, belying the heterogeneity, fluidity and spatially contingent nature of

identity construction. The implications of ageing for men's identities which are of relevance to grandfathers are explored in more detail in Section 3.3 but this provides a substantial critique of masculinities as an identity approach, in that they are age specific and not necessarily applicable to older age and generational male identities. This suggests that in order to understand the gendered and aged nature of grandfather identities, an approach applicable to age as well as gender should be considered. Section 3.2 explores Judith Butler's (1990) approach to gender identities as performative as well as performed; an approach developed to understand gender as discursively constructed and practiced, but which has also been usefully applied to age (Section 3.3).

3.2. Gender identities as performed and performative

Judith Butler's theory of gender identities (Butler, 1990; 1993) supports Connell's (1995) approach to gender, that it is a product of social practice and has regularly been applied to geographies of identity (Smith, 2001). In particular Butler has established a powerful and comprehensive theory of gender that draws on the post-structuralist ontology that gender, and indeed masculinity is a 'performance'; a continuous repetition of practice, but also discourse (Butler, 1990; Nelson, 1999). She argues, however, that there is a need to consider gender as performative as well as performed, suggesting gender is not something individuals possess but is something that they acquire over time through the reproduction of gender through routine; a routine that is structured and shaped within a wider social and discursive framework. Performance, according to Butler's work, particularly reveals how identities are interpreted through people's behaviours and practices. She argues that it is the continued re-iteration and enactment of acts and practices over time that mean that gender appears to be a stable

identity, constructing norms that regulate expectations of particular behaviours that are attributed to sexed bodies. Men, for example, are expected to perform behaviours interpreted as masculine and women as feminine. Pervasive normative ideas are therefore constructed about gender that create and sustain them as a supposedly biological "fact" (Laz, 1998). In suggesting that it is acts and practices that construct norms, Butler (1988, pg 1) argues that:

'Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender...must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self'

As such, rather than a pre-existing ontological core of gender, gender comes into existence through various 'doings' that are deemed appropriate, or not, in particular contexts (Butler, 1990). As Morgan (1996) suggests gender is a doing, not a having; it is something that is accomplished by individuals. Therefore, in Butler's view, people act in particular ways because ideas of gender are constructed in discourse, rather than because the individual has a gender.

If this is applied to grandfathers, when grandfathering, men therefore perform a variety of practices that reflect their gender; essentially their practices (that they narrate and are observable) enact a grandfather identity which is constructed by specific identity categories. Bates (2009) defines these practices as the work of grandfathering, or the doing of grandfathering; important observable practices that forms the contribution to the empirical work of the thesis. As I later argue however, this focus on practices is quite limiting and there needs to be much more

understanding of the influence of intergenerational relations on these practices. Norms and expectations of gender are developed through an iterative process; performances construct norms and expectations, but over time, they structure and regulate how individuals feel they should behave according to their sex. Should they diverge from this norm, through their practices they can be made to think that they are not accomplishing the correct gender appropriate to their bodies.

As an example of how performativity works in practice, Butler (1993) argues that the act of questioning whether or not a baby is a boy or a girl is a performative act that brings gender and gender categories into being. A baby for example is not gendered until this performative act of speech is iterated at birth; gender is therefore ascribed to the biologically sexed body. In this respect identities are made sense of through social and cultural understandings of gender, reflected in discourse as opposed to natural differences (Brickell, 2005). In her second book for example, Butler (1993, pg 2) clarifies:

> 'One does not wake up each morning and decide which ...gender to be - it is not an arena of free play but is shaped by the "reiterative power of discourse"'

This approach develops important theoretical and analytical understandings of being a grandfather and its significance for constructing identities. While becoming a grandfather is a biological process in which a man's child has a child of their own, Butler's approach implies that becoming a grandfather and adopting a grandfather identity comes into fruition through discursive acts, as well as through performing in specific ways that over time become established as being a grandfather. The acts and

behaviours of men who are grandfathers are structured by their gender and are therefore revealing of how they interpret their identities as grandfathers and how this influences their everyday lived experiences.

Butler's (1990; 1993) theory highlights, however, that this performative element of identity can be challenged, and individuals can also consciously subvert these norms through practices that do not conform to expectations of gender. This is a contextual and temporal process and the spatially contingent nature of performance and performativity in particular, is something that human geographers have highlighted and explored. Several geographers have examined the complex ways in which everyday bodily identities can be performed and made sense of in different places, including the home and at work for example (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Teather, 1999). As a result of the regulatory power of gendered norms that are attached to sexed bodies and are performed both by individuals and others, individuals can even be excluded from spaces should their bodies and practices be considered threatening to the cultural norms expected in those spaces.

In an empirical study of the merchant banking industry in London, McDowell and Court (1994) apply Butler's approach to explore how successful masculine performances in the workplace environment should embody norms of laddishness, aggression and bodily fitness. These performances reflect the appropriate performances of multiple masculinities but this is nuanced by understandings that in this environment, male performativity is bound to traditional masculine expectations of success in the work place. Success and consequent power in this masculine environment is contingent on specific stereotypical performances of masculine

behaviour expected in that space as well as specific bodily identities. Marginalisation of men can occur, should individuals decide not to conform to these ideals, because success is so contingent on particular performances of masculinity.

Robinson et al (2009) also explore men's identities in occupational spaces constructed as feminine. They suggest that these environments, such as hairdressing salons, create spaces for men to parody camp versions of masculinity. This becomes a strategy for men to advance in their field of work but also to play with dominant understandings of what constitutes being a man. Even when doing 'women's work', men may still do it in ways that conform to hegemonic forms of masculinity (Brandth and Kvande, 1998). Elements of these findings are also applicable to Davidson et al's (2003) suggestion that grandfathers must be both nurturing but also sage like. In the space of their relationships with grandchildren, men perform particular versions of masculinities that represent wisdom and being a sage, but must also be nurturing and caring, practices that are typically associated with femininity in the Western context. This is not to say that men who are grandfathers are parodying gender however; just that men of a particular generation can construct an alternative identity that is multiply constituted of various identities in turn becomes performative.

This spatial application of Butlers (1990) approach not only helps to understand identities and how constructions of gender have powerful influences on the experiences of men in various localities, but also that individuals use space and have the agency to challenge pre-existing norms of gender and sexuality through their bodies and through their practices. This understanding of agency has attracted critique (Nelson, 1999) because if identities are performative, individuals' practices

always exist in discourse and are always structured. Ideas about gender based on the biological differences between women and men, are regulative discourses that discipline the individual to act, or perform their gender in specific ways that create it as seemingly natural in appearance.

Biggs (2004) however argues that this performative element of identities actually celebrates creativity and resistance. He states that, even 'if there is an element of inevitability in this approach, it lies in the assumption that the problems that identity poses between personal expression and social construction can never be fully shaken' (Biggs, 2004, pg 49). While in these examples, individuals appear to be consciously subverting gendered and sexualised norms by parodying particular gendered performances, many people also do this in their everyday lives. The masculinities literature, for example, argues that if masculinity is considered socially constructed, and that some practices are culturally exulted over others (or hegemonic) in particular places, many individuals never actually achieve norms or status considered most appropriate but are rather complicit to or subordinated by them (Calasanti, 2004; Connell, 1995; 2000; Robertson, 2006). In this respect, rather than consciously subverting norms of gender, individuals simply cannot achieve it, and this is because they are also positioned in other forms of power (Calasanti, 2004) reflected by identity categories such as age. As is already clear, the grandfather identity is intersected by both gender and age. The following section explores how age, as an identity category can, and also has been conceptualised as performed and performative.

3.3. Conceptualising age as performed and performative

Of course, the grandfather identity is not only gendered, it is also a complex intersection of various axes of social difference. In particular however it is an age

based identity. While performance and performativity has been explored in several studies of masculinities (see Brickell, 2005 for a review), if the grandfather identity is considered performative and interpreted through practice, it is important to consider how performance is applicable to theoretical formations of all social identities because grandfather identities are intersectional (as Chapter One, Section 1.1 highlighted). Gender, Butler (1990) argues is inseparable and indeed dependent on other intersections that form identity (see also Valentine, 2007). Therefore it is not only gender that is performed by individuals, but also age, race and generation for example.

In recent years age has also been considered as performative because specific expectations, constructions and behaviours are also attributed to specific age groups and categories. Carole Laz (1998) in particular has made a convincing case that age, if considered as socially constructed like masculinity, (and in the case of grandfathers engaging in 'gentler' more emotional practices, as Davidson et al (2003) suggest) is also a facet of the performance of identity. While Butler (1990; 1993) has acknowledged that gender must always necessarily intersect with other discursively produced identities, she does not include age in her discussion of various identities. Laz (1998, pg 86) develops this argument for age:

> 'Age *is* an act, a performance in the sense of something requiring activity and labour, and age is normative. Whether we do it well or poorly, according to the dominant rules or not, our accomplishment of age—indeed age itself—is always collective and social. However, age is not simply *shaped* by social forces; it is *constituted* in interaction and gains its meaning in interaction and in the context of larger social forces. We all perform or enact age; we perform our own age constantly, but we also give meaning to other ages and to age in general in our actions and interactions, our beliefs and words and feelings'

Grandfather identities framed in this way are therefore representative of the ways in which individuals are always 'doing difference' (West and Fenstermaker, 1995) and as Laz (1998) emphasises, in interaction with others, such as grandchildren. As Chapter Four explores, generation can also be considered a facet of social identity, but little is known about how this is performed; as an identity of difference however, these findings would suggest it is. There are examples of how the intersections of age, gender and even generation are powerful conceptual tools for understanding particular identities. Grandfathers are men, and of a particular generation, so performative understandings of masculinity and age and how these intersect can generate further knowledge about how individuals might interpret and construct these identities in varying ways.

As mentioned, in past literatures understandings of masculinities are typically 'based upon the lives and bodies of younger men' (Calasanti, 2004, pg 314) but it is evident that masculinities can also be performed later in life. In some cultures, such as the Chinese for example, age is revered and performative understandings of masculinity are bound to Confucian ethics that reify aged traits such as 'respect' and 'obedience' (Powell and Cook, 2006); in Western cultures, maturity developed over time through the building of social networks and experience also allows men to sustain dominance by complying to the norms of masculinity (Sandberg, 2007). Because of their nurturing and mentoring roles that reflect a level of maturity and experience, grandfathers have even been described as expressing 'an alternative discourse of masculinity' (Waldrop et al, 1999) for example. While Davidson et al (2003) label this paradoxical, it represents the fact that grandfathers may still comply with the norms of masculinity, but also subvert norms by engaging in more nurturing practices.

At the same time however, ageing can result in declining sexual ability and a loss of gender particularly in relation to the body, to the extent that older men become constructed as asexual and agendered (Spector-Mersel, 2006). This suggests that age and gendered performativities can be either contradictory and result in the subversion of masculine norms (men can no longer use their bodies to act in masculine ways), or they can allow men to continue to sustain their dominance through the re-iteration of masculine practices. Ando (2005) for example argues that grandfatherhood actually presents the opportunity for men to transform their identities later in life as they experience a dynamic change in their relationships and spaces (from work based to familial) and the consequent gendered expectations, or performativities in these spaces. However the performance of particular identities as a grandfather is complex and does not always have positive consequences.

When putting this approach into practice, using ethnographic data, Jennifer Reich explores how race, class and masculinity intersect when an ageing man was assessed for his competence to provide a foster home to care for his grandchild (Reich, 2007). She discusses an example of a 63 year old African-American grandfather who wished to become a foster parent to his young grandson whose mother was unable to care for him. She demonstrates that his attempts to convince courts that he had the ability to be an appropriate guardian to his grandchild were undermined by complex negotiations surrounding his ageing body, history, masculine competence, choice of younger wife which marked him via his race as a 'pimp', and consequent care giving abilities; all contested in the juvenile court system. As such she argues that his masculine and racialised practices, such as being married to a younger 45 year old

woman, and his embodiment of particular differences such as his race and class, became a barrier in his attempt to prove his competence.

This story, in particular, reveals the significance of his identities in determining his abilities to provide and be an active parent in his family. In adopting performativity as a framework, in this example, it is evident that the intersections of his identities as a grandfather, subvert the norms of someone wishing to care for a young child regardless of his capabilities, in the space of the court system. In this example it had negative consequences as a result of this particular discursive framework and context. His past actions, embodied performances of race and his age in relation to his wife, all contribute to his lack of success in gaining rights to the child. This highlights how pervasive negotiating the performances of identity can be in particular spaces.

Geographers have also shown how these competing conceptualisations of masculinity and age as performative can influence how older men experience space. Recent approaches to identities in human geography and particularly that of age recognise that age is also an axis of socially constructed difference and a social identity that differs across space (Del Casino Jr, 2009). Approached in this way, like gender, practices of identity and particular spaces are constructed in relation to bodily appearance and ideologies of age and are discursively and performatively produced. This has implications for people's everyday experiences and uses of space because individuals are subject to processes of ageism and children and old people are often constructed as dependent and at risk (Pain, 2006). This results in individuals' having variable access to spaces based on their age (Pain, 2001), and being subject to the possibility of age segregation in their communities (Pain, 2005).

The spaces that people use as a result of their age must also be negotiated around other axes of difference. The home for example can represent a site of contestation for older generations because it is constructed as an identifier of old age. Mowl et al (2000) argue that this is a space that is particularly resisted by men post retirement as it marks a loss of a work identity (which is often considered central to a man's identity, Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Arber et al 2003) and an increased time spent in a feminised space where women already have an established identity (Cliff, 1993). Fairhurst (2003) challenges this stance however, suggesting that a new lifestyle in retirement creates the possibility for men to explore new identities, including being a grandfather (Ando, 2005).

In line with Connell's (1995) framework of multiple masculinities, inherent in these discussions are issues of power. Butler's (1990; 1993) understanding of power recognises ambivalence in that individuals can both benefit from their position in power relations but also become subordinated by them. She argues 'power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend upon for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are' (Butler, 1998, pg 2). This is particularly relevant to grandfathers whose identities, as discussed, are a complex intersection of these various differences. What this review suggests is that if the grandfather identity is a complex intersection of gender, age and other performativities then this creates multiple and diverse outcomes for the ways in which men perform their identities. This challenges essentialist conceptions of grandfathers previous discussed in Chapter Two and suggests that experiences of grandfatherhood are more variable than previously imagined. How this influences men's everyday

experiences of being a grandfather is currently unknown and is explored using the empirical data collected for the thesis.

3.4. Discussion

While Butler's theory can help to understand how men who are grandfathers might individually make sense of their identities, the grandfather identity is also relational; men are only defined as grandfathers in relation to their grandchildren. Janet Finch's (2007) critique of Butler's (1990) performativity therefore cannot be ignored in research about grandfathering. She argues that because of the ways in which the concepts of performance and performativity have developed, 'performativity has more to do with individual identity than with the nature of social interactions' (Finch 2007, pg 76, see also Salih, 2004). In families, Finch (2007) suggests that individuals are also engaged in a shifting process of displaying family relationships. She argues that performance is too limited a concept because it implies face-to-face-interaction, yet identities are not only significant in direct interaction with others, meanings of identity can be displayed and hold significance beyond direct interaction.

While geographers have highlighted the importance of gender constructions in various spaces including the home (Blunt, 2005; Blunt and Varley, 2004), Butler's (1990; 1993) approach has rarely been applied in the context of family. As a consequence of the limitations of these concepts, performativity has not been understood in the context of the family, a context that is known to influence identity and what people do and is of particular relevance to the grandfather identity, particularly in the current context where technology is increasingly influencing family relationships and grandparents tend not to live with grandchildren.

Understandings of identity are clearly well established and can assist in developing important insights into, and understandings of, the social diversity and practices that men might experience as grandfathers. This review of relevant theories of identity suggests that understanding being a grandfather as a 'doing' is insightful and challenges existing conceptions of grandfathers that are currently gendered and essentialist because they can account for the heterogeneity of men's experiences. Both Connell's (1995) and Butler's (1990; 1993) approaches provide a useful frame for understanding grandfather identities as multiply practiced or performed because they are socially constructed, suggesting that the practices men engage in are located within broader structures of power relations that are gendered (Connell, 1995) and also aged (Laz, 1998).

These practices are particularly explored throughout the empirical chapters drawing upon the ideas of Connell (1995) and Butler (1990; 1993). However, as the review suggests, generation has rarely been theorised in this way and these conceptualisations reveal little about age and generational relations and how these intersect with and influence the performance of male identities. While these approaches to identity might suggest that they are relational, emphasis is focused either on gender or the individual, and not the collectivity of grandfather identities, particularly in Butler's theory (Butler, 1988; 1990; 1993; Finch, 2007; Salih, 2004). Chapter Four therefore explores relevant literature that advocates a more relational understanding of generational identities and develops the argument that multiple theories are required to interpret the empirical data collected from the grandfathers. This is important for accounting for the complexity of grandfather identity construction and the influence of generational relations on this.

CHAPTER FOUR: Relational approaches to age and intergenerationality

4. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed approaches to identity relevant to grandfathers, suggesting that practices (or performances) are structured by power relations that are revealing of the heterogeneity of male identities and their practiced and performative nature. This is useful because being a grandfather represents an alternative form of being a man that has received little attention academically and because theoretically, these (re)conceptualisations of identity can significantly challenge existing essentialist assumptions about grandfathers and their role in the family by accounting for the diversity and multiplicity of masculinities. While these approaches offer perspectives on how individuals individually construct their identities and certainly are insightful about how the individual man constructs being a grandfather, they provide more limited knowledge about the relationality of generational identities or the influence of intergenerational relations on grandfather identities.

This chapter shall explore how more relational approaches to identity utilise the concepts of similarity as well as difference to explain how individuals construct grandfather identities as individual and collective identities, an important consideration for an identity that is gendered and aged, but also constituted through relationships with grandchildren. Butler's approach in particular has been critiqued for only focusing on identities of difference (Jenkins 2004), as this chapter explores. Although consideration of difference is still useful for understanding how grandfather identities are constructed and performed, intergenerationality, with its focus on

similarity as well as difference can nuance existing approaches to identity through a combination of multiple theories.

In reviewing reconceptualisations of age and generation as relational and the product of both similarity and difference between generational groups, as well as discussion of how intergenerational relations are characterised, this chapter therefore argues that understandings of grandfather identities as practiced and performed can be refined by also examining the influence of the characters and quality of intergenerational relations and intergenerationality.

4.1. Relational approaches to age and generation in geography

A key theme explored in Section 3.3, Chapter Three is how age identities can be conceptualised as socially constructed, performed and performative and are a key intersection of grandfather identities. Social geographers are beginning to advance this understanding of age however and have begun to conceptualise it in more relational ways; recognising the dynamic and fluid nature of identities and that age and generational categories are produced through interaction with other generations and age groups (Hopkins and Pain, 2007). This mirrors much existing work on masculinities and femininities in geography that have also been defined in relational ways. Linda McDowell (2004) for example suggests that masculinity is considered what femininity is not, just as notions of youth are considered what adult and old age are not (see Wyn and White 1997). However like gender, constructions of age do not just influence individuals in performative ways; they are also produced intergenerationally (i.e. in the context of relations between age groups defined by generation) and over time which means they are much more fluid and multi-faceted than simple binary constructs.

While geographical approaches clearly support existing identity theories that construct age, as well as gender, as identities that are performed and historically contingent, relationality raises further interesting questions about identities and marks a fundamental change to the ways in which age can be understood and theorised about (Hopkins and Pain 2007). Hopkins and Pain (2007) suggest that age identities are situated in specific relational networks and generational contexts such as the family which draws attention to how relations with others, not only of different genders, but also of different age groups, influence identity construction.

In embracing a more relational approach to age identities, generation has very recently begun to figure more evidently in this interest and has been adopted variously to overcome critiques of the geographical field that characterise its development as adult centrist, fetishing and compartmentalising the margins of age by focusing on the young and the very elderly (Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2007; Del Casino Jr, 2009; Pain et al, 2000). Even more recently some geographers are beginning to think about how the middle-ages and generations of the lifecourse might be understood and deconstructed, as they are currently missing from critical analyses (Del Casino Jr, 2009; Maxey, 2009). This is important because it is at this time that many people (both women and men) are now entering grandparenthood. While their research is more generally positioned in debates about childhood and youth geographies, Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue that future approaches to the geographies of age should be guided by the use of a conceptual framework incorporating intergenerationality, the lifecourse and intersectionality, each of which this research relates to directly. This framework is intended to redress the separation of existing geographical work on age groups, but, has also drawn attention to other marginalised

generational groups such as grandparents (Tarrant, 2010). Consequently, while emerging from interests in childhood and youth geographies, it can also inform understandings of older generational identities such as being a grandparent and how interactions between generational groups are interlinked and contingent. These concepts also act to add new layers of meaning to the ways in which the lifecourse and lifecourse transitions are also experienced temporally and spatially.

Of their framework, I argue that intergenerationality is the most powerful for combining with practice and performativity for theorising about grandfather identities because it accounts for relations as well as individual identity. According to Hopkins and Pain (2007), intergenerationality is a multi-faceted concept in that it refers to the interactions and relationships between generational groups but also highlights the importance of generation as an influential and defining facet of an individuals' social identity, particularly in relation to familial identities such as grandfather. Like gender, generation is a social relation, a process and a basis for performing identity. In this study and theoretical context, generation refers to generational identity and does not constrain the analysis to a particular cohort which defines the sharing of historical experiences (Pilcher and Wheelan, 2004). This is important because the contemporary context in which men are grandfathering is increasingly diverse, particularly in relation to the age of becoming a grandparent. This is also a methodological consideration for this study because the men recruited span several cohorts due to the range of their ages. Generation provides a shared identity between men who are grandfathers on the basis of their familial position, alongside gender. As will later be discussed, this shared identity is significant for how grandfather identities gain salience and are performed.

While Vanderbeck (2007) has given strong justifications for examining the influence of space in intergenerational relations geographers have already used the concept, by focusing on child-adult relations as situated in various contexts including the family, public spaces and cyberspaces (see Aitken, 2000b; Kjørholt, 2003; Tucker, 2003; Rawlins, 2006; Valentine, 1997; 2003). Pain (2005) has also highlighted the relevance of intergenerational projects in creating sustainable and inclusive communities by encouraging intergenerational cohesion between old and young communities. Gender, as an intersectional difference is quite frequently implicated in these examinations as well, usually with a focus on women (mothers and daughters) (see Holdsworth, 2007 and Rawlins, 2006).

Examining generational interaction rarely extends beyond child-adult relationships however so there is little theoretical or empirical engagement with grandparents and generations beyond (Costanzo and Hoy, 2007) despite emerging recognition of their importance in contemporary family life (Valentine, 2008; Vanderbeck, 2007). While Horton and Kraftl (2008) critique the explanatory power of the concept, particularly in relation to childhood, they do agree that intergenerationality 'works' in empirical research. At a family level, it represents age based differences signified by generational (and gendered) labels including grandfather and father for example; in the family, generation matters. They also concur that age is socially constructed and factors in the antagonisms between generational groups (which is useful for this research). At this juncture, antagonisms begin to highlight the importance of relationships between generational groups, a point raised earlier in Chapter Two, Section 2.2 and something that intergenerationality as a concept can account for that

practice and performativity do not. These antagonisms can arise because of age differences but they are also shaped by social context.

Focus on the antagonisms of intergenerational ties were previously understood as either facilitating solidarity or conflict between generations, constructing a binary model of 'cohesion of conflict' (Pain, 2005, pg 5) that belies the complexity of intergenerational relations. A response to breaking down this binary and for improving explorations of the dynamic of intergenerational family ties is by accepting the ambivalent nature of intergenerational relations (Lüscher and Pillemer, 1998; Connidis and McMullin, 2002; Connidis, 2003). While solidarity and conflict models pertain to the importance and character of family and intergenerational ties as either negative or positive, sociological ambivalence refers to the paradoxical nature of family relationships, characterised by coexisting harmonies and dissonances (Bengtson et al, 2002). As such it adopts a more fluid and flexible approach to close personal relationships and breaks down assumptions that relationships can only be either good or bad.

Social context is also important to how ambivalence emerges in the relationships (Lüscher, 2002) to the extent that, in adopting ambivalence as a conceptualisation of intergenerational relations, a more differentiated picture of how intergenerational relations are structured can emerge that is sensitive to how generational interests might diverge or conflict (Lüscher, 2002) but also be negotiated. As such ambivalence acts as a bridging concept between social structure and individual action (Connidis and McMullin, 2002); 'ambivalence may be defined as simultaneously held opposing feelings or emotions that are due in part to countervailing expectations about how

individuals should act...reflecting the contradiction and paradox that are characteristic of social experience' (Connidis and McMullin, 2002, pg 558). This is particularly relevant to grandparents in the contemporary social context as it highlights how the dynamic contemporary social structures of the UK, continue to implicate them in family relations and creates expectations about what their role should be. The individual experience of everyday life and construction of grandfather norms and expectations that determine an identity, are shaped through this structure and through intergenerational relations, and are often characteristically ambivalent (Mason et al, 2007). The potential for ambivalence in the lives of grandfathers is unclear and has yet to be explored.

Robert Vanderbeck (2007) argues that these antagonisms are further identifiable through the study of 'intergenerational geographies' in that space plays a role in either facilitating or restricting contact between the generations and affects the relations between generational groups. Hopkins et al (2011) extend this argument, and I argue how ambivalence may be understood, suggesting that various intergenerationalities exist between the generations meaning that relationships vary and can be characterised as compliant, conflicting, correspondent or challenging. According to their findings, many more intergenerational characters exist, that may be interpreted as ambivalent for example.

Ambivalence and the existence of multiple intergenerationalities present one potential way in which Horton and Kraftl's (2008) critique discussed earlier, might stand up in relation to how important individuals consider their generational identities such as grandparent, grandfather or even great-grandfather. While there is evidence that

people classify youth and childhood as identities and that this can at times result in the exclusion of individuals from places as a result of the constructions associated with that identity, little is known about how being a grandparent is interpreted in various spaces, or even if it is salient in interaction with others. The potential for ambivalence towards the grandfather identity, as a result of being engaged in intergenerational relations requires further attention.

4.2. Lifecourse and Lifecourse Transitions

While intergenerationality is deemed the most significant element of Hopkins and Pains (2007) framework for the combined conceptual framing of this research, a more relational understanding of age also implicates the lifecourse, because it suggests that over time, as individual's age, they negotiate their practices in ways that reflect not only their gender, but also the distinct qualities that reflect the stage they have reached in their lives. This understanding is an important consideration in researching grandfather identities as relational as well as practiced and performed. Much childhood research conducted from a lifecourse perspective for example recognises that young-personhood is constructed as dynamic and contested (Hopkins 2010) and that this aids in studies of young people's lives.

Geographers have also contributed to themes of relationality through an exploration of various lifecourse geographies (for a review see Bailey, 2009) an approach that embraces the fluidity and complexities of age and ageing. Hockey and James (2003, pg 5) argue that if ageing like identity, is considered as a social process the lifecourse can be adopted as 'as a way of envisioning the passage of a lifetime less as a mechanical turning of a wheel and more as the unpredictable flow of a river'. A key

concept of the lifecourse is the 'principle of linked lives' (Elder, 1995, pg 112) which suggests that identities are constructed not just by individuals themselves but also through their interactions with other family members; grandfathers for example construct their identities in relation to their children and grandchildren. Lifecourse is also an important consideration for contemporary grandfathers because, as Chapter Two argues, becoming a grandfather now increasingly bridges middle age (Wilton and Davey, 2006) and is therefore experienced for much longer periods of time than ever before (Ando, 2005; Karp, 2000). As Chapter Three discusses, this temporality is also interrelated with performances of gender; men can continue to sustain power in later life through the enactment of maturity which reflects experience.

In considering the fluidity of the lifecourse, continuity and change also becomes an important element of the process of ageing. In adopting a generational identity for example, several transitions and changes must occur over time a) in relation to maturing and making decisions about the life path people should take and b) in relation to the ways in which the transitions of others influence the role a person adopts. For grandfathers for example, becoming a grandfather is never the choice of that person; the marking of generational change and progression depends on the decisions of others. Lifecourse geographies are a new way of thinking about these changes, taking account of the distinct temporality of identities as well as spatial locations. Defined as lifecourse transitions in the sociological literatures, geographers have also begun to make important headway using this concept in a relational way. Transition is a key concept in the lifecourse literatures and reflects processes of continuity and change.

The work of Cowan (1991) is significant to reconceptualising how transition has been defined and theorised. He argues that for a life transition to actually constitute change, two co-existing qualitative processes must occur; a shift in how an individual interprets, understands and feels about their self and the world, and changes to their external behaviour and their practices with significant others. This speaks directly to grandfathering particularly when approached from a relational and social perspective. The biological reality of becoming a grandfather does not necessarily imply a qualitative transition into grandfatherhood. In order to make an effective transition into grandfatherhood would imply they altered their practices and increased their interaction and involvement with grandchildren, and defined themselves as a grandfather having accepted and interpreted themselves as a grandfather. This is important to consider in a study of contemporary grandfathering because of the increased diversification of family life and because the cultures of grandfathering do not necessarily reflect the realities of interacting and making time for grandchildren.

Geographers have enriched these approaches by examining how space also plays an important role in the mediation of transitions (for a review of examples see Bailey, 2009) and various contributions have explored the spatiality of youth transitions, conceptually, from childhood to adulthood (Henderson et al, 2007; Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Holdsworth, 2007; Mitchell, 2007; Valentine, 2003), across institutions such as school to university (Hopkins, 2006), to employment (McDowell, 2001), and to new family roles (Bynner, 2001; Finn and Henwood, 2009). A far less varied focus on later life transitions has centred on the transition from paid employment to retirement (Barnes and Parry, 2004; Bures, 1997; Fairhurst, 2003; Green, 2009; Owen and Flynn, 2004; Stockdale, 2006). Family transitions in later life

have received some attention in geography and social science to date (Hagestad and Lang, 1986; Kitzinger, 1997). Speaking directly to intergenerational relations, Bailey (2009) argues that existing geographical studies in this area are organised around themes of synchronization and contingency; interest in the way groups (including generational groups) organise themselves highlights how lives are linked and practices become motivated by ideologies of synchronization. To illustrate this point he cites Schwanen's (2007) study of dual-earner parents and their routines in taking children to school to show how these routines, even though practiced by fathers as well, continue to reproduce traditional gender ideologies. Similarly Holmes (2006) examines where dual-career couples chose to locate to balance their work and emotional labour biographies (which is sometimes apart) and determines that these decisions are more likely at certain stages in the lifecourse than others. These synchronizing patterns in the lifecourse are considered to extend gender ideologies over space (Walton-Roberts, 2004).

A small but significant literature on transition work is now beginning to highlight the reciprocal nature of interactions at the boundaries of generation. Much of the existing literature concerning intergenerational relations is concerned with adult/parent control and surveillance over children (Aitken, 1997; Valentine, 1997). What is notable about this research is that the influence of intergenerational relations on parents and their sense of identity construction, at these times and in these places is considered relatively unproblematic and is not critically appraised. While the relational geographies of age are intended to overcome 'fetishing' certain age groups over others (Hopkins and Pain, 2007), transition research has replicated this trend, focusing more often on the identities of young people and children. Two studies however have

essentially highlighted how parent identities are also constructed and influenced in relation to their children. In an empirically driven study of young girls' fashion choices, Emma Rawlins reveals conflicts in the negotiations between mothers and their children and how they chose to present their bodies and identities in public spaces (Rawlins, 2006). She suggests that mother-child relationships are spatially and temporally specific; mothers are held accountable for the ways in which their children present their bodies even though children have the agency to define the boundaries of their generational relations and to construct an identity that is different to their mothers. ˙Not only does this have implications for the child's identity through the negotiation of family relationships, but also for the mothers who are judged on being a good mother. In this respect, both their identities are profoundly affected.

This examination of parenthood and parent identities from a relational perspective is furthered in particular by Clare Holdsworth's project, leaving home in Britain, Spain and Norway (Holdsworth, 2007).She employs the concept of interdependency to demonstrate that transitions are also relational and have implications for parents as well as their children. Drawing on three empirical case studies from these European countries she explores the transitions of young people to adulthood, characterised by their developing senses of maturity and independence. In the project, interdependency is utilised to characterise the intergenerational relationships and to highlight the mutuality and reciprocity of identity construction for both adult children and parents during this transition. Particularly for the women, the transition of daughters leaving home is defined by a period of gendered inter-dependencies that continually constructs the identities of both daughters and mothers. The intergenerational support and development of responsibility for the daughters she argues is mutually constituted

and created out of resistance to cultural ideals about parenting more generally. In Anna and Lydia's story for example Holdsworth (2007) suggests that it is difficult to identify who is becoming, or would become independent when the daughter left home. Locality is important to these transitions particularly for young people when they are leaving, or have left home as they negotiate and shape places to construct the kinds of adulthood they desire (Henderson et al, 2007).

Perhaps the most important contribution to this transitions work is that it also demonstrates that transitions in the lifecourse have important spatial and moral implications for the identities of older, as well as younger generations. Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) define these processes as connected transitions. In the context of young people's leaving home practices, they argue that a range of other actors are implicated, especially in the family. The family holds great significance in young people's lives and transitions, marking the starting point of the transition phase and providing and transferring resources, from the economic to the cultural.

Transitions are an important conceptual consideration for understanding grandfathering and an empirical study of grandfathering could talk back to this concept from the perspective of an older generation. Grandparents make various transitions into and during grandparenthood which can hold significant meaning for them. This, and the varying ages at which men are becoming grandfathers suggests that the transition to and experience of grandfatherhood is increasingly non-linear and heterogeneous. Grandfathers will have to adapt to the changes in their lives, as reflected through their practices and understandings of who they are and this will vary depending on their age and other structures of social difference. The transition to first time grandfatherhood is particularly interesting because at this point men must decide

if they consider themselves a grandfather and how they intend to practice grandfathering.

Colarusso (1995) calls this the evolution of the paternal identity. He argues that fatherhood is not a static identity but evolves over time as a result of both internal and external forces. This can be a process fraught with contradiction in relation to age and ageing and also in relation to performances of gender, as Butler's approach to identity also reveals. As previously mentioned the transition to grandmotherhood has been described by Kitzinger (1997) as a confirmation and assurance of a woman's identity but there is little information on men. What we do know from studying grandchildren's transitions in relation to grandparents (Mills, 1999) is that family solidarity alters over time and there is a transition in the role grandparents conduct in relation to their grandchildren. Similarly as individual's age, the balance of generational power shifts over time, highlighting the shifting interdependency of generational relations across the lifecourse. For men this is likely to be particularly poignant as the possibility for their masculinities to erode as a result of ageing increases along with potential reliance on their younger family.

4.3. Using multiple theories to understand grandfather identities

The review chapters so far have mapped the current UK context within which grandfathers are grandfathering (Chapter Two), have examined how identities are both performed and performative (particularly by the individual (Chapter Three)) and how relationality, the context of the family and the importance of generation as a social identity, might influence the grandfather identity as a meaningful identity men construct and interpret in their everyday lives, relationships and spatialities. While

structural accounts of demographic, social and economic trends point to how grandfathers are increasingly implicated in family life in various ways, theoretical approaches emphasise relationality, fluidity and performance as central to understandings about how individuals experience everyday life, respond to wider societal trends and consequently construct their identities. Practices, and the difference and diversity of the identities that construct grandfatherhood such as gender, age and generation are therefore central concerns of the conceptual framing of this thesis and for developing an empirical exploration of grandfather identities and the influence of intergenerational relations on grandfathering. In the existing geographical research on child-adult relations and in the conceptual debates more generally, there has been a minute, but noticeable and significant shift in the ways in which identity is theorised however which nuances post-structuralist approaches that centre particularly on difference.

Section 4.3.1 highlights how more relational approaches to age emphasise similarity as well as difference using empirical evidence from recent childhood studies. Section 4.3.2 explores how difference can be nuanced by the interdependent concept of similarity to aid in understanding and exploring grandfathering identities and practices more fully, as a generational, as well as gendered and aged practice. This combination also incorporates the complexity that the family context and relationships with grandchildren creates when men perform their identities as grandfathers.

4.3.1. Why similarity?

The work of Richard Jenkins (2004), which critiques Butler's singular approach to difference, argues that emphasising difference alone misses the interdependence of

social practices, an argument similar to that of Finch (2007) and Salih (2004). He argues that if identity means to identify with others in a relational way then there must be a necessary interplay of similarity and difference; 'foregrounding difference underestimates the reality and significance of human collectivity' (Jenkins, 2004, pg 23) and senses of belonging. This is particularly important when examining familial relationships where relations are often ambivalent; conflicting and difficult to some extent but also mutually cohesive and meaningful. Identifying who one is not, is based on defining who one believes they are in the first place. As Rawlins (2006, pg 360) argues 'identifying and (dis)identifying with various core aspects of the self such as stereotypical notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are central to defining one's own identity'. This interaction and determining the correct way to perform an identity either consciously or subconsciously, is how people learn to perform in those ways in the first place. Similarly, as Wenger (1998) argues practices of identity and community are learnt, which involves mimicking and adopting behaviours that conform to a particular identity, be it gender, age or generation. Taking Butler's view of performativity, conforming to stereotypical behaviours through performance creates the notion of stable identities; while these performances can be subverted, typically individuals reproduce expected norms and regulations that already exist within discourse, thus an individuals' practices are likely to be similar to those regulatory norms that construct identities in order to conform. As such, similarity accounts for the social constructions and discourses of grandfatherhood and difference accounts for the realities of how it is practiced within this structure.

Based on this premise, one of the main strengths of intergenerationality as a concept, which is most useful to this study of grandfathers, is that it marks a notable change in

the way age, ageing and consequently age defined positions such as grandfather are approached and understood, and draws attention to the importance of the relations and interactions between different generational groups that shape and are consequential to people's lives. As established in the previous chapter, individuals make sense of their identity and the identities of others, through interaction and the interpretation of performances and doings. As such generational roles, like other social positions, are performed by individuals in relation to one another in dynamic ways; generational groups produce and practice their generational interactions in specific contexts, at specific times in relation to others.

When performing their identity as grandfathers therefore, men and their generational counterpart's, their grandchildren are defined in and through their relations to each other. This argument is most evident in Hopkins and Pain's (2007, pg 288) definition of intergenerationality who argue that seeing generation as part of social identity means 'that individuals' and groups' sense of themselves and others is partly on the basis of generational difference or sameness'. It also suggests that generational positions such as being a grandfather for example become a key facet of the ways in which individuals identify themselves in their everyday lives, gaining meaning in relation to significant others such as grandchildren. To an extent this definition of intergenerationality does buy into Horton and Kraftl's (2008) critique about the conceptual power of intergenerationality as a research tool because it only labels individuals and does not go much further in relation to the implications of these labels. However if combined with practice and performativity, it can provide a great deal of theoretical clarity and a deeper understanding of the processes through which

individuals perform and enact their identities in relation to others, and in performative ways.

Approaching generation from a social perspective is not a new concept and was developed initially by Karl Mannheim over 40 years ago (1952; 1960). In everyday language generation explains the differences in experiences and outlooks of older and younger people in society (Pilcher, 1998) but according to Mannheim, generation is about cohort and locating individuals in a specific socio-cultural context in which they were brought up. Conceptualised this way, it is a useful tool for demonstrating how this creates a 'generation gap' which marks social change (Pilcher, 1998) and therefore the potential for conflict. This view again focuses specifically on difference and does not take into account cohesion between generations, or even the ambivalence of generational relationships; there is an assumption that difference is constant, permanent and unchanging, usually with strong negative connotations, thus countering poststructuralist approaches which advocate fluidity, change and futurity.

Building from Mannheim's view of generation, Mayall (2002) argues that, like gender in examining the contradistinctions between women and men, generation is a useful concept for examining the contradistinctions between adults and children. This is constructive in two ways; it encourages the researcher to think about the processes through which childhood is constructed and distinguished from adulthood (difference), and it can be used to consider how people share ideas and identify themselves in a generation or 'how people identify themselves and others, as belonging to social groups that are based on age and experiences' (similarity, Tucker 2003, pg 112). As such Jenkins' (2004) approach and those of Mayall (2002) and

Tucker (2003) further advocate considering similarity and difference. In conducting an empirical study of grandfathers it is important that temporality and ambivalence are taken into consideration and that while generation distinguishes grandfathers from their grandchildren, their intergenerational relations, sense of belonging in family involvement and their obligations to their grandchildren are also rooted in similarity.

This over emphasis on difference has also had implications for how the sub field of age and ageing in geography has developed over time. Before becoming established as a sub-field in its own right, children as a topic of research had received limited attention in geography compared to adults which Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue is because they were seen as less than adults. Arguably, due to the negative and pervasive constructions of older generations as in decline and dependent, this has also made them less attractive as focus for research. This has since shifted and the relation of children and childhood to debates of identities of difference have been identified; being a child appears to be biologically defined within certain age boundaries, but the development of specific ideas about what children should do and be is socially constructed (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). As such childhood varies over time, space and between social groups. Because geographical approaches to identity have emphasised difference, children have been constructed in Western societies as counterparts to adults which rendered them as invisible to the academy. These differences in particular are manifest in generational differentiation (Alanen, 2001; James et al, 1998). Arguably, the same process is happening with grandparents. Although they are becoming increasingly implicated in family life and there is a great deal of difference and diversity between grandparents, the pervasive association of them with old age (and women) means they are not constructed as the most powerful

generation and are not constructed in relation to more hegemonic forms of difference. As a result they have received limited attention despite the fact that as grandparents, they are increasingly expected to have a role.

Due to the complexity of conceptualising generation and the uneven development of the ageing field which focuses predominantly on childhood and youth, it is evident that Jenkins' approach to identity as constructed of similarity and difference has been favoured in defining intergenerationality and relationality, over Butler's, which emphasises difference. It is important to note that relationality and fluidity are still an important feature of this work as a result of poststructuralist understandings, but that similarity extends from this. This understanding has gained particular salience in studies that examine generational relationships. The following empirical examples provide evidence that we should go beyond difference, because similarity also shapes how generational practices are enacted and influential on particular uses of space.

In Faith Tuckers empirical exploration of girls' use of recreational space in Northamptonshire, she highlights the differences between child and adult conceptions of using those spaces (Tucker, 2003). The adults were considered to interpret young generational identities through sameness by performing practices they considered would protect the young girls perceived to have a collective identity. The young girls perceived their generational position differently however; the generational approach to childhood revealed that the apparently similar girls from the adults' perspectives, actually lived realities that reflected difference and diversity between their experiences. Kjørholt's (2003) empirical study of Norwegian children's experiences of hut building as a place for constructing identities in everyday life is a good example

of how children create special childhood spaces that reflect generation. In these spaces the boys and girls are considered to perform social practices that reflect local cultural practices and gendered generational relations characteristic of the community. As such, while the huts are seen by the children as secret spaces that create boundaries between them as a peer group and the adults of the community, their social practices, autonomy and agency are actually embedded in generational structures and underlying dependencies that construct and influence their practices and identities (Lee, 1998 cited by Kjørholt, 2003). What Kjørholt's (2003) study does that Tuckers (2003) does not is emphasises how the children's practices are structured through generation and culture. Although the parents in Tucker's (2003) study make assumptions of similarity based on dominant constructions of children and their practices in public, this is not explicitly described in her study.

In sum, what these empirical contributions demonstrate is that a singular focus on difference can be nuanced through an emphasis on how similarity and belonging, either to a culture or even a family, has important implications for how individuals interact with one another in relational ways, and the importance of these implications for individuals' everyday realities.

The following section advances this argument further in relation to thinking about grandfather identities within this conceptual framework.

4.4.2. Understanding grandfather identities

It is evident that practices can reveal a great deal, not only about the meanings and implications of particular identities such as gender and ageing, but also about the experiences and meanings of intergenerational relations and how space and place inform and are informed by these practices. From a generational perspective practices

reflect how both similarity and difference encourage cohesion, conflict and/or ambivalence between generational groups, whilst allowing opportunities for individuals to negotiate their own sense of self and difference from those similar, as in Tuckers' (2003) example. This suggests that practices of both similarity and difference are enacted in grandfathering; similarity can be established across groups of men because they are all constructed as grandfathers, and difference emerges through their individual and lived experiences and practices. Difference on its own does not account for wider cultural assumptions about what grandfathers should do with their grandchildren or the interdependencies of how individuals identify themselves in specific subject positions such as grandfather. However, while perhaps limited in approach, as Chapter Two, Section 2.3 suggests there are understandings about grandfatherhood, such as for example being a minister of state, being uninvolved or disinterested or even as Mason et al (2007) argue adopting paradoxical normative understandings of the role such as 'being there' and 'not interfering'. While uncritical, these constructions are beginning to reflect the performativity of grandfather identities and suggest that social structure and context are an important consideration in how men interpret and enact their identities and relationships.

In returning to the ways in which grandfatherhood is socially constructed therefore, present understandings about what men do are based on how grandfathers as a social category of ageing men share similar characteristics and behaviours that determine how they practice their role either appropriately or not, in relation to their own, and other generations. This assumed similarity between grandfathers, just as Tucker (2003) argues when explaining parent and adult attitudes and behaviours of younger people, is based on the assumption that men will enact their roles and identities as

grandfathers in specific ways; that their grandfathering will reproduce expectations and norms of male grandparenting. Performativity accounts for this particularly well because the behaviours and actions of the men create what appears to be static and regulated gendered, aged and even generational behaviours. The empirical element of this research builds from this argument; difference should not be discounted because it is this that provides the opportunity to explore the diversity and variations in grandfathering practices either as a result of wider structures of social change or because individuals have the agency to transcend expected behaviours. In short, grandfathers perform difference, either in relation to other generational groups or in relation to other men who are grandfathers; similarity is constructed through wider social constructions and expectations of grandfatherhood.

As Bates (2009) has argued the work of grandfathering or men's practices, which highlight their relationships and interactions with other generations remain to be explored. Through examining the practices and performances men who are grandfathers engage in, in their everyday lives with grandchildren, the importance of their relationships and the ways in which they conform to or diverge from these norms can be determined. It is this process in examining intergenerational practices that the importance of performing grandfathering relationally can be accounted for; generational relationships, and consequent identities, are produced through interactional performances based on generational relations and obligations that men transition to and accommodate for throughout their lives as they become grandfathers. Practices of grandfathering, that are influenced by relationships with grandchildren therefore produce significant meaning about how men interpret their identities as men of a particular generation, how they interpret relations with other generations such as

their children and grandchildren and their understanding of their place in the lifecourse and social networks.

4.5. Conclusion

To conclude this literature review chapter, I have argued that intergenerationality as defined by Hopkins and Pain (2007) is a useful concept to combine with practice and performativity because not only does it account for generation as a social and practiced identity but also suggests that relationality is an important way to conceptualise and understand age identities. A combined framing allows us to understand how men individually perform grandfather identities, but also how this is done in a relational way, in interaction with other generational groups such as children and grandchildren. This provides a unique conceptual approach for understanding contemporary grandfather identities and intends to develop more nuanced understandings of what men do as grandfathers and what it means to them.

With grandfather identities as their focus, the literature review chapters have established a dialogue between relevant conceptualisations of identity that currently remain disconnected. According to the theory, for the individual, grandfather identities are constructed through performances and practices that enact and produce gendered and aged identities that are historically and geographically contingent. However this has not been explored in the family context, so relational approaches to age, that highlight the importance of generation have also been advocated as an important element of the conceptual framing for this thesis. I have argued that grandfather identities are both performed/performative and relational and it is this theoretical standpoint that will frame the analysis of the empirical data. At the same

time, the empirical data will test the viability of this theoretical approach which is unique in focus.

Having established the key literatures and theories that are relevant to grandfathers, the following chapter presents the methodology deemed most appropriate for researching contemporary grandfather identities from this perspective. Justifications as well as critical reflection on the methods used are also included.

CHAPTER FIVE: Methods and Methodology

5. Introduction

Empirically, the main aim of this research is to explore and understand men's contemporary practices of grandfathering, the geographies of these practices and the influence of men's relationships with other generations in their family to develop a more in depth understanding of how grandfather identities are constructed and performed. In turn this empirical data can test existing theoretical approaches to identities that are relevant to a number of disciplines. I argue that an understanding of how men experience and do grandfathering is best understood by involving men in the research process. In order to gain first-hand knowledge about how men are experiencing grandfathering this required an appropriate methodology that elicited personal responses about their experiences. This responds to methodological critiques that highlight how men are either a minority sample whose examples are compared against mothers and become constructed as 'grandparent data' (Bates, 2009) or are grandchild focused (Spitze and Ward, 1998) which biases the data sample against men of the grandfather generation.

The first section of this chapter provides justifications for conducting qualitative research, linking this approach to the theoretical framing established in the two previous literature review chapters. The following section (5.1) describes the philosophical underpinnings of the research, followed by discussion of the participants and the strategies employed to recruit them (Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). Section 5.3 explains how the methods for the study were designed and implemented including in depth justifications of using interviews as the main method of data collection. Because of the post-structuralist feminist and entirely qualitative approach the

research adopts I also discuss my positionality in the research with an in depth critical discussion of the experiences and challenges of interviewing grandfathers as a young female researcher (Section 5.4). Finally my adherence to good ethical practice and the analysis phase are discussed (Sections 5.5 and 5.6).

5.1. The philosophical approaches appropriate for a study of contemporary grandfathering

I employed a qualitative methodology and approach for this research. This differs from existing research about grandparents which has tended to generalise about the experiences of being a grandparent through large survey data sets (Ando, 2005; Hoff, 2007, Kaufman and Elder, 2003) which although providing some indication of the shared constructions of grandfathering, offer little engagement with individual experiences of grandfathering and the differences and diversities inherent in such a heterogeneous group. Qualitative methodologies have increasingly been adopted by human geographers as they allow researchers to 'explore the feelings, understandings and knowledge's' (Dwyer and Limb, 2001, pg 1) of other people and to learn how they enact their social identities in a specific context. Usually with small groups of people, qualitative methods involve the in-depth exploration of the complexities of everyday life to gain deep insights into the processes that shape their social world (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). This allows researchers to 'get closer' to people's lived experiences (Hoggart et al, 2002) and to examine the particularities of their lives. Qualitative methods also involve talking and listening to people (Longhurst, 2003) and are particularly useful for allowing researchers to interpret the nuances, individuality and plurality of life worlds (Flick 2006). Winchester (2005) suggests that

human geographers now require a multiplicity of conceptual and methodological approaches because of the sorts of questions now being asked.

5.1.1. Feminism and post-structuralism

As the three literature reviews have established, the theoretical framing of the research resembles a complementary feminist poststructuralist approach, applying conceptualisations of practice and performativity to gender and age identities, and also intergenerationality; concepts many human geographers have advocated. Because the research examines insights into how men construct their gendered identity as grandfather, and also issues of knowledge and power as they act to subordinate women and men of different generations, feminism complements poststructuralist thought by challenging essentialist arguments about women and their roles (Chinn 2004), and increasingly men and their roles. Theoretically intergenerationality as a relational concept also complements a feminist poststructuralist approach, because it draws attention to power relations between generational groups and their various characters and is implicated in constructed multiple identities, as Chapter Three outlines. Both feminism and post-structuralism, have had an increasingly long association with qualitative research methods (Crang, 2002) but feminists in particular are seeking qualitative methodologies that establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships with those who are researched, of which interviews tend to be favoured (McDowell, 1992). This is something that I wanted to ensure in my study and I reflect upon this in greater detail in Section 5.4.

Paradoxically, while feminist post-structuralism has allowed geographers to research those other than white, Western, heterosexual, middle class men (England 1994), it is

to those men that this thesis returns. However this study has feminist sympathies because it has not been conducted to reify male power over women, but to think critically about men's experiences of their identities as grandfathers which are a complex construction of various markers of difference including generation and gender. The identification of the intersections of gender, ageing and generation for example are located in feminist debates that argue for the deconstruction of male patriarchal and hegemonic power. As such researching grandfathering presents an opportunity to deconstruct masculinities as well as consider how men's everyday lives are influenced by transitions to, and within grandfatherhood. Semple (2001) questions, why listen to men?, why investigate, (grand)fatherhood if this could be seen to contravene the feminist project? Her justification resonates:

'Initially it does not fall neatly into the category that normally defines feminist research, that being to focus attention on women's lives and the areas which impact on those lives in an oppressive way. But most women happen to like men, and for the majority of women much emotional time and energy is invested in securing long-term committed relationships with them' (Semple, 2001, pg 53).

As feminists have done with gender, social and cultural geographers and gerontologists have incorporated a critical turn into their research, in which they are engaging in theoretical and methodological debates and innovations that are broadening the deconstruction of ageing through explorations of the experiences of ageing and its processes (Andrews et al, 2009). Calasanti (2004) and Twigg (2004) for example have drawn upon feminist theories to theorize ageing (a process that is inherent in becoming and being a grandfather) and to highlight the diversity and multiplicity of older age identities that exist. Geographers and gerontologists alike are also incorporating more diverse methodologies in their research that converge with

theoretical debates about ageing, uncovering micro-level experiences of ageing through ethnography, narratives and visual approaches to name a few (see Andrews et al, 2009).

While it may seem paradoxical when studying men, a feminist poststructuralist philosophy is being applied to the data because it can highlight how the men's generational position as a grandfather is intersected by the doings of other social positions of difference such as generation and age. Rather than searching for objective truth, the study focuses on the men's individual experiences and constructions of knowledge about their experiences and assumes, and indeed expects, difference and complexity between the narratives. Rather than reify men's voices over women and children, it aims to give voice to the participants because they have been marginalised and subordinated by dominant conceptions of men as disinterested and uninvolved as grandfathers and by a lack of engagement with men who are grandfathers empirically.

5.2. Methods; Procedures and justifications

5.2.1. Fieldwork and Participant Profiles

Having defined the conceptual framing for the research in Chapters Three and Four and the philosophical underpinnings (Section 5.1), it is important to note that experiences 'in the field' are an important element of geographical research (Vanderbeck, 2005). The fieldwork conducted for this study spanned one and half years, and took place between June 2008 and September 2009. During this time 32 grandfathers were interviewed and two agreed to be observed with their families, including grandchildren. Only 31 of the narratives have been included in the final analysis because one interview was deemed unsuccessful (see Section 5.5 for further discussion). The methods were designed to address the research questions effectively

and so that the research methods, analysis and questions were consistent with one another in line with Mason's (2006) recommendation. Due to their intensive nature, the interviews lasted variably between 40 minutes and two and a half hours, although on average lasted approximately one and a half hours. Photographs were also taken at some interviews and observation notes were recorded in a field note book after each interview. These acted as useful tools for reflecting on the research process and for developing ideas about grandfathering and intergenerational identities during the analysis phase. At times the photographs in particular have been used to support the narrative data in the empirical chapters (see Chapters Six and Seven). Two complementary observations were conducted later in the interview phase and provided some additional ethnographic data. Rather than used to triangulate the data to generate an overall 'truth' about grandfathering and intergenerational relations, like Forsberg (2007) in his study of fatherhood, I adopt a post-structuralist perspective that considers both narrative and observable practices as discursive; men's grandfather practices and their talk about their practices are considered epistemologically the same, 'both are parts of the discursive struggles where subjects are constructed' (Forsberg, 2007, pg 114). Grandfathering and the men's practices for example, enact family and interpersonal relationships that involve various observable practices but also emotions and expectations that might only be expressed through narrative. Further justifications of the methods used are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

As discussed, only men were interviewed for this research but there was diversity between their personal and demographic characteristics as Table 5.1 presents.

Pseudonym	Age	Marital Status	Occupation
David	86	Married	Retired Civil Engineer
Ted	66	Married	Retired Station Foreman
Colin	68	Co-habiting	Retired Private Sector Worker
Steve	51	Co-habiting	Civil Service Worker
Mervyn	72	Married	Retired University Professor
Duncan	70	Re-Married	Retired teacher
Paul	58	Married	University Professor
Sam	51	Married	University Reader
Fred	74	Re-Married	Retired (unknown)
Charles	65	Married	Retired Product Developer
George	63	Co-habiting	University Professor
Arthur	73	Married	Retired Engineer
James	62	Re-Married	Retired Surveyor
Robert	62	Married	Part Time Administrator
Andrew	70	Co-habiting	Retired Teacher
William	88	Married	Retired Teacher
Arnold	65	Married	Retired Teacher
Roger	74	Widowed	Retired (unknown)
Wally	56	Married	Self-employed
Gerald	63	Re-Married	Self-employed
Percy	73	Co-habiting	Retired (unknown)
Reg	66	Married	Retired Primary Teacher
Bill	70	Married	Retired Lawyer
Philip	61	Married	Retired Teacher
Ed	63	Married	Retired (unknown)
Ray	69	Re-Married	Retired Psychologist
Jim	71	Married	Retired Actor
Timothy	70	Married	Retired Farmer
Alan	72	Married	Retired (unknown)
Peter	65	Re-Married	Retired (unknown)
Jonah	84	Widowed	Retired (unknown)

Table 5.1: Participant Profiles: Age range, marital status and Employment.

N.B. Married refers to men still in their first marriage, and re-married refers to a second marriage

Appendix 1 also presents the men's familial structures which varied across the sample. These differences are also important to the analysis of the empirical data and more difficult to present in table form. As Table 5.1 shows the majority of the men recruited are white, middle class and retired, although seven were still employed, one of the men was black with Jamaican heritage and one was visually impaired. The age profile of the sample ranged from 51 to 88 years old. It was decided not to limit the sample by age in order to explore the diversity of contemporary grandfathering and because the research defines generation as a social position and identity rather than a cohort. Similarly the participants of past studies, including only grandfathers, have had a limited age range (Scraton and Holland, 2006). The age range of the sample also reflects the influence of recent demographic change whereby increased longevity has extended the years of shared life between generations (Semon Dubas, 2001) and resulted in an increased diversity of men grandfathering at various ages of the mid to late lifecourse. Each of the men also had diverse employment backgrounds, ranging from retired to employed to self-employed and this was a result of the recruitment strategy.

5.2.2. Important considerations: Location and recruitment strategies

The participant profiles in Table 5.1 and Appendix 1 highlight the differences between the men recruited for the study and these differences are a result of both the contemporary context and the recruitment strategy I employed, which was significant in shaping who became involved in the research. In order to select a suitable research area for this study, access to men who were currently grandfathering was required. Due to the qualitative nature of the research which explores the practices of grandfathering and the influence of intergenerational relationships on this in the

contemporary context, specific location was not a primary concern as long as it was situated within the UK context where interest in grandparents from a variety of social arenas is burgeoning (see Chapter One, Section1.1.). The study is not intended to be wholly representative of the experience of grandfathering in the UK today; the data provides a snapshot of contemporary grandfathering that is revealing of how intergenerational relations influence grandfathering practices and grandfather identities. The study was therefore conducted in the Lancaster District in the North West of England in the UK where I live and work. Men are grandfathering across the country, but in terms of meeting people for face-to-face interviews and organising places in which to hold them, my own local area was justifiably appropriate; convenience became an important factor in my decision to locate men in and around the Lancaster District.

One of the key challenges I faced during the recruitment phase is that there are no easily identifiable spaces or places in which accessible intergenerational relationships are facilitated or where grandfathers gather because they share the fact that they are grandfathers. Older men are particularly likely to avoid social gatherings and organisations particularly if aimed at older people (Arber et al, 2003) and are also more likely to become increasingly isolated from society as they get older (Davidson et al, 2003). While this made some men harder to access and is a possible limitation of the research strategy, the research was designed to incorporate men across a large age range. As a result, a suitable recruitment strategy was designed that facilitated access to a range of different men who are currently grandfathering. Despite the findings of Arber et al (2003), initially an assortment of social clubs were sought in the Lancaster area and were approached using various techniques including telephone and email

contact, the distribution of flyers, giving advertising talks and putting up posters in visible public places where I could gain permission. Telephone contact in particular was the most fruitful in securing interviews. Contact information for these groups was identified using the Virtual Lancaster website which lists local activities (Virtual Lancaster, 2008) and places targeted included:

- Community Centres,

- Societies (including Bird Watching and Music),

- Social and charity organisations (e.g. Rotary Club)

- Sports Clubs (Crown Green Bowling, golf, swimming),

- Libraries,

- Sheltered Housing Schemes,

- Large Institutions (Universities, hospitals and Police Stations)

- Retirement Homes (not preferable, but a possibility)

Accessing grandfathers required knowledge by the group members of people who were grandfathers so this strategy was heavily reliant on the use of gate-keepers. In order to avoid age bias in the sample, a number of institutions in Lancaster with a large pool of employees were also contacted which allowed me to gain some access to the younger grandfathering population who are still working. Due to the difficulties in identifying grandfathers through targeting organisations and institutions, I also employed snowball sampling (from which I gained five participants) that involved asking the men who had been interviewed for contacts, meaning they also became gate keepers. Rubin (2004) used this technique in his study of men using Viagra because it is useful particularly when there is no obvious sample frame, such as with

grandfathers, and none can easily be created (Rubin, 2004). Managers and leaders of local charity groups were also particularly helpful as gate keepers. For the participant observations I asked the grandfathers after the interviews if they would like to participate. Only two agreed because there were issues of access and gaining consent from parents to observe younger children. The recruitment phase was stopped when I felt that the data I was receiving had begun to reach saturation i.e. regularities were emerging and I was not hearing anything else new. Men are also notoriously difficult to recruit for interviews (see Section 5.4, Chapter Five) and I was beginning to struggle to make contacts and confirm participants.

Time constraints, as a result of personally transcribing the interviews, also formed part of the justification to stop the recruitment and data collection phase. Had I had more time and had there been spaces where grandfathers were easily identifiable, I would have continued the recruitment phase and tried to increase the diversity of the sample because varying grandfather identities evidently exist. However, I felt that this point could be made using the 31 interview narratives already conducted and as discussed, the sample is not intended to be representative of grandfathering as a whole.

All but one of the men was deemed to be of good enough mental health to participate in the interviews. One issue I was aware of when recruiting for the study was the potential for participants to be suffering from conditions relating to their age that may affect the research process such as dementia for example, a potential issue in research with older participants (Hellström et al, 2007), and something that needed to be considered in relation to the ethics of the study (see Section 5.5). All but one of the final 32 men who participated was able bodied; one was visually impaired but able to take part in an interview.

5.3. Research methods

5.3.1. Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were the main research method employed in this study. Interviews are now a well established and popular method in research in geography and social science because they are effective for gleaning data about people's everyday lives (Nettleton and Watson, 1998; Gubrium and Holstein, 2000) and for gaining an insight into meanings and experiences of a personal and social nature (Mason, 1996). Their main benefit is that they involve more than just talking and listening; 'the interview is an active site where researchers and participants perform their stories, negotiate their identities and construct meaning' (Grenier, 2007, pg 716). Interviews are a key site where the doing of identity is practiced (Smith, 2001) and as the conceptual framing of the thesis (developed in Chapters Three and Four) highlights, the doing of identity is done relationally, through the collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Valentine, 1999). It is this practice and doing of identity during the interview in particular that was deemed most appropriate for this study which is concerned with the practice and performance of grandfather identities and the influence of intergenerational relations.

It is important to be aware that this doing of identity is shaped by the interaction by the interviewer and interviewee (as Section 5.4 discusses) and that the practice of identity may be altered during an interview to reflect what the interviewee thinks is appropriate. Therefore narratives are valuable because they are also distinctly social (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009), and as Somers (1994, pg 618) argues, they are 'used to define who we are; this in turn is a precondition for knowing what to *do*'. In this vein

interviews are useful because, while they may not entirely represent a person's identity, which are spatially and temporally contingent and consequently multiply practiced, they provide one way to make sense of things and simultaneously produce the practice and narration of identity. These differences in approach to the function of interviews do raise some questions about the effectiveness of an interview, but essentially, the interview narratives reflected the conceptual and philosophical approaches adopted in this thesis but also allowed the participants to reflect upon how they act and do their identities as grandfathers, in relation to their family members. They provided snap shots of contemporary grandfathering and allowed me to search for commonalities and contradictions to make sense of the broader processes influencing grandfathering practices and intergenerational relations through a triangulation of the narratives. The semi-structured nature of the interview also allowed the men to discuss what they believed to be the meanings and implications of their intergenerational relations with children and grandchildren. To match the aims of the research, the interviews therefore allowed the men to become critical and active subjects of the research (Ginn and Arber, 1995), something that previous grandparent, and grandfather research has rarely done.

I allowed the participants to choose where and when the interview was conducted initially for their convenience and to maximise the men's comfort about being interviewed; all were conducted face-to-face with the participants. Most of the interviews were carried out in the men's homes, some were conducted in work spaces and the rest were conducted in a room I organised on behalf of the participants near my work space. Fontana and Frey (2008) argue that the interview is an active rather than neutral encounter, to the extent that the results are contextual and negotiated. As

such the geographical location in which the interviews were conducted became particularly important when interpreting how the grandfathers construct and perform their identities. In line with Elwood and Martin (2000) interviewing the men in their own environment was also preferable because it allowed them to feel relaxed in their own surroundings and provided me with richer information and insights about their identities as grandfathers and their personal geographies. In their homes in particular, I was able to observe the spaces in which they display their grandfathering identities including through their photographic displays and material spaces (as discussed in Chapter Five) and even validate the things they were saying and understand them better because I could observe the extent to which they displayed and even valued their generational relations. Even with those interviewed in their offices, I observed how their grandfathering identities extended beyond the boundaries of the home and into their work environments in similar ways. There were some challenges related to the interview locations however as discussed later in the chapter.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured. I wanted to ensure that each participant discussed being a grandfather, the key focus of the research, but could also diverge from the structure to discuss the specifics of their circumstances. The more flexible and relaxed structure of the semi-structured interview also allowed me to develop an informal and conversational style to encourage the men to discuss what they considered most relevant. As a result the men's accounts included discussions of their mundane everyday experiences and encouraged exploration of specific or personal details. This generated differences and diversities in the responses, as I had anticipated. The questions were pre-defined prior to the interviews and were designed to encourage open discussion. An interview schedule was taken to each interview for

guidance (see Appendix 1). The schedule was divided into several sections that reflected the themes of the research. Some were designed to find out about the men's everyday activities and life histories, while others were designed to learn more about their experiences with grandchildren and how they constructed their identities as grandfathers.

The fact that I was interviewing men became an important consideration in planning the interview schedules. Shwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) warn that while not all men behave alike, cultural expectations of male behaviours, which men are compelled to abide to, can potentially generate what they call 'a predictable set of problems in interviews' (pg 55). To respond to the various possibilities of how the men might respond to questions, I included prompts to myself in certain places to encourage the participants to explain their individual circumstances in detail, thus overcoming issues of imposing a formal structure and encouraging the men to discuss in more depth. Pilot interviews were also conducted to ensure that I was gaining the data I needed and to ensure that the interviews were flexible enough to account for these expected diversities. Piloting was also useful because interviews require a great deal of skill; as a researcher I was keen to develop a good rapport with the participants, accepting offers of tea and sometimes biscuits, introducing myself and the project and giving reasons for conducting it. I also gave an indication of the length of the interview, things that Dunn (2000) recommends in order to make an interview successful. Each participant was also thanked and sent a thank-you letter for taking part.

All interviews were digitally recorded, having gained the permission of the participants. This allowed me to listen to, and interact with the participants at the time of the interview, rather than to take notes. This was intended to avoid the loss of

potentially important data as it allowed me to focus my attention on the participant at all times, make eye contact and respond to non-verbal communication (Blaxtor et al, 2006) and to develop rapport between myself and the participants in order to facilitate a more natural and realistic conversation.

In the field diary that I kept and used after each interview, I recorded my thought processes and those things that the tapes cannot record such as gestures, body movements and atmosphere. This contributed to thinking reflexively about my influence on the research and was also useful for incorporating participant observation techniques in my interviews, something Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest is useful for researchers who wish to understand the significance of micro-geographies for shaping individuals' identities. In particular I made notes about the people who were present, the physical environment and the general place dynamics (Elwood and Martin, 2000) when the interview was conducted. This was considered important because these factors help to inform understandings of the different identities that individuals' construct and also their meanings as displayed through the men's personal micro-spaces.

The narrative data allowed me to reflect on the men's stories of the social and cultural norms and expectations through which their identity construction as grandfathers is constituted (Jackson, 1999). In line with my approach to grandfathering discussed in the literature review and used to frame my analysis (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), interviews provided a space in which individuals could also practice their identities, as Benwell and Stoke (2006, pg 138) recognise; 'the practice of narration involves the "doing" of identity, and because we can tell different stories we can construct different versions of self.' When framed in this way, narratives become an important way in

which identities such as being a grandfather are accomplished and performed, and therefore are intricately connected to the social context in which we live (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009). Interviews have been criticised because they focus on the subjective accounts of participants, and their sometimes elective memories (Mason, 2002) which can result in discrepancies between what they actually do and what they are saying. Due to the nature of the research however, which is concerned with the ways in which men give meaning to grandfathering, it was these verbal subjectivities that I was particularly keen to access as a foundation for knowledge about grandfathering. As Wetherall and Edley (1999) also suggest, men's self accounting is still based on general truths about what they do outside of the interview context and is therefore robust. Interviews were therefore deemed appropriate for this.

5.3.2. Complementary observations

As the process of interviewing continued I became increasingly interested in the relationships with grandchildren that the grandfathers were describing and how these shaped their practices. As a result I began to ask the interview participants if they would let me observe them with their grandchildren, not only to provide complementary data that added to, embellished (Kearns, 2005) and checked the validity (Family Health International, 2002) of the data of the interview narratives but so that I could get a sense of the reality of the types of practices that the men were discussing.

Two of the participants who were interviewed agreed to be observed and conducting the observations allowed me to take part in the grandfather-grandchild relationships and benefit from the value of experiencing the relationships firsthand. I gave Bill and

Arthur some freedom in deciding where the observations were conducted and initially, both took place at their homes. Bill however also took me to the beach with his grandchildren half way through the observation, which is something he often does in order to keep his grandchildren occupied on visits. In allowing them to choose where the observations would take place and in being flexible, I learnt a great deal more about their interactions with their grandchildren and was able to observe their identities as grandfathers in various places that represented their grandfathering geographies and identities.

Careful observation of these spaces as well as the participants' interactions and activities within these spaces also illustrated the social geographies of the places, offering new insight to the research questions that built upon the interview data (Elwood and Martin, 2000). As a result of allowing them to choose where and when the observations would be held they were direct and reactive. With observation there is a risk that individuals will change their actions to reflect a certain image of grandfathering; there is a performative element to observation in which my presence becomes a regulatory factor that can influence the ways in which the men think I expect them to behave as grandfathers. Although I was wary of this, this can be revealing and I could nonetheless observe their public performances of family which provided insight into their relationships and their processes of interaction with their grandchildren. Similarly because this research is about how grandfathering is constructed and the men's subjectivity in relation to grandfathering, this was not deemed a limiting factor but is a potential drawback of the observation data. One way to overcome this limitation in regards to the reliability of the data was to continuously cross-check the observations with the interview data in order to form more reliable

interpretations (Aull-Davies, 1999). In Bill's example however, observed performances sometimes countered things he had discussed in the interview (see Chapter Seven for more in depth discussion and also Chapter Five, Section 3.2.1 for discussion of the issues with interviews). This dissonance however was illuminating because it added some depth to the data (Gabb, 2009) in that while he performed and narrated his performances of grandfathering in contrasting ways, I learnt more about his understanding of these performances through his narrative.

Because neither Bill or Arthur are the guardians of their grandchildren, organising the observations took time because multiple generations had to be negotiated; Bill who has younger grandchildren had to find a time when their parents could bring them to his house and Arthur, who has older grandchildren had to arrange a time that suited their various commitments as adults. In Arthur's case, in particular, the observation was slightly more artificial in that he mentioned that getting his grandchildren together to be observed is difficult because their meeting as a group is now quite rare. This highlighted the potential issues in organising research with multiple generations but was also insightful about how the time is organised between grandparents and their grandchildren and which family members have responsibility and power in organising face-to-face contact. It also took three months to arrange an observation with Bill because of various issues in getting the grandchildren to Bill's house and due to unforeseen circumstances that meant they would not be seeing their grandchildren at the times we had planned. When the observations did take place, they varied in length and I left when grandchildren had left. Overall however, the observations were very short, lasting no longer than half a day, which was good for gaining a snapshot of grandfather-grandchild relations.

It is for these reasons that the observational data does not form a substantial part of the data for the analysis in the empirical chapters and is considered complementary to the narrative data. Future research could potentially negotiate longer term observation and involvement with families, something I discuss further in Chapter Nine which considers how grandfather research might progress.

I was aware that observations should never be fully unguided (Silverman, 2006) but focused, in order to avoid sloppiness (Mason, 2002). I therefore based my observations around the key research questions and paid particular attention to their practices, their relationships with grandchildren and other family members and the various environments within which they were interacting. During the observations I tried not to interfere with the interaction too much. There were times however, particularly in Bill's observation where the grandchildren had run off into another room to play so I stayed with Bill who discussed with me how he was feeling about having his grandchildren there. These conversations were recorded at a later juncture. During Arthur's observation I also took photographs as extra evidence and to remind me of the time I had spent with them. Following the observations, I developed free flowing commentaries of an ethnographic nature that described the spaces, places, relationships and events that occurred during the observation periods. These formed a secondary set of data for analysis. I chose to write the notes straight after the observations had occurred and not during them so that I did not miss anything that was going on and did not draw attention to my researcher status. In order to be as accurate as possible and so as not to forget what had happened I did this as soon as I was able.

5.4. Positionality and researching men of an older generation

As mentioned, both feminist and post-structuralist approaches to social science insist on greater reflection by the researcher on the research process, the researcher-participant relationship and the power relations inherent within their interactions (England, 1994). Positionality incorporates thinking reflexively about the position of the researcher. It 'is commonly used in qualitative research and has been posited and accepted as a method qualitative researchers can and should use to legitimize, validate, and question research practices and representations' (Pillow, 2003, pg 175). This is important to consider because in doing field work I was involved in the processes of identity construction and self representation as much as the grandfathers were (Coffey, 1999). In line with my qualitative approach to the research, the interviews were not only an important site in which the gender of my participants were performed, enacted, 'done' (West and Zimmerman, 1987), and articulated but also my own gender. Data collection is never an abstract process; the act of collecting data requires the management and negotiation of social relationships with those from whom information is sought (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). The relationship between me and the participants therefore was intrinsically entangled with power relations relating to our gender, age, sexuality, class, race and so on (Dowling, 2005).

In a study of male elites in the city of London Linda McDowell (1998) discusses these negotiations as her multiple positionalities. Grenier (2007) further points out that generation is an important organising principle in the research process and that researching across age and generational boundaries raises it owns issues and challenges particularly in relation to the appropriateness of researching ageing societies as a person younger than the participants and benefactors. Ways of

overcoming these issues are considered in Chapter Nine which reflects on future directions of grandparent research. In line with Lohan (2000) who notes in her study of men's use of domestic technology, during the interviews I 'was performing multiple gender identities in the context of the interviews', as a young woman, interviewer, friend and sexual being' (Pini, 2005, pg 89).

Interviews can be a site in which men perform male identities but also feel as though their masculinities are being threatened (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) particularly when interviewed by women. A common stereotype is that men do not talk and at the very least, if they do talk it is very different to women's talk (Coates, 2003). This performance of masculinity is also intersected by various other axes of difference however. As Chapter Three explores, old age is considered to erode styles of masculinity, to the extent that men become more nurturing and soft. Due to the relative lack of studies on older men and grandfathers, methodological considerations relating to these intersections of identity have rarely been discussed in the literature.

In the interviews with the grandfathers, the men were generally happy to talk about their grandchildren, sometimes even emotionally as Chapter Six explores. These intersectional performances were articulated in the men's narratives and positioned me as a researcher; having asked my name, for example, Jim pointed out that I was young enough to be his granddaughter:

> *you know you're obviously old enough to be, young enough to be rather my er, a granddaughter of mine.*

In talking about the differences between his and his wife's roles as grandparents Philip says:

I suppose it's an awful thing to say these days isn't it?, especially to a young woman, the more domestic aspect of it, like I'm hopeless at dressing them and bathing them, and ought like that'.

At these points in their interviews, both Jim and Philip were keenly aware of my positioning as a woman of a certain age and the fact that I may interpret their traditional approaches in a particular way. This was very revealing of the fact that the men were acutely aware of how they were performing their male identity and it also provided a more gendered perspective on their constructions of their grandfather identities.

This interest in my own status by the men was not considered problematic however. As Aull–Davies (1999) argues, we cannot research something from which we have no contact or are isolated from. As a granddaughter myself with living paternal and maternal grandfathers, observing and taking part in the grandfather-grandchild relationships was not alien and was something I felt I could empathise with. Feminist interviewers particularly advocate sharing information with interviewees (Valentine, 1997), so that they do not consider themselves subordinates. Several of the men asked me about my own family life and situation which I responded to when appropriate, and this aided in developing respect and more mutual relationships between us.

Several researchers have commented on the ways in which interviewing men raises certain challenges. Reflexivity draws particular attention to the politics of difference that may be encountered in research settings and also raises questions about how difference should be represented (Pillow, 2003). A small but disparate literature is emerging that deals with women interviewing men (Gatrell, 2006; Lee, 1997;

McDowell, 2002; Pini, 2005; Winchester, 1996). Rutherford (1988) suggested that researchers should be wary that some men may talk and act in ways that reflect a fear of intimacy, some men may find it difficult to trust others (Whitehead, 2002), which is a key component of a successful interview and some men have been found to use rationality, to control and even deny when discussing certain aspects of their experiences (Seidler, 1994; 1997). In interviewing grandparents, men have been considered generally less talkative than women and harder to research (Cunningham-Burley, 1986; Scraton and Holland, 2006), although in agreement with Gatrell (2006) I found the men in this study generally very obliging once I had recruited them and secured interviews with them. Due to the nature of the discussions about grandfathering, it was fairly easy to develop a rapport with the men but at times, in the narratives there are examples where the more emotional aspects of grandfathering were avoided or conversation changed direction which presented challenges in relation to trying to gain more in depth information.

As previously mentioned, the majority of the interviews were conducted in the home environments of the participants. This was not only convenient for the participants, but also enabled me to gain a sense of their lives and the spaces within which they were conducting and displaying grandfathering. Having a car made it much easier to access the men's homes which I felt was important. Interviewing in their homes also raised several challenges however. As a female researcher I was acutely aware that I would be entering the home of someone I had never met, potentially on my own. Sadly, there have been reports of violence against female researchers when entering the research field to interview men (Lee, 1997). In order to avoid any potential issues and to protect both myself as a young woman going into an unknown persons home

and the participants themselves, I designed and followed strict safety protocol, similar to that used by Gatrell (2006). Before arriving at the interview I wrote down the address provided by the participant and put it in a sealed envelope which was left with a colleague. This was intended to keep the address anonymous unless it was required in the event of an incident.

For some of the interviews in the men's homes, being alone with the participants was not an issue because their wives and partners were there, however this was something that raised its own challenges because several of the 32 interviews were interrupted by the men's wives or were conducted in their presence. Although the participants were informed prior to interview that the space should be quiet and without potential for interruption, on three occasions, the wives were in ear shot of the interview and very often tried to add extra details or give their own perspectives on grandparenting. This meant that the men concerned did not always give their own views, which is central to the thesis aims, but was also interesting from a gendered perspective because the women had very strong views on their grandparenting and that of their husbands. In one interview, the participant would not go into further detail about his practices in the home because his wife was there. On these occasions it was very difficult to ask the wife to leave because it was their home. Despite this, the data from these interviews are still included in the analysis because what the men said was considered just as important, but future research with either grandfathers or grandmothers should take this into consideration during the planning of the methods.

5.5. Ethical Considerations

The previous section demonstrates that there are several challenges and issues to consider when planning fieldwork in regards to personal and participant safety. As a

researcher and indeed a human being, I recognise I have responsibilities to those participants with whom I conduct the research. 'Ethical behaviour protects the rights of individuals, communities and environments involved in, or affected by, our research' (Hay, 2003, pg 39). Whilst I did not intentionally discuss sensitive subjects with my male participants, asking questions as a young, female researcher about personal issues such as family life and practices may raise suspicion about my own intentions and could be very intrusive for some people. There was also some inevitability that my interviews and in the cases where the observations followed that I would become embedded to some extent in the lives of the family members I researched (Gabb, 2010). Explaining my intentions and my role as an interviewer was deemed very important because it allowed the interviewees to understand who I was and why I was conducting the research (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

To do this, I provided each participant with proforma prior to commencing the interviews that detailed these things (see Appendix 2). Gaining informed consent from the participants was something that I felt was also important to do both for the interviews and observations. It has become an accepted element of ethical practice in social research (Wiles et al, 2009) and I deemed it necessary for this research, which required individuals to discuss a great deal of personal information about themselves and others. Each participant was asked to sign and date a consent form attached to the introductory information form (Appendix 2) that introduced who I was, introduced the research, assured participants that they did not have to answer any questions they deemed inappropriate, informed them that the interview was being audio recorded and promised confidentiality and anonymity. All transcripts and consent forms are kept in a locked draw that only I have access to, to ensure full confidentiality.

As mentioned in Section 5.2.1 one of the interviews was deemed unsuccessful and this was because the participant was not able to speak clearly. He had been recruited through a gate-keeper and in this situation informed consent was received from the man's spouse. I later decided however that it would be fairer to exclude the interview data for ethical reasons and because the data was not useable. In the rest of the cases, participants were deemed of good mental health and consequently capable of giving informed consent.

Protecting the anonymity of participants is now common practice in social research (Clark, 2006) and is something I felt was important to do, particularly because the information I was gathered pertained to the 'sensitive data' (Clark, 2006, pg 7) of the participants, including their religious affiliation and identity characteristics. Constructions of the family as private in western countries (Edwards, 1993) were also a consideration. To avoid issues relating to being able to identify participants and their family members, I consequently assigned each participant a pseudonym at the time of transcription in order to protect their identities. Throughout the analysis, where significant family member names or specific places are mentioned, they have been replaced like so; *[family position]* or *[charity group name]*. While taking photo's was negotiated with the participants, to further protect the anonymity of the participants and their families, faces in photographs have been blurred to avoid their identification.

5.6. Analysis

The first stage in the analysis process was transcribing the interviews verbatim. While a daunting and time-consuming task I felt it important that I transcribed myself because it was imperative to the process of 'knowing the data', which is arguably the most important stage in analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Indeed

throughout the writing phase, I was able to recall conversations and sections of data because of the familiarity with the transcripts that I gained during the transcription phase. I began to transcribe as soon as possible after the interview was conducted. This meant that the interview was still fresh in my memory and that I could immerse myself in the data while the interview was still clear. During the transcription process I referred to my field note book to prompt my memory further and began to record key themes and ideas that were emerging from the transcripts throughout a process of continuous re-reading.

These ideas helped me form the coding framework (see Appendix 3). Because of the number and length of the transcriptions and observation notes, I used Atlas.Ti as a management tool in order to deal with the large volume of data collected. Coding was a fluid and gradual process that required redefinition and alteration, particularly in relation to the research questions. This was also necessary because while I was trying to find patterns and commonalities within the data I was also seeking differences and diversities. The coding framework was initially developed for the first few completed transcripts and then gradually applied to the remaining transcripts to identify patterns but also to discover any new issues that merged.

Like transcription, coding was essential in immersing myself completely in the data and the findings of the research. More general themes such as practices, spaces, and symbols captured what the men did and how they constructed meaning about their intergenerational relationships. However it soon emerged that their personal and familial contexts were also important and were shaping their grandfathering. These related to the influence theme which captured how the men discussed the contexts that shape their actions, interactions and emotions (Corbin and Strauss, 2009) as

grandfathers. After coding a small sub-section of the transcripts it emerged that the effects of personal and familial circumstances were important to the ways in which the men practice grandfathering and consequently feel about being a grandfather, so this became a key theme and demonstrated that the analysis strategy was effective in allowing new ideas to come to the fore.

Once all of the interview transcripts had been analysed, the observation commentaries were subjected to the same, established thematic coding framework using Atlas.Ti for coherence in the analysis and to ensure rigour. When this was complete further re-reading of the codes and quotations were conducted relating to the key themes which informed the structure of the interpretations of the data and the analysis write-up. The coding framework allowed me to interpret examples of similarity and shared ideas that emerged about grandfathering, as well as any peculiarities that emerged from the data and enriched the final presentation of the data. The writing up phase also proved to be an important stage in testing out and continuing the analysis that was done in Atlas.Ti. As such the analysis was a rigorous and iterative process composed of multiple stages from transcribing to developing a coding framework, coding and writing. In each of the analysis chapters all of the interview and observation data is represented in *italic font*.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has provided justifications for why men who are grandfathers are the sole focus for the empirical data collection phase in contrast to past research about grandparents. While seemingly counter to the feminist project, the men's voices and actions are the central focus of the research, in order to allow them to explore the differences and diversities of grandfatherhood and to challenge existing constructions

of grandfatherhood that currently mask the realities of contemporary grandfathering and the influence of intergenerational relationships with grandchildren on this. I employed a qualitative approach that includes in depth interviews and complementary participant observations to explore through narratives and observation of practices how men construct and perform their identities in their personal geographies and how this is influenced by their familial context.

CHAPTER SIX: Exploring the contemporary practices and personal geographies of grandfathers

6. Introduction

Existing theories about identity that are discussed in the literature review chapters, suggest that practices, or what people do, enact identities and these practices are regulated by context and space. It is this argument and the first research question that prompted the analysis in this first empirical chapter; what do men do with their grandchildren and where do they grandfather? Through an examination of the men's discussions of their practices with grandchildren (or the ways in which they 'do grandfathering'), the realities of grandfathering can be explored in more detail, bringing to the fore their practices of interaction and their relationships (Bates, 2009), and the men's personal geographies as grandfathers. The intention of this is to develop a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of how contemporary grandfather identities are performed and constructed.

The empirical focus of this thesis chapter is therefore how grandfathers' uses of particular spaces act to construct their identities and also facilitate intergenerational relations with grandchildren. In section 6.1 I explore the 'space closest in' (Longhurst, 1995); the men's personal geographies of the body and the ways in which grandfathering as an embodied practice can be used to perform intimacy, which constitutes the doing of family. Sections 6.2 and 6.3 explore the men's everyday spaces, first their homes and secondly their use of outdoor and leisure spaces. Gender frequently enters these discussions because of constructions of spaces as public and private and because the men's practices reflect ways of doing grandfathering that are

intersected by gender, age and generation. Finally, Section 6.4 examines the men's use of new media and technologies; new channels through which men are performing their identities and intergenerational relationships. This gives emphasis to the ways in which men do family practices with grandchildren across physical distance, but also sheds light on their direct interactions in technology spaces. These sections highlight the contemporary personal geographies of the grandfathers as they 'do family' with their grandchildren and allow for an exploration of the current form and functioning of intergenerational relations by grandfathers. In doing so they highlight the ways in which men do grandfathering in a variety of everyday mundane spaces that facilitate difference and diversity across grandfathering identities.

6.1. Doing intimacy and bodily practices: 'men are men?'

The provision of child care by grandparents has drawn increased attention from policy makers and government bodies in recent years (Gray, 2005; Haurant, 2009; Wheelock and Jones, 2002) yet there has been very little engagement with the ways in which men become involved in childcare at mundane and personal scales or how this resembles the doing of intimacy in grandfathers' intergenerational relations.

A key theme that I asked the men to explore in their interviews was their involvement in childcare and childcare practices. For the most part the grandfathers described more instrumental childcare tasks such as babysitting, taking grandchildren to and from appointments and looking after them at weekends but a small number of them also described being involved in more intimate practices. Increasingly conceptualised as a space by geographers (see Longhurst, 1995), some of the men's bodies mark the site through which they conduct their practices as grandfathers. In particular these men

described involvement in practices of affection including hugging and kissing, the most commonly discussed of the intimate practices by all of the men:

> *when I go to [granddaughters home] erm, if I'm there and [granddaughter] comes in, she comes dashing in and, puts her arms round and I feel really, pleased you know it's really nice and she'll sit down and tell me all sorts of things*

Roger, age 74

> *they're all very affectionate even, even from boys erm, even the big lad you know, still likes his cuddle before he goes to bed you know, and he'll still give grandad a kiss before he goes home*

Philip, age 61

In these examples, both Roger and Philip explain that they engage in practices of affection, but they also discuss this in relation to the genders of their grandchildren; Philip emphasises that even his grandson will have a kiss. The intersections of gender evidently have a marked influence on the ways in which bodily intimacy is performed, but generation is also implicated in this and can even cause men to alter their practices. Mervyn for example describes how he performs intimacy with his grandchildren differently depending on their gender, reflecting variation in his practices of his grandfather identity:

> *it's easier to cuddle a girl than to cuddle a boy and so I, actually I have a memory about my father, one thing I didn't like about him, he sort of cuddled me and kissed me, when I was, well getting on to 7 or 8 years old and I remember being quite annoyed and, thinking "well I'm a boy, I don't want to have all this sort of lovey dovey kissy stuff from my father" but I never dared tell him that because I thought he would be hurt or, wouldn't like it or something and, and so he used to call me all kinds of things erm // nursery, type of names and things you know, and I didn't like it and so it may be that when I came to be a father myself and particularly a grandfather, I on the whole tended to hold back from too much physical contact with boys, and I've never noticed that problem with girls, because the girls, they all rush up and cuddle me when I come you know but, [son], and [grandson] does it in a way, he puts his arms round me and I kiss him, but I kiss him on the top of his head because I think it would be too embarrassing if I were to kiss him on the cheek*

Mervyn, age 72

Mervyn situates his performances of his grandfathering practices generationally and in relation to his past lifecourse experiences, explaining that he has altered his practices with his grandchildren in relation to his own father and the way he fathered, which he did not like. Mervyn's narrative in particular reinforces the notion that gender is performatively constituted through the spaces of his generationally marked body. As a result of how he constructs his identity, Mervyn is aware of how his intimate practices with his grandson might be considered to subvert expectations of a heterosexual masculinity, even in this familial context. This strongly defines his identity and as a result influences his conscious choice to alter his grandfathering practices to reflect traditional gendered expectations. These also relate to his past experiences with his own father to the extent that he constructs an alternative masculinity to him; his father acts as a generational marker of difference.

Roger similarly explains that intimacy and bodily interaction is gendered but also intersected by age reflecting further variation in grandfathering practices. As his granddaughter has got older, their intimacy practices have become more limited:

> *[Grandsons] don't er hug me or anything, the girls always do erm, well [granddaughter] gives me a good wrapping one. The other one, I mean she's, I say she's only 20 now, she just gives me a kiss on the cheek but er, no the boys er, they just acknowledge me kind of thing "oh you're there" (laughs), mind you I don't give my son a kiss either (laughs) yeah...so we, I think we've had, yeah we've had a lot of fun with them*

Roger, age 74

While Roger explains that his younger granddaughters give him hugs, it is evident that there is a transition in the way in which the men conduct intimate bodily practices with their grandchildren, as lifecourse studies suggest occurs. This is a result of the ageing of grandchildren and the men's own ageing and is reflected through bodily

performance. In reducing these intimate practices over time both grandfathers and grandchildren are performing age and intimacy in ways that conform to specific norms of appropriateness (see Laz, 2003). Peter for example explains how these more bodily displays of affection become more difficult over time, particularly in relation to his bodily ability:

> it was quite endearing as they were smaller, as they're getting bigger it was quite difficult but, when I go and see them they'll run across the room, the road, the drive or whatever, leap up in the air, arms round my neck and sort of swing on me erm, which at the ages of oh I don't know 4 and 1 or something was quite fun but, erm, now I feel as though my necks about to be broken erm, but you know that's just a, a progression, but yes that's erm, the, the there's clearly a lot of attraction, we've shared a lot of good times together so yes, they're, they're very fond of me...well of us both you know, not just me but erm, maybe that's a male thing

Peter, age 65

While bodily practices of intimacy in grandfathering can be gentle and can display love and affection, in Peter's case they also highlight his changing bodily ability, revealing how his embodied ageing undermines his masculine performances such as allowing his grandchildren to swing from his neck. Ability is very much attributed to age in the men's discussions as Sam and Paul's narratives reveal:

> We had our children fairly young and so that's why, and in a way now I'm so pleased because, you know the, everything, the, everything I do now I've been doing for years, so I'm not doing, or not, not doing anything I haven't done for ages, so I'm very active with the grandchildren. I don't really think about "hmmm should I do this?, should I do that?" It's just the same as it always was

Paul, age 58

> My younger person's perception of grandparents is that they were old, but I imagine the realities not quite like that. I imagine I look very old to my grandchildren, but I actually became a grandfather at 42 er, which was marvellous you know and erm, so especially with a grandson who was born first, er I did an enormous amount with him, and still do

Sam, age 51

For the older men in the sample, there was much more concern about bodily abilities

which was particularly apparent during their grandfathering practices and in interaction

with the generations in their family, as Bill discusses;

> *the erm young children will start the chasing game you know "catch me grandpa if you can" and I could do myself a mischief so, erm, but I erm, like a lot of men my age I suppose, if I'm well I'll pick, I'll put [grandson] up on my shoulders erm, he's now 10 and growing fast and I, I erm I might occasionally even now try that and my son will say "be careful with grandpa" and I'm aware that I can't do it without you know sooner or later, I'll harm myself...I want to be a dad again... (laughs) er but I haven't got the energy at all, it's very frustrating as a grandfather, we still think of ourselves as 25, look in the mirror and say "oh you poor old man" you know (laughs) yeah*

Bill, age 70

Clearly as the body declines, being physical and active gets more difficult, affecting

what men can do as grandfathers, yet despite this, during the observations, Bill was

very active with his grandchildren, carrying them around and lifted them up despite

clearly being in discomfort:

> *the children became a bit boisterous and start play fighting with each other. Bill asks them if they would like to go out later but there is some resistance to this from the children. They want to stay on the computer. The play fighting is all light hearted and there is clearly a strong sibling bond between brother and sister. Bill periodically tells them to be careful and warns [grandson] not to hurt his sister. He soon joins in with their playing, wrapping his arms round [grandson] from behind, who has his sister squirming around on the floor in a mini play fight. I consider it all to be good rough and tumble family fun. Bill warns them to be careful as 'this sort of play usually ends in tears'. Eventually [granddaughter] tires and runs downstairs and surprisingly to me, Bill who still has hold of [grandson] picks him off the ground so that he is hanging in front of him almost folded in half. I was surprised by his strength although the strain of this action was clear on his face. He tires quickly, going red in the face and puffing and panting. In this lovely, yet alarming display of masculinity, Bill gushes that he loves his grandchildren. He then (whilst still holding 10 year old [grandson] off the ground) tells me that every time he sees him he is at least an inch bigger and so he is seeing him growing up all the time. He then speaks to [grandson] and says "I won't be able to do this much longer, if anything you'll be picking me up.*

*When do you think you could pick me up?", [grandson] replied "I don't know 2
years". Bill laughed and put [grandson] down, who runs off down the stairs*

Observation Notes with Bill: 05.09.09

In continuing to engage in these physical, bodily activities, Bill continues to enact activities he considers appropriate to his grandfather identity, despite his declining bodily abilities.

The body is often central to narratives of ageing (Sandberg, 2007) and there was no exception in the grandfather's examples. By engaging in physical activity which requires his strength to carry his grandson, Bill actively resists his bodily ageing and the 'poor old man' image he constructs in his narrative through performances of an active masculinity. Courtenay (2000) suggests that subordinated men in particular engage in physically dominant behaviours at the expense of their health to resist relegation to positions of lower dominance, and this is something that Bill appears to be doing. As discussed in Chapter Three, this represents the intersectionality of performativity; while his declining strength is a biological reality, Bill subverts negative notions of ageing decline through performing masculinities, despite the potential for injury or harm to his body. There is also an awareness of transition in the exchange between them as Bill points out he will not be able to continue holding him for long, although Bill's grandson seems keen for it to continue.

It is important to note that the majority of the grandfathers who participated were aged between 51 and 74 (see Table 5.1, Chapter Five) and in general were able bodied but beginning to notice their declining abilities, particularly when engaged in interaction practices with grandchildren. For great-grandfather Jonah, it is evident that this process of care was reversing and that his granddaughter was beginning to care for her

grandfather. Jonah, for example explains a visit made to his home by his 19 year old granddaughter:

they were up this weekend and, I mean the place is nice and clean but she cleans the place you know and it really, I said "it's not dirty" but everything was tidied up, she stripped the kitchen down, it wasn't dirty but she stripped it down, cleaned, washed everything, she's one of those that's house proud, they've made good for themselves

Jonah, age 84

This reversal of practices particularly suggests that there is a transition in grandfathering practices over time that begin with being a carer and transition to being cared for. This is reflected through the ageing and declining body and clearly affects the practices men engage in with their grandchildren over time. Physical age is therefore a significant intersection of the grandfather identity that creates different practices of interaction and a qualitatively different performance of grandfathering than might previously have been experienced.

While related more frequently to ageing by the majority of the men's narratives, ability was particularly an intersection of Charles's grandfathering practices. Of the 31 men interviewed Charles was the only man to define himself disabled as a result of being visually impaired. He revealed however that for this granddaughter, being a grandfather had considerably more meaning to her than his disability:

my grandchildren, even though, I'm totally blind, I've got spinal problems and I don't hear all that well, we went out last year, parked in a car park and we parked in a, well we call them veggie spaces, a disabled person space because it was chucking it down and my granddaughter said "why have we parked in a disabled space?" and my wife said "well grandad's disabled" and she said "he's not, he's my grandad" so we do all sorts of things with them you know, I mean, I've done wood work with the kids, made them painting boards and sledges and things, they know I used to go to work because, me granddaughter can remember me working, so they don't think of me as...I'm just grandad...I mean alright they have to be careful, where they leave

*things in the house, they are, you know they don't leave things on the floor to much,
but we've only had, one little accident in...3, 4 years so it's not been so bad*

Charles, age 65

To his granddaughter, Charles's bodily disability is not related to his generational
position as a grandfather because he is still able to do things with his grandchildren
and they remember that he has driven the car, has worked in the past, does volunteer
work and does different activities with them (such as wood work). For Charles doing
things with his grandchildren and conducting practices that maintain a sense of ability
are performances that reassert his identity as a grandfather and being masculine
(which I explore in more detail in Section 6.5) and contribute to diminishing his
disability. As also reflected in Bill's ethnography, emphasis on being active is
considered an important element of ageing successfully (Bowling and Dieppe, 2006)
highlighting a disparity between being physically able and conforming to a
construction that values being active. Bodily performances in grandfathering are
contingent on various factors that constitute the men's identities, including physical
ability, perceptions of how age and masculinities should be performed effectively and
engagement in intimate practices.

A smaller number of the men discussed caring for their grandchildren in more
intimate ways particularly when their grandchildren were babies and described how
they conducted caring practices such as nappy changing (particularly Duncan, who
described topping and tailing his grandson as a baby before work, and Arnold who
also nappy changes). These findings challenge existing ideas that the care of infants is
traditionally construed as 'women's work' (see Aitken, 2000). While more young
men and fathers are becoming increasingly involved in this type of care work
(Singleton and Maher, 2004), it was evident that some contemporary grandfathers

were also adopting more intimate practices of care with their grandchildren, subverting traditional performances of masculinity in the later lifecourse by engaging in what Gill Valentine terms 'doing intimacy' (Valentine 2008). The men who discussed changing nappies draw upon their personal and familial circumstances to explain their involvement. James for example got re-married to a woman with no children, which has influenced his grandfathering practices:

my wife, she's on a learning curve because she's never had any children, and she's adapting to it, I must say, incredibly well, she does exceedingly well. So she performs some of the functions, and I do the others, so for instance [wife] won't change nappies (laughs) so that immediately becomes my job but yes, erm, yeah we, yes we do different things and I'll keep [granddaughter] occupied while [wife] goes and does things and she'll keep [granddaughter] occupied while I go and do things, so yeah

James, age 62

Here, through intimate bodily intergenerational interactions James' grandfathering practices reflect a gendered performance of childcare that subverts traditional performances of masculinity. David Morgan (1992, pg 140) terms this adoption of more feminine tasks using a spatial metaphor, defining it as a 'new territory'. As such through their embodied performances of child care the men are negotiating alternative discourses of masculinity. From a feminist perspective this represents some evidence for hope for the alteration of gender roles in the family.

However, James and Duncan are minorities in the sample and there are disagreements between the participants, as Ray (representing the majority) demonstrates:

I didn't have to [nappy change] the little ones, thank God er (laughs) [son] does it all and [daughter] does it all, when they're here er, [wife] does it. They're girls, I think girls need girls, I'm sorry I'm a bit old fashioned, do you know what I mean?, men, men are men, in that sense and as I say, they love their grandma to do it, they look to grandma to do it, they don't look to grandad to do it and I think "yeah that's good, that's good"

Ray, age 69

For Jim this was also related to his attitude to babies more generally:

I had views of children that, all small people should be born at 21 and emigrated, that was my attitude, I've never been one to dote over small children; I'm still not. I don't think grandchildren, really come into their own until they're voluble and you can communicate. I see nothing beautiful or, or captivating in a 4 or 5 week baby.

Anna: So did you not do nappies or anything then?

Oh God no, no I mean all they do, they eat, they fart, they smell, it goes in one end, out the other, they're little lumps of growing things, they have next to no personality, this nonsense of he's got his mothers eyes, his father's nose, his grandads teeth, absolute nonsense, they're lumps and it's not until the grow and they start to develop and become little human beings that they do, then become interesting, to me

Jim, age 71

What these contradictions between the men's narratives suggest in relation to child care practices such as nappy changing, is that performing intimacy is influenced by a range of different factors; the individual, their attitudes to child care based on their lifecourse experiences, gender and relations with other family members including wives and children. For some such as Ray and Jim, this even results in the continued rejection of any intimate practices such as nappy changing. They instead justify their lack of involvement in relation to wider cultural expectations by saying 'men are men'; a strong signifier of identity and what it represents. Ray also suggests that the allocation of the nappy changing role is ordered, between his children and his wife.

From a performativity perspective it is clear that while the practices of James, Duncan and Arnold (discussed in Chapter Seven) represent a subversion of traditional masculinities by being involved in these more intimate practices, the realities are that many men still do not do these tasks even in grandfathering, and that this limited progression should not naturalise men's overall (lack of) involvement in child care.

6.2. The home

I spend a lot of time with [grandchildren] in our house, so our house is like their second home

Sam, age 51

Like Sam, many of the men were keen to impress that part of their role as grandfather is to provide a second home for grandchildren. The home is often constructed as a key site in which people construct their everyday lives (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Hopkins, 2010) and is the place where family practices are contextualised (Allan and Crow, 1989) and identities are shaped. While constructions of the home are generally positive, it can also be a place of resistance, fear and alienation made evident when considering the various identity categories that interact in the home (Blunt and Varley, 2004). As stated in Chapter Three, the feminisation of the home as a space can cause some older men to resist it when they retire, to overcome the strongly established female identity of their wives and as a response to a loss of a work identity (Cliff, 1993; Mowl et al, 2000). But as Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003) and Gorman-Murray (2008) highlight, just because men occupy domestic space does not mean they let go of their masculinities; it is still a space where male generational identities are invested and enacted and domesticity and masculinity are interrelational and co-constitutive (Gorman-Murray, 2008).

The men in the sample described several grandfathering practices that took place in their homes and these practices sometimes overlapped with the intimate bodily practices described in the previous section. However, the men discussed a much greater range of practices that they conduct in their homes. Their homes were used for grandchildren to stay overnight for visits for example; Arthur discussed having the grandchildren stay over at weekends and Alan described looking after his grandchildren to allow his children to go and have fun, which is particularly characteristic of the contemporary economic context in relation to child care. Homes are also variously the centre of various family gatherings such as meals, BBQ's and celebrations. In particular the men's practices involved creating spaces for their grandchildren at their homes and constructing specific micro-geographies that reinforced their masculinity in an otherwise feminine space as this section explores.

6.2.1. 'Doing' grandfather at home

If men resist the feminisation of the home post retirement, grandfathering was one facet of the men's lives in which they described engaging in practices that supported this resistance. Mann (2007) argues that grandparenting is a space beyond employment and parenting and conceptualised this way, there was evidence of the men using this space to establish their identities through various practices that reflected their male identity. A lot of the practices that the men described suggested that they were very involved in practical and 'fixing' activities at home as the following quotes illustrate:

we do all sorts of things with them you know, I mean er, I've done wood work with the kids, made them painting boards and sledges and things like that

Charles, age 65

I, I, build him, we've given [grandson] a construction thing, where you build it, if you imagine Meccano?, yeah well got young, lots of pre-formed shapes and things like that erm, we're very happy to get down on the floor and crawl about and play with things

Reg, age 66

With a small child you've got to be involved and directing and, helping and guiding erm, you know how these bits of Lego go and, "shall we build a bus together?" and whatever

Peter, age 65

Philip even describes himself as the families *"Mr Fix it!"*. Reg and Peter in particular, emphasise activities involving construction, building and fixing things together (a popular discourse represented by Plate 6.1); like Philip, Reg identified himself as *'the families fixer'*. Plate 6.1 depicts a cushion given to Alan, one of the research participants, by his grandchildren:

GRANDFATHERS
◆
ARE FOR LOVING AND
FIXING THINGS
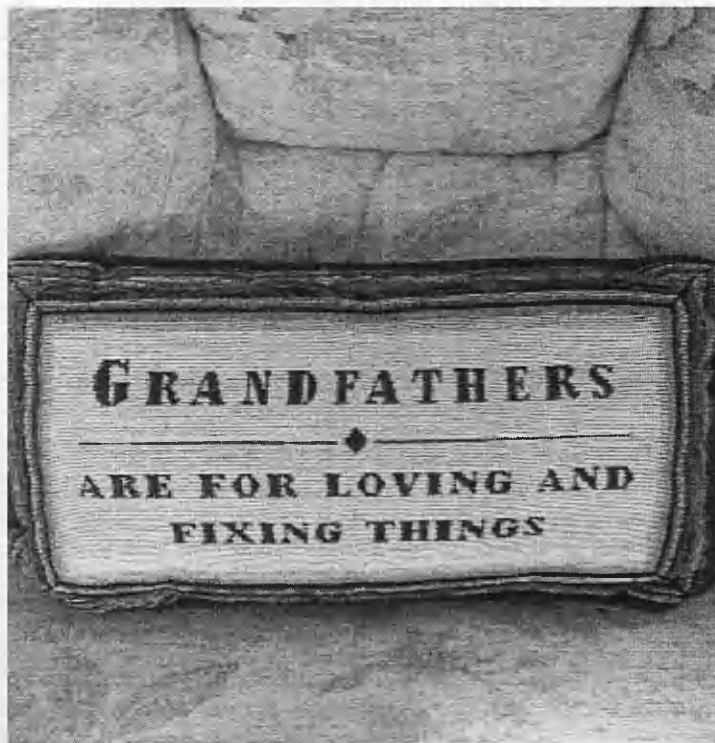
Plate 6.1: This photograph was taken at Alan's home after his interview on 15th July 2009. This was a gift from his grandchildren that he proudly displays in his conservatory. Photograph taken by author with participants permission at the time of interview ©.

The cushion was on display in his conservatory and I had observed it while conducting the interview; confirming the importance of the interview context and participant observation in the field (discussed in Chapter Five). This picture was taken during his interview at his home because it represents a material space that reflects not only a cultural construction of grandfathering but also his grandfathering practices with his grandson when he visits his home. Alan offered an explanation for receiving the cushion:

When [grandson] comes, he brings up his bike and goes out with 1 or 2 of the boys

He continues,

Now his bike, he's always pulling it apart, and he'll sometimes bring it in, bits you know, and we've put it back together again, so I suppose that's probably why that cushion, because I was always fixing his bike yeah, yeah

Interestingly, Alan does not offer any suggestion that grandfathers are for being loved or are involved in intimate relationships, and instead focuses on the fixing aspect portrayed in the message, which Reg also does, as demonstrated on the previous page when he discusses Mechano. For Alan, the fixing element of his identity that has been interpreted by his children and grandchildren is one of the main reasons why he was given the cushion. Comments of this nature were made throughout the narratives, and there was a clear reinforcement of the instrumental roles of grandfathering as well as the expressive and emotional. Overall however, the men in the study discussed the instrumental roles more often and in more detail than they discussed their more personal and interactive practices (discussed in Section 5.1) suggesting that as grandfathers, men are engaging in gendered practices, but that this varies between the men. While some men do engage in nurturing and caring practices through bodily

intimacy and also in the home, others do not and instead conduct more instrumental, masculine practices. According to these data, this is defined through variations in the ways the men construct and practice their identities.

These constructions of a particular masculine stereotype of their role as fixer, were reinforced in different ways by several of the fathers including Philip who calls himself a *Butlin's redcoat* and Paul who describes himself as a *cheeky chappy clown* (Phillip's narrative is discussed in Section 6.3 and Pauls is discussed in Chapter Seven) and Bill who explains:

> *I think yeah because our, our roles obviously er, I, I'm erm, I'm the man figure*
> *aren't I?, erm she's [his wife] more involved I suppose in the domestic side of things,*
> *she'll do some erm, mending for my daughter-in-law she's got a particular gift er*
> *she'll do some cooking, if needed yeah, I'm much more erm, taking them and playing*
> *football with [grandson] or erm ,at the moment she likes being picked up and*
> *cuddled by me, which all little girls love you know (laughs), I'm aware we're partly*
> *setting role models for them*

Bill, age 70

Bill positions his own role as a grandfather in relation to his wife who he situates in the home and the domestic sphere. He explains that his practices involve playing and doing things, practices that reflect the doing of masculinity, in opposition to his wife. While this example suggests men as grandfathers sustain gendered dichotomies, it is important not to be essentialist about gendered identities because not all men discussed their roles in this way. While Bill explains this, he also immediately challenges this gendered role by discussing his cuddling practices with his granddaughter, an emotional and affective practice. Each individual man therefore discusses variations in their gendered practices and throughout the interviews men construct different identities through their discussions of their practices. Mervyn for example explains in section 6.1 that he feels he can be more intimate and cuddly with

his granddaughter, while he is more active and involved in playing with his grandson. This is also reinforced by the spaces he uses; with his granddaughter he involves his body in intimate, emotional ways but takes his grandson out to play football. This process of doing active practices away from the home was much more common in the men's narratives and is explored in greater detail in section 6.3.

As discussed in Chapter Two, grandfathers emphasised that an important element of grandfathering is the transfer of values to grandchildren through education, and this was discussed most frequently in the home context. The men's narratives therefore supported the findings of Waldrop et al (1999) because one area that the men emphasised was the importance of educating grandchildren:

what I try and do with [granddaughter], the granddaughter I see most often, in fact seven times a week basically erm, so I try and do with her what I did with my own children, which is educate, so we play eye spy in the car or we have guessing games or we, discuss things and erm, I try and teach what, what I used to know

Wally, age 56

For Wally educating grandchildren is an extension of his fathering role. For him and several of the other participants, it has become part of the everyday interaction he has with his granddaughter and also includes playing games and talking. As well as playing and talking, a surprising number of the grandfathers emphasized the importance of reading to their grandchildren. Reg for example described how his grandchildren call him '*grandpa books*' because of the amount of reading he does with them. For these men, including both Mervyn and Ray this is an important aspect of being a grandfather and a grandfathering practice:

sometimes we go and stay at their house, and er when we do that we find various things to do, sometimes we play games or I read them books and stories, I, I've always had the, feeling that grandparents, one of the useful things is to do reading with their kids, with their grandchildren, we've always tried to encourage them

Mervyn, age 72

We've got them into reading now and er they won't go to bed without their books, so they're really into their books in a big way, you know what I mean?, and they, really I mean....we go over there, going to bed, we spend an hour reading. And she knows every word, like you might say "I'll skip a page", "grandad!, grandad you've missed some!"

Ray, age 69

Reading and telling stories in particular were emphasised by the men as an important contribution to the education of their grandchildren. Sam for example explains that he frequently tells his grandchildren stories when putting them bed. When prompted he recalled one of the stories he told his grandson one evening:

Sam: they both really like stories as a matter of fact, er I spent the last er, well this last 7 years making up grandad stories for them

Anna: Am I allowed to hear one?

Sam: Yes, I'll tell you a grandad story if you like? Entirely up to you

Anna: Yeah that would be good

Sam (clears throat): "Once upon a time, there was a little boy called [grandson's name], and he loved his grandad erm to bits and pieces, but his grandad was older so he got tired. One night when he went to bed and he was staying at his grandads house, and he fell asleep and he woke up and he looked outside the window and there was a tree growing there, and on that tree was lots and lots of grandads, and he ran downstairs, played with one grandad, then with another, then with another until eventually there were 30 grandads all playing and running around the garden, and then [grandson's name] said, "I'm hungry now and want something to eat" and the grandads said "oh no we don't play er we don't make food we only play" and William said "oh I wish, I wish, I wish I had my real grandad" and then he woke up and he was there"...

Sam continues to explain the significance of these stories:

They reflect an emotional reality, they reflect, they reflect a kind of a bond that they need to work through and they work through those bonds narratively erm stories make sense to them and there's thousands of them that I've told and the stories make sense to them narratively they have a part, somebody else has a part, there are clear problems, clear resolutions and er so I think it helps them to sort of situate themselves in these complex relationships, and that's what I tell stories to them for

These practices of telling stories are extremely revealing of the ways in which both Sam, and his grandchildren interpret their social lives and their interactions, as Phoenix and Sparkes (2009, pg 219) explain; 'stories are narratively lived and do not simply lie in waiting for the telling'. Sam's storytelling provides an interpretation of the reality of his relationships with his grandchildren and demonstrates how they form their identities relationally. This desire to be involved in transferring values and educating about interpersonal relationships is evidence that men do more than adopt instrumental roles as research suggests (see Mann, 2007) but also have a desire to be involved in meaningful expressive interactions with grandchildren. The importance of the meanings that men attach to their grandfathering is examined in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

Sam's narrative also provides some information about his gendered identity. He explains at the end of the story for example that as grandfathers they only play, and do not make food. This is paradoxical in relation to performances of masculinity in that they reflect the emotional realities of grandfathering, through educating grandchildren about relationships. As Atherton (2009) states, emotions are a fundamental, yet frequently overlooked, aspect of masculinities in the home. In this respect, changing performances of masculinities in the home are reflected through the practices and content of his storytelling. This also challenges findings that grandmothers tend to be

more nurturing with their grandchildren than grandfathers (Spitze and Ward, 1998; Taylor et al, 2005).

6.2.2. Creating spaces in the home

The majority of the sample did not live with their grandchildren but often had them stay at their homes for visits, holidays and for babysitting as mentioned in Section 6.1. It was evident from the narratives that despite not living with grandchildren, the men were involved in creating spaces in their own homes ready for when their grandchildren stayed over, as Alan's narrative indicates:

Anna: Do they have their own rooms in the house, is it a guest room or something?

Alan: They don't here, they did in Kendal erm, we used to have you know those little china plates with "[granddaughters name]'s room" and that you know so even though it was two bedrooms which they shared and swapped around, their names were up on the er, on the door, but we didn't do it here, I supposed 'cause they're a bit older, and not coming as often

Alan, age 72

The naming of the bedrooms in the house and marking them materially with their names suggests that grandchildren are an important part of the men's identities even when they are not living with them. The spaces and materials within the home are important not only because 'a home's material arrangements come to shape our ways of looking and thus our ideas of the place and those who live there' (Swan, 2008, pg 261) but also how these relate to their experiences of everyday life and the relations that are significant within that. As such this practice of naming the rooms is a statement about having grandchildren that reinforces and conveys the meanings of his intergenerational ties and identity as a grandparent even when they are not in the home or directly interacting with them. This forms part of the process of 'displaying family' (Finch, 2007) that is discussed in the literature review. Creating spaces for

grandchildren goes beyond performativity, which Finch (2007) argues does not fully encapsulate the performance and meanings of family relationships.

Of the men interviewed in their homes (17) and work places (3) there was a great deal of evidence that the men were involved in practices of displaying their family, including grandchildren. This was reflected in the form of displaying photographs, drawings and paintings and other material objects relating to grandchildren. Some of the men even pointed them out in their interviews:

I've got four grandchildren...all the photographs are up there (points to the photographs)

Roger, age 74, interviewed in his living room

It's amazing what they can produce in the way of art, I mean when I'm talking about doing things, this, this card here (picks up a hand drawn card) I think it's, it's quite attractive and, this was something that was done by [granddaughter] in, in Canada

Percy, age 73, interviewed in his conservatory

Photographs were commonly displayed in the men's homes and most often depicted children and grandchildren. Gillian Rose (2003) suggests that photograph displays in the home are important to study as they represent the extension of domestic space, depict integration outside the home and are 'the product of relations that extend beyond the home' (pg 5). This was certainly the case for the men who displayed images of their grandchildren and children who they did not live with or who lived at greater distances. She further suggests that family photos in particular represent the family in specific ways. Some were holiday photographs that emphasized leisure and happiness at a specific time and place (Rose, 2003), some were school and graduation photos that demonstrated achievement in the family, particularly that related to education. Graduation and school photographs were specifically displayed in Roger's

living room. He lives alone following the death of his wife but has school photographs of his grandchildren proudly displayed in various areas of his living room:

> *Roger had photographs of each [grandchild], provided by his daughter and son of key events such as school and graduation, that he pointed out immediately. They were placed on cupboards and shelves around the room, behind the chair he was sitting on, and on the mantelpiece*

Observation Notes from Roger's interview: 07.04.09

> *[the photographs] erm, they're all school ones, they're all taken at school, and if either the parents come and the photographs are not there they shout at me you see (laughs) especially if there's one missing, so you'll notice there are four, four different ones there yeah, so that's why they're there really, but no, I quite like the photographs there anyway*

Roger, age 74

Roger's children regulate how his home is decorated and there is an emphasis on being fair and displaying each of the grandchildren equally. This suggests that having more grandchildren requires grandfathers to consider how they regulate their home but also that, Roger is not in complete control over how his space is decorated. Even though he likes the photographs to be there, he emphasizes that he would be in trouble with his children if they were not displayed, and not displayed fairly and equally. Thus the home and its presentation is also regulated by the middle generation; his children.

This expands and critiques Rose's (2003) argument that it is only women who undertake family photography work. Whilst it is true that his children (a son and a daughter) encourage him to display the photographs, Roger is involved in family display work by positioning them in his living room at all times and constructing important, albeit invisible ties with family members he does not live with. Jonah also lives on his own and his living room is highly decorated with photographs of both his

grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He even showed his digital camera which still held photographs that he eventually laminates and displays. Thus while family photography is recognised as a gendered activity that is almost exclusively the activity of women, it is important to recognise that men are also involved in it but might display different imagery and space it differently.

As well as creating spaces that reflected their intergenerational relations with grandchildren in material ways, James also discussed creating his home as a safe environment for his baby granddaughter. He explains:

we are starting to go through the stage of having to change things at home, like move things out of reach, fasten my grandfather clock to the wall so she doesn't pull it over and this sort of thing and move wires out of the way and, things which....when you, you don't think about until the grandchild arrives you know, people say "oh you'll have to move this you know" and then of course she moves in and you have to do it; catches on kitchen cupboards this sort of thing, change the glass in the door so it's all safety glass or something erm, yes

James, age 62

When prompted for more information about becoming a grandfather, as a regular care giver to his granddaughter, one of the biggest changes James describes making as a grandfather is altering the physical layout of his home in order to make it safe for his granddaughter. As such his practices of grandfathering include altering his everyday spaces such as his home in order to accommodate her. These physical changes are meaningful and form part of the display of being a grandfather while not in her presence. For James they are also practices that are part of a process of keeping up to date with changes in his life such as starting to care for a new child. Not all of the grandfathers were so accommodating for their grandchildren however. George for example did not see his grandchildren very often, which in part he attributes to the

geographical distance between him and his grandchildren who live in Glasgow, and in part to the spaces of his daughters home and his own small flat;

> *it would be nice to see them more often, but to be honest the house is a tip so I can't stay there erm and, so it, it costs, so I literally drive up early morning and I come back in the evening and I get told off for that (laughs) so yeah it would be nice to see more of them, and, and when they come down, I've got a small flat on the Quay, there's no room for them, well they have stayed there but it's difficult, but my wife, she lives in a big house in Ingleton and they will stay there, they love being up there anyway with it being in the countryside so I go and see them out there*

George, age 63

As a geographical solution for having a lack of space in his home and disliking his daughter's home for its untidy nature, George's resolution is to visit his grandchildren at his wife's home. Due to his personal circumstances as a man living apart from his second wife due to work commitments and living at a geographical distance from his grandchildren, George's grandfathering practices are characterised by creating and negotiating an alternative space, which he considers more ideal for his grandchildren; his second wife's home in the countryside.

Of each of the narratives, creating and negotiating space in his home was particularly important for Charles. Charles was the only man in this sample who lived with his grandchildren, but of a sample of 1103 grandparents, (data collected recently by Grandparents Plus) 29% are living with grandchildren (Grandparents Plus, 2010), a significant figure suggesting that several families are dealing with similar issues. Charles' daughter, who has two children had divorced and was staying with them until she had finished her degree. Charles also had another granddaughter to his son who lives in Bamber Bridge (located to the south east of Preston, in the North West of England). For Charles, the negotiation of space in his home is important and specific

to the needs of each of his grandchildren. In relation to his two older grandchildren who he lives with he explains:

we all need our own space at times, they're out at school most of the time, they're out of school from 8 o'clock in the morning and they have school activities and so it's often, all but one night a week, it's always after 5 o'clock, sometimes even as late as 7, when they come home, that's not purposely, they want to do these things, that's not staying away, but come half terms and things like that, me wife and I take that opportunity anyway to go you know, next week we're going over to California for a week, 10 days you know so, or we'll you know we'll, we'll, we'll go somewhere else, we don't, we don't, not driven away you know, we're quite happy for the children to be there, but we all need space, now they have their own bedrooms now and we've fitted them all out, they've got their own gear, their own toys and gear and what have you and, me wife and I have our own room where I have my computer and everything as well, so, we have our own space if we want it, or we can be together

And for his granddaughter who lives at a distance;

....[granddaughter's] only 3 but, when she comes she has her own things at our house, her own pot of pens, you know area for play things that she, she leaves there, so she, she belongs there as much as the other 2, we treat them all equally

As a result of his familial situation and consequent living arrangements, the spaces in the home play an important role in facilitating equal intergenerational relations between his two sets of grandchildren. While practiced in a different way, this is the same principle Roger applied to displaying his grandchildren in his home. Charles and his wife play an important role in ensuring that these home spaces reflect meaning and make his younger granddaughter feel at home. This also reveals the role that decreased proximity and geographical distance plays in influencing the strength and quality of intergenerational relations and the types of practices grandfathers engage in such as creating spaces.

Finally, Charles discusses the marking of particular spaces in his home as belonging only to him and his wife which gives them some privacy. While he describes doing some things together with his grandchildren, he also emphasises having his own

space. In a study of home spaces by Sibley (1995), this patterning of space in the home actively separates out generational roles by marking particular spaces as adult. As such these practices of creating and negotiating particular spaces in the home can also contribute to defining men generationally.

6.3. Outdoor and Leisure spaces

"outdoor space and in space are both important I would say, they're an equal importance"

Ray, age 69

While Ray places equal importance on conducting grandfathering practices with grandchildren at home and outdoors, most of the grandfathers described spending a great deal of family time with their grandchildren, away from the home. Family time in public spaces was frequently described by the men as an important aspect of being a grandfather, an aspect of family leisure that is rarely explored outside of the home space (DeVault, 2000). Literatures about leisure experiences in both fatherhood and grandfatherhood more generally are almost non-existent (for exceptions see Kay, 2006; Scraton and Holland, 2006) especially in geography, despite being an important aspect of family life and intergenerational relations, and in grandfatherhood.

The majority of the men in the sample were retired, six of the men worked full time and one worked part time. Those who worked either saw their grandchildren at work (Wally), could not get time off to see their grandchildren and so were restricted to seeing them at evenings and weekends (Steve), considered themselves lucky enough to have flexible working hours (Sam, Paul, and Robert) or in Gerald's case, worked from home. For the retired men in particular their individual leisure time was significantly increased and taken up by various activities ran ging from volunteer

work, charity work, attending church and indulging hobbies amongst other things. Grandchildren were also commonly seen between these commitments. A general theme between each of the men's discussions of their outdoor and leisure practices is that they are typically embodied and embedded in local spaces, as Kenway and Hickey-Moody (2009) found in exploring young men's outdoor leisure spaces. The practices they conduct in these spaces are now explored.

The practices that the men described as key to performing their grandfathering and intergenerational relations in outdoor and leisure spaces varied across the sample. The men with grandchildren who were still babies discussed walking grandchildren around in prams, men with younger grandchildren talked about taking them to parks, many went out for family meals at restaurants and for those with slightly older grandchildren, going on walks was described. For Paul, rather than engaging in nappy changing practices as Section 6.1 explores, caring for his grandson is defined through practices that occur outdoors:

> *...caring for them, taking them out erm, helping out with erm (tut) caring duties you know, I mean you know, if er, both say with [son] and [daughter-in-law] they have to do something which they can't, so you know babysitting, taking them out, er my daughter in law, er the oldest one, with just one child [grandson], is a lawyer she works in Manchester and, the hours are absolutely horrendous so, you know I think there's a real tension for her, between being a mother and erm looking after the child, for [son] also, so they leave the house early and come back very late and there's a baby minders and all that so, we, whenever we can and I can...we go down, and take [grandson], out all day and stay with, be with [grandson] erm, you know not because we have to but because we want to you know*

Paul, age 58

Taking his grandson out defines his babysitting and caring practices as opposed to nappy changing, suggesting that there are gendered ways of caring for grandchildren and that space is implicated in this. The emphasis on going out is important because it

highlights variations between men in the ways they practice grandfathering, where they do it and consequently how they perform their identities.

Each of the activities described by the men also varied depending on the age of the grandfathers and grandchildren. George for example who has two grandsons aged three and one and a half years, looks forward to the future:

> *it would be nice to take them across to Hungary and, take them walking and stuff like that, they're a bit too young at the moment*

George, age 63

There is certainly an element of transition in relation to the types of practices that the men describe doing with their grandchildren and age affected the grandfathering practices the men conducted with their grandchildren as Roger and Fred mention;

> *It was more fun when they were small, we used to go to the park and roll down hills and you know play silly games and things, but when they get to 20, I mean they're not children anymore are they?, they've got their own minds*

When asked what he does with his teenage grandson, Fred replies:

> *Not a lot, you know he's got his, he likes his, skateboarding he likes, er, bike, mountain biking and everything else, and really he's got his mates sort of thing*

The majority of the men involved in practices outside of the home were those who were retired and had grandchildren young enough to be looked after but old enough to be able to do different activities (usually between five and six years old up to early teens). These activities typically reflected the men's own hobbies and interests. There was a great deal of emphasis on sports and activity based practices including watching and playing football, sailing, riding bikes, orienteering and sports more generally such as tennis and golf as the following narratives represent:

I've taught all of them, even my children...how to ride a bike, well I don't think mothers dare let go of the saddle (laughs)

Philip, age 61

I've taken [step-granddaughter] to my tennis club and er, introduced her to tennis on Wednesday afternoons and erm....and then we go for perhaps walks if they come along, if the weather is perhaps suitable er, but I don't really play games much with them when they come here no, no we don't play games with them so much erm, it's mainly going out and erm, as I say, if they want to play sport, because I enjoy tennis myself and golf you know and er, erm, but er they do play, I mean [step-granddaughter] plays chess at home I think, and she does a lot with the computer as well, she's very confident as children nowadays

Percy, age 73

we used to do the normal things, we used to, with the lads, sometimes we were all together, we just went out, went out to, for a meal or went to the park or, out into the country or, to the beach or wherever you know, whatever, it depended on the weather sometimes football, well I go to football matches regular, the lads, like that you know...generally they went down where all they, because we're still in the little, lower leagues so it's not all seated so you know, they go down towards the front near the barrier, and I used to be further back but you know, when they were very little they were right in front, when they got in to 10, 11, 12 you know they wanted to be closer to the action

Andrew, age 70

If it's a day like today I'll say to them "shall we go fishing?"....it's Morecambe Bay out there which is erm, quite a dangerous, but beautiful place and erm...they have a whale of a time, jumping around and, and er sometimes you'll take a ball down and play cricket, [granddaughter] is not interested in cricket but [grandson] is

Bill, age 70

Interestingly Percy's comment suggests that he has little interaction with his step-grandchildren in the home; his step-granddaughter plays chess or goes on the computer on her own. In order for them to interact he mainly takes them out and actively organises something to do (sometimes to play tennis). A variety of the practices that the grandfathers mentioned are conducted outside the home and are

sports related, includ ing tennis, cricket, football and golf. Many of the existing literatures about masculinity and sports focus on younger men (Anderson and Nylund, 2007; Drummond, 2002; Parker, 1996; Wellard, 2002), but these practices clearly continue into the later lifecourse, until bodily ageing restricts men from conducting them (see Section 6.1). As Bill's narrative suggests, and in parallel with caring practices, the gender of the grandchild is also a consideration when planning their practices with the grandfathers decide what to do with their grandchildren, outside their homes. Andrew for example constructs taking his grandson to regular football matches as a normal thing for a grandfather to do. Gendered differences in activities with granddaughters and grandsons shape the relationships between the grandfathers and grandchildren, and their use of space. Ted for example discusses indulging his hobby and including his grandchildren:

they get a bit annoyed when I take 'em to see aeroplanes and trains (laughs) so when we've got 'em both, boys and girls we've got to sort of, one day for boys and one day for girls, try and work it that way (laughs)

Ted, age 66

These outdoor practices and the gender of grandchildren therefore contribute to the construction of gendered generational relations between men and their grandchildren and also the gendering of the men's practices that in turn, reflect their identities. Ted also suggests that his reason for using outdoor spaces is because his life has always been about being outdoors:

we always keep 'em, I take 'em out a lot, we go walking and things like that, especially the young one now, he's 6 and we go walking but, and last year they went orienteering, so I went with 'em and, you know....we try and keep going and, I like walking int' country and, we go a lot the canal and look at ducks and that and I train 'em in bird watching type thing, tell 'em what birds are what, and animals...I did it with me sons, and I was in the Observer Corps which is attached to RAF so we went

to a lot of air shows when my kids were young 'uns and we were always at air shows, bin all over, so you know it's been an outdoor kind of life

Ted, age 66

Just like the home, outdoor spaces allow men to be involved in practices of education, although in these spaces the practices are much more active, including bird watching and educating grandchildren about bird types, and also teaching orienteering. Interestingly Ted attributes this to his lifecourse; an identity he has always identified with. Having an outdoor life has always been part of his identity and through his practices and uses of outdoor spaces he transfers this element of his identity, first to his sons and then to his grandchildren. This represents a continuity in his identity over time as well as the interdependency of his grandfathering practices. Through spending time with his grandchildren, he continues to maintain more masculine practices that have always constructed his gendered identity.

As well as a continuation of practices outdoors, some of the men also gave several other reasons for making use of outdoor spaces to interact with their grandchildren. Arnold and Philip offer explanations:

What I'm able to do, is provide them with something they, it's which is, is actually an embellishment of what they have from their parents, something different, access to different interests, different activities....what tends to happen is erm, if we have...both [grandchildren] for a couple of days erm, we will split up, my wife and I, and take one each for some of the time... it's the best way of coping with them really (laughs) I mean they're great, they're not difficult, but they are young and lively, and I'm better, I think, I think I am definitely better, er, if you wanted to sort of see the difference between the way my wife and I operate with them, I need to have somewhere to go, and somewhere to look at and something to show them. My wife is absolutely brilliant at sitting down at the table like this, and getting them interested in absolutely everything, I mean she was a special needs teacher so she has an interminable patience erm, so I tend to say "right, we'll go to, somewhere" so we'll go say to, when Preston North End are playing, and we'll go to the match

Arnold, age 65

I think the children see... my wife, more as the, provider of food and erm, home comforts if that's?, and I'm more the Butlin's redcoat you know, like I always take them swimming or, riding their bike on the prom, well we sometimes do that, I do that kind of thing and [wife]does more of the (tut) I suppose it's an awful thing to say these days isn't it?, especially to a young women, the more domestic aspect of it, like I'm hopeless at dressing them and bathing them, and ought like that

Philip, age 61

These extracts expose several revealing things. Both men consider a significant part of their grandfathering to be about doing different activities with their grandchildren. Arnold suggests that this provides his grandchildren with extra interests; interests that they might not get from their own parents. As such being a grandfather is about doing different things, and introducing grandchildren to new interests through various practices and therefore playing an important role in the upbringing of his grandchildren. Further, in emphasizing their preference for going out away from the home space, both Philip and Arnold present distinct differences between their roles as grandfather and their wives, Philip especially. Both place their wives in the home space while reinforcing their desire to go and engage in sporting and physical activities such as football, swimming and bike riding, but as previously discussed in Section 6.2 this is not the case for all of the men in the study and is a result of these men's specific identities as grandfathers.

Wellard (2002) argues that sport is still predominantly considered an important aspect of *male* life (his emphasis), but is dependent on various other social factors including age, ability, class and so on. As able grandfathers, Arnold is able to take his grandson to see football matches and is able to play the sport with him. Philip in particular reinforces this spatially. Through their grandparenting, he and his wife sustain gendered norms; she performs her role in the home, a female constructed space, while he performs his role through the doing of activities outside of the home. At the same

time, while the men do state preferences for being outdoors, several of them describe this as a deliberate strategy to overcome generational differences. Arnold mentions that he enjoys his grandchildren but that they are young and lively. Bill also suggests that he too, prefers to take the grandchildren out of the house when they visit, as a way of coping with their youthfulness:

> *Bill mentions to [his son] that the children had been resistant to the idea of going out but [his son] says "no they need to go out really". There was clearly the expectation that going to the grandparents meant needing something to do. Their constructions of the grandchildren as lively and needing entertainment were evident.*

Observation Notes with Bill: 05.09.09

> *if the weather is kind the kids usually like to go down to the Shore to play in the "rock pools" or to the village playing field where they can let off steam. They are not of an age where they can be cooped up in a room (especially with adults) for any length of time!*

Email Correspondence with Bill: 27.07.09

These data suggest that intergenerational interaction with grandchildren allows the men to do grandfathering out of the home space and in the public sphere, a practice also considered a trait of fathering (Brandth and Kvande, 1998). For retired men in particular being a grandfather reflects a shift from the outside world of work to the home. Brandth and Kvande (1998) found that fathers in situations that mimic this shift in role and use of space, either because they are on paternal leave or who are active fathers, tend to want to take their child out into this world. A similar process appears to be occurring here; grandchildren are an extended generational relation but relationships with them present an opportunity and a space in which men can conduct their practices in the public world that men most relate their identities to. As is required when doing sports, these activities, and the need to take grandchildren out, is

also intersected by other social axes of difference. Bill needs to be able bodied and have the space available in which to take them out.

6.4. New technologies and media

Section 6.1 explored embodied intimate practices between grandfathers and their grandchildren but it is evident from both the narratives, and the literature discussed in Chapter Two that intimacy in familial relationships, including between grandfathers and their grandchildren is also being mediated through new technologies, for which there is currently a deficit of information (Vetere et al, 2005). An important facet of grandfathering practices in the contemporary context is the incorporation of new technologies in intergenerational relations. Both the interview and observation data revealed that the majority of the men had access to various forms of technology in their homes that they discussed using to contact their grandchildren and to maintain relationships with them. As such, new media which has become so pervasive in youth culture (Ito et al, 2009), is also becoming enmeshed in the grandfathers' practices with their grandchildren. The men revealed that technology use facilitates both direct, face-to-face interaction in space as well as rescaling intimacy across geographical distances (Binnie, 2000). They also discussed various ways in which new technologies such as those for communication (computers, telephones, mobile phones, and web cams) and for interactive play and learning (especially computers, video games and music technologies) facilitated practices of involvement and interaction.

As a result of the contemporary demographic context, characterised by grandparents living at increased distances from their grandchildren as highlighted in the literature review (Bordone, 2009; Mulder and van der Meer, 2009) several of the grandfathers discussed using alternative practices of communication with their grandchildren.

David was one example of a grandfather who lived at a distance from his grandchildren. Aged 30 and 31, he explains that his main contact with his grandchildren is via emails, highlighting that in this case technology is mediating intimate relationships between grandfathers and their grandchildren across geographical distance. In line with the literatures, a large proportion of the sample lived at extended physical distances from their grandchildren (see Appendix 4), which constructed an additional barrier in grandfathering that the men would have been less likely to experience in fatherhood, except perhaps in situations of divorce or separation. It is this spatial barrier that influences the ways in which men practice their relationships with grandchildren.

Reg in particular highlighted the significance of communicating with his two year old grandson who lives in the North of Scotland by using the telephone:

Being a grandparent...it's very special erm, because we hope that we'll have a good relationship with our grandchildren, that they will see that we offer, almost a second home, that there's somebody else there to care, and to love them...because instinctively we were thrilled when the, it's quite special being a grandfather, or grandparents...if I tell you, when we speak to [grandson] on the phone. It's a nice warm glow. It sounds pretty, pretty doesn't it?, it's just a feeling erm...you're important to someone

Reg, age 66

As well as telephones, some of the men who lived at a distance from their grandchildren discussed using webcams so that they could see and interact with their grandchildren:

as regards seeing them physically erm, the last time I saw [daughter] and [granddaughter], was last March so just over a year ago they came across, [daughter] and [granddaughter] and stayed here for a, erm she visited her aunty who lives in, North Wales, for a few days, and then came here, erm that was the last time I saw them, sort of physically, and erm I'm going across to Canada in June this year erm, so I suppose...since she's been born I've, I've seen her twice er, I think it's

twice in Canada and once here so, 3 times in 3 years I see her, and they send me email, photographs, and erm, regularly er, digital camera and that and er, so that helps and, we have a web cam on the computer and, it's marvellous really, it doesn't always work, sometimes it er, the char....the people don't move but erm....you know it's a miracle really, you have this picture this instant picture through your computer, the little web cam isn't it?, er, and that does help and er, we, we're on the phone, my daughter and I, I would say, certainly erm, at least once a fortnight yeah erm, yes so, I've kept up the contact since she's been living in Canada

Percy, age 73

Webcams suggest that the performance and performativity of grandfather identities, and intergenerational relations are now also being practiced in virtual space where social identities are no less important. Webcams raise interesting questions about how grandfather identities are practiced in that the body becomes disembodied (Kitchin, 1998) and separated from direct interaction, something future research might examine.

In the examples discussed so far, technologies are used in a way that compensates for the distance created by living at an increased proximity from grandchildren. As Quadrello et al (2005) found however, some of the men did not use technologies in a compensatory way and instead incorporated them into direct, face-to-face interactions with grandchildren regardless of the distance that they lived. A good example of this is Bill's use of web cams, an important facet of his grandfathering practices which I observed when visiting him and his grandchildren. Bill's grandchildren live locally but the observations revealed that he uses the webcam within the space of the computer itself as well. They used his home computer and webcam, not across distance but in social interaction, to play games and to perform plays that he organised with them and also recorded (Plate 6.2):

Plate 6.2: Photograph sent by Bill of him and his grandchildren, taken with a home webcam. Permission to use photo received ©

In a large room on the second floor of Bill's house was a room with a computer, computer desk, futon and mirrored built in wardrobes. [grandson] was sat at the computer with [granddaughter] sat next to him. He was on Youtube and playing a comic yellow singing bird that can be paid for to add to mobile phones. [grandson] was singing along and dancing and taking full control of the opportunity to show his grandad and sister what he had found. Bill stood behind the chair and watched each one (there were a series of them) and seemed to revel in his grandchildren's enjoyment of the birds and their interest in showing him them. One was of the bird singing "Jingle Bells" which Bill sang along to. Each one was also in a different language and Richard explained to them which language was being spoken – he was acting as an educator in relation to the clips the grandchildren were enjoying showing him.

Observation with Bill: 05.0.09

In his individual interview, Bill discusses his computer use further:

It will never be a substitute for face-to-face, for body language and all that er but erm, I'm experimenting with it, it's a bit radical but, yeah I want to extend if I can, this time of real contact before they become monsters, you know into, into boyfriends and girlfriends yeah, yeah....I think it's a new world, there are dangers in it, it's like everything else, it can be used er, used for harmful ways or positive ways and er, I tend to think ahead, I think one day we'll have screens, up there, and we'll switch it on and say "hi how are things?"

Bill, age 70

Observations and discussions with Bill suggest that contemporary grandfathering practices and intergenerational relationships are digitally mediated as a result of geographical distance, but also through face-to-face interaction in these spaces. Bill and Percy for example have access to this form of technology in their homes which is shaping their interactions and practices with grandchildren both in front of the webcam and across physical distance.

Most of the men in the sample who I interviewed in their homes had computers and described their use as part of their intergenerational practices. Of significance in Bill's discussions however is the fact that this use of technology does not substitute face-to-face interaction and 'being there' and thus is rarely used in a compensatory way as others literatures suggest (Urry, 2002; Quadrello et al, 2005), reflecting the variety of practices grandfathers can engage in using technologies. As such, techno spaces, as characterised by Laegran (2002) have increasingly become a site for intergenerational interaction and the practice of grandfather identities, where technology is used through and alongside human interactions.

While Bill used the space in which to observe his grandchildren playing and to educate them, Duncan also explained how practices around the computer can be mutual and reciprocal in relation to learning to use new technologies. He says:

We don't do a lot together, but the, the last thing we've done together was his homework before half term, but before that I showed him how to make a slideshow using [Microsoft software program] Power Point. Now somehow he got into Microsoft Movie Maker so, what he'd learnt on Power Point, he adapted to that, and he knows how to get music off the Internet, so he showed me how to make a movie...and you should have seen his face when he'd finished, I'm really close with him compared to the others

Duncan, age 70

This data in particular supports Wilk (2000) who suggests that competence and knowledge in relation to computers and new technologies can shift generational authority either from older people to younger people and change their relationship, or create them as equal partners (discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.2.1). As such grandfathers are negotiating their relationships with their grandchildren relationally in the spaces of the computers in their homes while being involved in practices of learning as well as educating, highlighting the interdependent nature of generational relations. Intergenerational learning is defined as the transmission of beliefs and practices from one generation to another and is typically studied from the perspective of parenting (Gadsden and Hall, 1996); grandparents are rarely considered. While there is little evidence of how technologies affected grandparent-grandchildren relations in the past, Duncan's narrative suggests that it can provide an important space for performing intergenerational practices that facilitate close relationships and ways in which to 'do family' in a contemporary way.

This shift in generational authority around the use of technology was particularly evident in Ted's narrative:

you know this technology that's coming out now and they know all about it, and they give me an old computer, well eldest granddaughter gave us her old computer, I mean I haven't a clue, they come and show me how to work it, well it'd be better if you did this, you know, it's better on her now, you can get on internet (tuts)

Ted, age 66

Here Ted's granddaughter has authority over the technology as she transfers her knowledge and resources to her grandfather in order to help him in his social activities outside of the home. This reversal of roles is a clear transformation of the contemporary grandfather identity in that new social practices with technology are

challenging traditional Parsonian accounts of the family which assume that generational power is descendent upon children who are dependent (Hockey and James, 2003). This loss of power and authority generationally also has an impact on masculinity as this lack of ability and competence with computers might be considered to undermine male identity in later life (Ribak, 2002). Because male identities are articulated through practices involving technology and computers in particular, the lack of ability to use them when grandfathering is potentially disempowering. Technology spaces therefore reveal how generation as a social identity can also be considered a power relation that constructs and influences how men perform their identities, as Butler argues about gender (Butler, 1990; 1993) but in the context of intergenerational relations with grandchildren.

Further comments made by the men demonstrate that through their various practices and interactions with grandchildren they learn about and become exposed to other forms of new media:

we, just talk, they might show me something they've got or these, like the iPods and all these sort of things they've got.....if I want anything doing with my phone, I just, you know anything, when they come, I'm glad, I'm glad when they come, I save things for them you know

Andrew, age 70

I still can't operate machines on the television like my 2 grandsons, they, they have these games where they play each other and I was down there, I think it was last Christmas Eve and er, "come on grandad have a go at this" and I just couldn't, the fingers are just doing this aren't they?, you know yeah so I, yeah so I know my restrictions, I can't play fast games (laughs), because you do erm, your mind does slow down when you get older, as you get older which is unfortunate

Roger, age 74

In each of these narratives, the men describe how their grandchildren introduce new technologies to them, try to teach them how to use them, or fix them. Interactions with grandchildren allow the men, particularly aged over 70, to explore new practices that include the use of new technologies and consequently do family in different ways. Through these interactions the intersection of age becomes stark, particularly for Roger who describes his inability to keep up with his grandchildren when playing their games. As such, the embodiment of grandfathering practices and the ability required to use technologies is also something that must be negotiated in these spaces.

As a final point, it is important to note that not all of the men were interested in incorporating new technologies and media into their grandfathering as Jim's narrative illustrates:

Anna: Does your grandson teach you anything about computers do you think?

Well he could, but I'm not interested erm. It sounds very blasé but erm, my wife is, she's much more, into it than I am, I can't handle them. I've got through 70 odd years, 72 in October without the need for a computer. If I want to speak to somebody I can pick up the telephone. Like the mobile phone nonsense, I'm a dinosaur, I don't need to take bloody pictures, I don't need to watch television, I don't need to upload music, I don't need to know how to get from here to Guildford in a car, it's a phone for Christ's sake. A phone is what you talk to people on. You don't text them so they can read it, that's a letter. But you know I, I am and I will admit in that respect, and this is where you have fun again with your grandchildren, because they're "oh grandad you're boring!", I say "I'm not boring!"

Jim, age 72

While most of the men's narratives suggest that grandparents are beginning to embrace new media and technologies in their familial practices and relations, either across geographic distance or in direct interaction with grandchildren, as a generation who grew up without these technologies, some of the men continue to reject them. Interestingly Jim is also the grandfather who rejects conducting more intimate

practices of child care such as nappy changing suggesting that his lifecourse experiences are deeply engrained in his reasoning for not conducting certain contemporary practices in grandfathering.

6.5. Discussion

The findings presented in this chapter show that the ways in which men construct and perform their identities as grandfathers is more complex than the existing literature suggests. As Chapter Two, Section 2.3 highlights, present understandings of grandfather identities are based on gender biased data that creates gendered assumptions about men as distant and disinterested or assigns them essentialist gendered dichotomies. Therefore there is also a dearth of literature that focuses on what contemporary grandfathers actually do with their grandchildren in mundane and everyday contexts despite the fact that it is these contexts and spaces that shape, and play an important role in how men enact their identities.

To overcome these limitations in the literature, this chapter argued that a focus on practices and what men do as grandfathers in various spaces can provide a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of how grandfather identities are performed and constructed. As Harper and Lesson (2009) have recently posited, it is finally being recognised that as grandfathers men are involved in relationships with grandchildren, something that the practices these men describe shows. More generally these practices are representative of the men's involvement with grandchildren suggesting that across the sample, men are adhering to and constructing a norm of involvement with grandchildren, supporting the findings of previous qualitative studies (Leeson and Harper 2009; Roberto et al 2001; Ross et al, 2005).

Evidently this involvement cannot be attributed in a straightforward way to dichotomous gendered expectations as it has been in the past, although it is evident that the men's practices as grandfathers are gendered. As several masculinity scholars now acknowledge (see Chapter Three) there are multiple practices of masculinity and also gendered contexts in which families interact and this clearly has important implications for how men construct their identities as grandfathers. A great deal of variation in the men's practices is apparent through comp aring the men's b odily interactions that characterise intimacy, with other uses of gendered space including the home and outdoor leisure spaces. Grandfathers are simultaneously supporting and subverting a range of practices that can be defined as masculine.

For many, practices such as playing sports, creating spaces in the home for grandchildren (something that the men with wives in particular, relationally construct) and being active outdoors are described, although there is notable variation depending on the age of the grandfather and his bodily ability. Demographic variation clearly influences how men negotiate and perform their identities. The narratives therefore support the fact that grandfather identities are paradoxical (Davidson et al, 2003), and the men's practices reveal that men negotiate this paradox through their intergenerational practices and interactions. Several of the men, particularly with younger grandchildren are adapting their behaviours to become more nurturing with grandchildren, doing practices including nappy changing and being intimate which might otherwise challenge more traditional constructions of masculinity.

The reasoning for adopting these practices is more complex that just the context of relationships with grandchildren however, and Chapter Seven, Section 7.2 explores in more detail why men are choosing to engage in these practices, typically defined as

'women's work' (see Aitken, 2000) beyond their interactions with grandchildren. The narratives do however support Hall et al's (2007) finding that if men conduct practices constructed as feminine, they do it in a way that still reflects being a man, as evidenced by the variety of practices described by the individual men themselves. This finding in particular, which is supported throughout by the narratives, suggests that men are constantly negotiating the axes of difference that construct their grandfather identities through their practices, contributing to the unstable and multiple natures of male identities observable in grandfatherhood Variation in demographic characteristics including age, influences how men perform their identities and resolve the contradictions in them. Bill for example negotiates his age through bodily practices that re-enforce masculinity such as virility and strength, regardless of the potential harm it may cause his ageing body, and several of the men discussed using new technologies, suggesting that they are negotiating generational differences in these spaces by sharing interests with their grandchildren.

Being a grandfather also means that men are negotiating spaces that have traditionally been constructed as feminine, such as the home (McDowell, 1999). Because the grandfathers' relationships are familial, as well as gendered and generational, increasingly, their practices reflect how they overcome this gendering of space. As mentioned, men are involved in creating spaces in their homes for their grandchildren and also construct gendered identities for themselves, for example 'Mr Fix it'. In conducting practices that create spaces for grandchildren, and also balancing this with taking grandchildren out, overall this suggests that grandfather identities are also spatially embedded and multiply practiced by the individual depending on the space they are occupying.

It is evident through examining the men's practices and their micro geographies, that there is great variety in the social practices that men engage in as grandfathers (across the sample and over time) in this contemporary context and these not only represent complex negotiations of the intersections of age and gendered identities, as recent literature suggests (Ando, 2005; Davidson et al, 2003; Mann, 2007), but also reveal that there is much greater variation in grandfather identities than previously acknowledged. However, it is difficult to divorce this variation in practices from the men's relationships with grandchildren and other generational identities. Practices that sustain the gendering of the men's identities are conducted in the context of intergenerational relations with children and grandchildren, and are structured by expectations of generational behaviour.

This examination of the men's practices and their geographies, does not fully account for the reasons why it is that men engage in intergenerational relationships with grandchildren however or how the specific characters of relationships with other generational identities influence what men do. It does reveal that men are conducting various gendered practices in a variety of spaces, and these constitute grandfather identities and develop a norm of involvement, but the difference and diversity across the sample cannot be fully explained by examining practices alone. The following chapter therefore expands upon these findings by exploring what drives men to be involved in grandfathering, presenting the men's discussions of the meanings and significance of their relationships to them.

CHAPTER SEVEN: The influence of intergenerational relations on grandfathering practices

7. Introduction

The grandfather identity is not just practiced, it is also relational; men become defined as grandfathers when they have grandchildren. As grandfathers, men have no specific obligation to develop relationships with grandchildren but many do and in exploring the practices that men engage in with their grandchildren in the previous chapter, it is evident that men have an expectation of themselves to be involved in their grandchildren's lives in various ways. While practices reveal what men do as grandfathers and where, it does not advance understandings of the nature and character of intergenerational relations with grandchildren, or the meanings that men attach to what they do. The intergenerational literature (reviewed in Chapter Four) suggests that intergenerationality, and indeed family relationships, can have ambivalent characters and are relational in nature.

This chapter explores the meanings and significance that men attach to their relationships with grandchildren in order to generate some understanding about the character of the men's intergenerational relations and their influence on the men's grandfathering practices. In doing so it also responds to the second of the research questions; what are the meanings and significance of the men's intergenerational practices to the men?

7.1. Why men 'do' grandfathering

The practices explored in Chapter Six suggest that a norm of involvement constructs the grandfather identity. As well as describing the practices they are involved in with

grandchildren, men also tried to make sense of the significance and meaning of this involvement; to characterise it and to explain why they do grandfathering. The following extracts from interviews present some of the explanations offered by the men for being involved in grandfathering:

when I turn up now with their [his children] grandchildren, I am expected to play with the grandchildren; that is what grandfather is. Grandfather can play with them, and because they happen to be two boys, all right and because I'm a stranger, in quotes, erm a stranger, I, I, I play in a very different way

Anna: What do you mean by stranger?

Well er // I'm, I'm not their father, I don't have to dominate, I don't have to tell them, I don't have to say it's time for bed, OK, I have, whereas a father has only a certain number of degrees of freedom I have lots of them OK erm, and I do purposely, and maybe this is unfair to my er son-in-law, I do personally try and provide a contradictory situation, a conflicting situation because it's good I think for the children to have a breadth of experience with people and see different things, and er, whereas he will come in at night tired, he'll put the children to bed, he loves them dearly he absolutely adores them, puts them to bed and reads them a bedtime story and then he just collapses. When I arrive I can play around with them all over the place, and we go and do all sorts of things, and we're out walking, and [daughter], my daughter loves it because she's got rid of them goddamn brats for a while and erm, and she has half a career as well so er, so parents...anyway the point is I am er, I am a distant grandparent which has its values erm, because it has forced, I think that if my wife, my ex-wife and I lived closer, we would be used a great deal more, and almost abused

Colin, age 66

It's an important thing to me yes, yeah, yes and er, you know I, I think that when you're retired and that erm, well I tried to find and do, voluntary work since I've been retired outside of er, being a grandfather but er, er it is in a way er...I suppose just being available and giving support, a form of service that you're giving and erm, in that respect it makes me feel who I am, at least by doing this, enabling younger people to, to work at their jobs and both to stay in full time work and er, there's that to it and er, also I just enjoy them

Percy, age 73

Of all of the grandfathers Colin is very specific about what his children expect from him and what he thinks being a grandfather means. He explains why he does grandfathering and relates this directly to his practices; grandfather is to play. In

conducting playing practices he feels that he provides something different to what their father can provide. The fact that he lives at a geographical distance from his grandchildren also allows him to perform and construct his identity in a particular way; he does not adopt a caring role because he is not 'abused' by his children. For Percy however, being a grandfather is about providing a service to his children. In providing a service, Percy is performing a particular kind of masculinity that reflects the paradoxes of being an older man. It is much softer than the expectations of bodily performances and identities in the merchant banking context for example (McDowell and McCourt, 1994) but nonetheless he identifies with a particular identity related to work.

Each of these narratives suggest that grandfathering is meaningful because it is about giving to younger generations and being there to provide something by transferring services and providing values. The men reveal the significance and meaning of being a grandfather through the articulation of their practices that perform their identities. Intergenerational relations with both children and grandchildren are clearly important to these men and shape the variations in the practices and identities that they each construct.

The distinctive nature of being a grandfather also holds a great deal of meaning and significance for the men. Duncan for example discusses a comment made by his grandson in the past that he considered unusual:

> *he kept coming right to going to university which was 19, so he still came every fortnight // erm, so there's no way that, [grandson] and I could sort of get together, now last time, before they moved house, the last time we went to see them he said to [daughter] afterwards "they're really nice people" and I thought that was, I thought that was, that was shocking // erm // that's right he said we're nice people and I thought well "we're his grandparents we're not nice people" (laughs) you know so*

that, that was a bit of a shock for us, well, it was something that struck me as being unusual

Duncan, age 70

While his grandson commented that he and his wife are nice people, for Duncan being a grandparent is much more significant than this. The strength of familial relations has driven involvement in his grandson's life as opposed to being a nice person. Interestingly, he mentions that he sees his grandson less now that he has grown up and gone to university, suggesting that involvement with grandchildren changes over time as they age and experience their own transitions.

The importance of grandfathering for the men is also based on the men's personal and familial circumstances which strongly influence how they grandfather and negotiate their intergenerational relations. Two of the grandfathers, whose daughters are both divorced, discuss how their role as grandfather has become increasingly meaningful over time because their grandchildren's fathers are considered absent. Both Wally and Charles describe themselves as father figures to their grandchildren because of either total or limited father absence:

> *if you don't support your children what the hell can you do with your life?, you know you've got to go there and encourage them and er, try and get them to do the best that they possibly can erm, and of course she's no daddy in her life, er, I suppose to some extent, well she has got a daddy in her life but he's a useless pilock [English slang for an idiot or fool]...oh he is, he would rather bring his daughter back early so he can watch football than have his daughter longer, sorry no respect for people like that and, he would take his daughter to the pub for the afternoon....erm, no don't get me going erm to some extent I, I'm the daddy figure erm, whatever that may be erm...so yeah, I, I just enjoy having her, but we do all sorts of things that we can do and er, you know she'll come out in the car with us and we'll go for a drives and things and er, we'll just chat or we'll just sit down and she'll do paintings for me and drawings*

Wally, age 56

Interestingly, Chapter Six revealed that football and sports are interests that the grandfathers like to involve their grandchildren in and this consequently constructs their identities in masculine ways. In this example, however, these practices cause Wally to disrespect his son-in-law because rather than facilitate intergenerational relations between his granddaughter and her father, they restrict them. In turn however this means that Wally feels more involved with his granddaughter and more able to conduct an involved role with her, to the extent that he even defines himself her father figure. Wally's familial circumstances mean that he considers his role as grandfather as very important for his granddaughter. Charles, who as previously mentioned, is the only grandfather who lives with his grandchildren, explains why his role is also meaningful in the absence of his grandchildren's father:

> *I think work's important and it's important for the children to see that you work, I mean they say to us now erm, you know, they say "grandad, how come you can afford", we have a nice house, we have a nice car, we go on holiday 2 or 3 times a year "how can you do all that grandad and you don't go to work now?" and we have to explain to them that's because we went to work and we saved up and we have a pension, and we encourage them to go, you know...I'm not trying to replace their dad you know, I do, I'm their grandad, you know, that's my role, but I do think it's important that they have, a male you know in their lives, it must be very hard for, children who you know, just don't have anybody there, as a role model*

Charles, age 65

By adopting a father figure role, something he relates to work and employment, grandfathering becomes particularly meaningful when there is an absence of extended intergenerational relations in young people's lives. Fathering is a masculinity issue (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003) and is clearly something the men continue to perform in a more nuanced way in grandfatherhood. There are slight contradictions between Charles and Wally's approaches to this however. Charles is wary not to take

over from his grandchildren's father while Wally, who has little respect for his son-in-law for his misplaced priorities, feels that his role is to provide something more positive and to encourage her development regardless of being interfering. Charles in particular, however, still values certain roles and practices characteristic of good fathering such as working, encouraging grandchildren and being a male influence in their lives in grandfatherhood.

In each of these narratives the ability to adopt a male role model role in grandfathering is dependent on their children being divorced. Arnold, whose daughter is in her first marriage, is much more cautious about this. When picking up a thread from the interview regarding his practice of taking his grandson to watch football Arnold explains:

> *Anna: You say your son-in-law's not that interested in football...?*
>
> *He's not that interested in football no....it means that I'm not encroaching on his, his territory erm, it would be difficult, if he was keen on football er, for me to have this special relationship with [grandson], in that erm...but he, his dad's only to pleased, he says "that's great" you know*

Arnold, age 65

What this suggests is that the men's family dynamics and circumstances must be negotiated and considered by the men. This then influences how men feel about their involvement and has implications for what they feel they can do with them. In this case, Arnold is aware that he should not encroach on his grandson's father, and that having a shared interest with his grandson, that his son-in-law does has little interest in, acts to create a meaningful and involved relationship with his grandson.

What these narratives demonstrate is that in situations where the grandfather's children are involved in their own children's lives they have a reduced power in

relation to their grandchildren and that the meaning they attribute to the role is either facilitated or restricted by how their children feel about their involvement. However, in situations where children are absent, and in particular their sons or son-in-laws, they feel their role is more significant.

It is evident that grandfathering is very meaningful to the men in terms of transferring values to grandchildren and being part of their social networks and upbringing. Existing intergenerational research, including in geography, has examined the importance of intergenerationality for children and young people but has rarely extended beyond the central generation; the children's parents (Costanzo and Hoy, 2007). In a similar vein to the grandfathers using new technologies with grandchildren (explored in Chapter Six), and because intergenerationality implies relationality, it is important to consider the meaning of the grandfathers' relationships with their grandchildren and how they are also important to the men.

When discussing intergenerational transfers between generations, literatures have also tended to consider it as uni-directional, influencing children and young people but with little consideration of older generations. The dominant understanding in grandparenting literatures and contemporary British family policy is that grandparents are providing grandchildren with a great deal in terms of transferring values and educating (Waldrop et al, 1999) and providing child care (Gray, 2005; Haurant, 2009; Thane, 2010; Wheelock and Jones, 2002). Much research assumes that intergenerational transmissions of values are static and uni directional, from adults down to children, but as Holdsworth (2007) found by examining the inter-dependencies of mothers, and their daughters who were leaving home, these dependencies, which are traditionally organised around polarised notions of

dependence and independence, are actually reciprocal and cyclical between generations.

This is evidenced by the empirical findings of this research. As well as these more positive descriptors of their intergenerational relations, this positivity also benefits the men and the ways in which they construct meaning about their grandfathering in several ways; the positive nature of the men's intergenerational relationships influences their health and well-being, compares to other roles and identities in their lifecourses, and is emotionally satisfying (and sometimes worrying). This section explores the qualitative meanings that the men attribute to being a grandfather in more depth.

7.1.1. Influential and cohesive relationships with grandchildren

One element that the men describe as particularly important for them in grandfathering is the positive health benefits it provides. The family is a significant source of support for many people and for grandfathers this is no different. Jim even calls interacting with his grandchildren therapeutic. As with the transfer of values, some limited research has examined the effect of being involved with grandparents on young adult grandchildren's well-being (Ruiz and Silverstein, 2007), but grandparents themselves, and particularly grandfathers have not been considered (for exception see Langer, 1990). Section 6.5, Chapter Six examined how grandfathers conduct their grandfathering in outdoor and public spaces. For some of the men this is part of a process of keeping grandchildren occupied but there are several positive reasons why doing things with grandchildren also benefit the men as well as the following comments highlight:

I think it's good for you as a, erm, as a grandparent to be held down and made to run after a football and stop being lazy and sat in front of a television so there's a, erm, a positive sort of health dynamic there, and I think not just with the grandchildren but with children as well. A lot of our closer relationships are with the next generation down erm, and I think in, in old age I think it keeps you younger and, wiser and your feet further, closer to the ground erm, I think there is a danger with the older generation of sort of nodding off into Coronation Street for the next 30 years

Peter, age 65

I think it keeps you young and active and on your toes and, keeps the thought processes erring in one, in the young direction rather than the (laughs) kick the bucket direction, erm, which is er, it can only be good

Ed, age 61

I get lots of pleasure in, just, if I go off to Sheffield we just wander off into Sheffield just the two of you, you know because I have a bus pass and [granddaughter] has a school pass (laughs) so we nip off on the bus, 'cause they live about 5 miles out of Sheffield, so, but er, we, we go to Sheffield shopping, er I quite enjoy it, it's a lot of pleasure yeah

Roger, age 74

Grandfathers gain a great deal from their grandchildren just as they emphasize helping them and enjoying their dependence on them. For each of the men the pleasure derived from their intergenerational relationships is inextricably linked to engaging in various practices with them, such as shopping and playing football. Grandchildren are given credit for allowing the men to perform a more active and bodily masculine practice that challenges negative constructions of decline characteristic of constructions of ageing. While Percy sees his role as providing a service to his grandchildren, for Roger, being active and being treated as a friend also provides positive benefits of well-being and David in particular discusses the potential availability and comfort of care as a result of having grandchildren:

occasionally er, if I go to [daughter's home], the little girl will do her homework and say "would you check if it's OK?" so in that way a slight influence but er, I think the major influence is from their parents, because they're there all the time you know, the way they're brought up is down to the parents not the grandparents....I, I think they look more upon their grandparent as, as a friend who they can turn to er, without knowing he's going to shout or tell them they're wrong or discipline them in some way, just like an additional friend really...it's very pleasant isn't it, to erm, to think someone actually listens to what you've got to say (laughs) no, no it is quite pleasant but er, you never argue with them, you never lose your temper yeah so, they must be quite nice grandchildren because they've never upset me, yeah so I can honestly say they've never once upset me... they don't consider me somehow a grandad, I feel more like a friend you know if, if I go on a walk with them, they talk to me as if they're talking to another per...you know another person of their own age you know not this doddery old fellow that they keep patting on the head, mind they are a bit impressed that I can walk much better than they can you see (laughs) so...but no that, that's one of my pleasures, like when I go to Sheffield erm, if I'm there and [granddaughter] comes in, she comes dashing in and, puts her arms round and I feel really, pleased you know it's really nice and she'll sit down and tell me all sorts of things and erm, the parents are you know moaning "have you done your homework?, have you done your guitar?" you know this, that and the other (laughs) yeah

Roger, age 74

We are members of the retirement fellowship, we see so many widows on their own who er, I say widows, it's widowers too, but usually it's more often widows that widowers erm, but when it comes to the point they're relying on neighbours because they've got no family, I mean we've got something to fall back on and if we ever wanted anything they're all there you see, but unfortunately people with no immediate relatives, you know second cousins and this sort of thing, have nobody at all

David, age 86

For older grandfather David, there is the suggestion that having a family is an important part of his and his wife's social network and there is evidence that men begin to think about how they might require support from their grandchildren in the event of death or illness. Being there for grandchildren, which is a common theme amongst the younger grandfather's, transitions later in life to needing someone there should something negative happen during ageing. During these times of poor health

Andrew and Wally for example described how their grandchildren offered them something positive:

well they gave me something, oh did they, you know there was a big thing you know, I mean that really hurt when I was first diagnosed [with cancer] *you know.... it erm, you don't know where it's going to go, you either live or die, because the prognosis wasn't excellent at the time and, then of course things improved and er, oh yeah a big support and really something to, to live for you know...it makes you more positive yeah, yeah but I was very positive anyway....*

Andrew, age 70

I should add with the condition I have, which is most likely a terminal condition, packing in what I can pack in is brilliant erm, er...so....yeah you can think "oh God you're a grandad" but I got my first grey hair when I was 18 so, it's, it's just one of those things that happens, it's just such an exciting event, I wasn't able to be part of my, other child's children being brought up because we had a mega row and didn't want to speak to me ever again etc, etc, so this grandchild I have now is probably quite special in that regard

Wally, age 56

Ill health as a result of ageing has important implications for the men's gender identities. Illness and health are significant for the construction of gender because they 'can reduce a man's status in masculine hierarchies, shift his power relations with women, and raise his self-doubts about masculinity' (Charmaz, 1995, pg 268). Interestingly, as Bennett (2007) found when interviewing male widows, Andrew and Wally mask the emotion of their declining health in masculine ways through their narratives and in relation to their intergenerational relationships. Andrew presents a dependent and emotionally strong narrative in relation to his health by suggesting that he felt optimistic anyway. He does not perform any emotion or weakness in his description of being ill but admits that his grandchildren provided hope and support.

For Wally, there is much more acceptance of the ageing process, but not as an erosion of his masculinity; his declining health allows him to overcome stereotypes of masculinity by being there for his granddaughter and appreciating what she provides. This process is also reciprocal and as William points out *'[grandson] is very worried you know if I'm a bit under the weather (laughs)...which is understandable'*.

For some of the men, getting involved in their grandchildren's interests also allowed them to explore new interests and hobbies as Alan discusses:

> *one of the things that we all do, we've all enjoyed from the oldest to the youngest [granddaughter], we always have a trip to, to the bowling alley, ten pin bowling, we all love it, we never go, we very seldom go on our own, but if, if erm, you know if they're going to be here a few nights, we'll always have a night at the bowling alley, yeah it's strange yeah, I mean even when [granddaughter] was very young she used to get one of those cradles and roll the ball down it yes, erm, and [grandson] er, so er, no that's er, that's something we do with them.. it's very pleasurable I think you know you spoil them and, treat them and do things like ten pin bowling which you wouldn't think of probably going on your own, although having said that there's no reason why not because there is a pensioners bowling club, one or two mornings a week, at Morecambe erm, but yes I think you know, as I said it's good to share, to be able to share the things you've enjoyed or still do enjoy, with another generation, help them to enjoy it as well*

Alan, age 73

By engaging in meaningful relationships with grandchildren, grandfathers are afforded opportunities to explore new hobbies and interests which can contribute to their overall well-being. Alan's hobbies in particular are conducted in family leisure spaces. Several of the men described indulging their hobbies and interests with grandchildren including bird watching, watching sports and even fishing, as discussed in Chapter Six but significantly these activities create spaces in which cohesive intergenerational relations can be conducted. The WHO (World Health Organisation, 2002) suggest that being active is essential for improving wellbeing, and that intergenerational solidarity

is a key tenet of this. They define "active" as the 'continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force' (WHO, 2002, pg 12). Through ten pin bowling with grandchildren in this example, Timothy is able to enjoy a new interest outside of his home with his grandchildren, something he admits he does not do without them. Davidson et al (2003a) suggest that older men, particularly those who have retired are more susceptible to loneliness and social isolation because unlike women, they are ambivalent about maintaining connections with others. Being a grandfather is important for the men because it can provide them with a strong social and intergenerational network that facilitates their wellbeing, social embeddedness and opportunities for exploring new practices and activities.

7.1.2. Ambivalence in intergenerational relations

The intergenerational literature suggests that intergenerational relations can be ambivalent in character and an exploration of men's narratives reveals that this is the case. Men's emotions in particular have received very little attention in social science research yet they are important in driving men to be involved in grandfathering as this section will demonstrate. However this can also create ambivalence. Emotions have a lifecourse and a distinct geography that has been recognised in the 'emotional turn' in geography (Davidson et al, 2003a). They shape what people do and why they do it and as people age and transition through the various phases of their lives, they transform and shape an individual's life. They are also by their nature, relational, produced by and given meaning to in the context of relationships with others. This is no different for men who have transitioned to grandfatherhood.

Thompson et al (1990, pg 190 – 191) suggest that 'grandfathers - usually older men - talked much more emotionally and lovingly about their grandchildren than they did about their own children. Many spoke with delight of their relationships and their conversations with them'. To some extent asking the men to discuss the more emotional elements of grandfathering in the interviews was difficult. This was one aspect of the methodology that required some thought about how to encourage the men to discuss these fundamentals without posing leading questions (see Chapter Five).

The men predominantly discussed what they do as opposed to why they do it. In not wanting to lead the participants, the interview schedule was designed to try and encourage the men to discuss this element of their grandfathering. In order to make them feel comfortable I asked more generic questions about their lifecourse and then asked them to tell me what it means to them. It was felt that asking them to compare their grandfathering to their fathering role, the men would reflect more on what they do and why they do it. The overall tone of the narratives was very positive and the men discussed their grandfathering in relation to what it could provide them in terms of their everyday experiences and outlooks. The men described the positivity of their relationships with grandchildren by using various words including wonderful (Andrew), feeling privileged (Arnold) and pleasurable (Timothy).

In line with Thompson et al's (1990) findings one of the main emotions that drives the men's grandfathering is love; although the majority of the grandfathers were not always very direct about saying they love their grandchildren in the interviews. Despite dominant understandings that men are less expressive than women (Peplau and Gordon 1985) several of the men became surprisingly emotional in their

responses about feelings towards their grandchildren; each with differing family backgrounds and ages; Colin (65), Steve (51), Reg (66), Gerald (62), Wally (58), Bill (70), Timothy (70), Mervyn (72) and Ray (69) all reveal that they love their grandchildren and that it drives their practices with them. The following narratives illustrate their responses:

my grandson, he's 3, he's a bit hard to judge, its, well they're pretty sure he's got some form of Autism, but in himself // he's a happy lad, you know, he's a good lad and I love him to bits

Steve, age 51

I think you love 'em and I think you play with 'em, I mean it's daft and stupid in 'ere I mean you know thank God there's 4 walls like, but you daft things you fool around and they play and you fight and you do all daft stuff you know what I mean?, and as I say....you protect 'em from nasty's that are around in this world...love is the most important factor but it's got to be delivered correctly...spoiling children doesn't help, I mean I'm saying this but I do spoil 'em a little bit. I mean you know like for instance, there was a set of dolls, I don't know if you've ever seen these, there's Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and another one, three in a pack and I saw them and I just said to [wife], "let's get 'em one each" so we did and took 'em across, well now, "grandad, I've got Belle!" (laughs) "I haven't got Jasmine now"

Ray, age 69

they bring a lot of love and, you've got the time, which you don't have when you've got your own, when my own kids were this age, I was going to work quarter to 7 in the morning, not getting back 'til quarter to 7 at night, and I only saw them basically, you know when I got home obviously, but they were then ready for going to bed, but every Saturday was there day, I used to take them swimming, I used to go in the park, I went, we would do something every Saturday, was the kids day, and then Sunday, was the family day, for all of us so whatever, now I haven't got those pressures now, so I can enjoy these grandkids more, than I did my own, 'cause you, I haven't got anything else to do, other than, you can be there for them you know

Charles, age 65

Many of the men are much more indirect, saying that they love spending time with grandchildren and doing things with them which implied their love for them but was

not explicitly spoken. In Chapter Six, Alan focused on being the fixer rather than for being loving and suggests that there is much more meaning for him being the fixer than being someone to love. Being loving is also related to intimate practices and Mervyn in Chapter Six discussed his discomfort in demonstrating love in embodied ways, something he attributes to his father. He also feels that a good thing to do with grandchildren is to read to them (again discussed in Chapter Six). What this suggests is that some men prefer to display their love and affection through doing different activities and having specific disembodied roles such as reading and fixing things.

Another emotion that the men discussed is pride for their grandchildren. Describing when his grandson was born, Robert, for example, felt a surge of both love and pride. Pride also drives many of the men to attend different social events that their grandchildren are involved in and to contact them to offer their support:

I always make contact when they've done something special, I want to know, now both my granddaughters have both, been in...er Grange-over-sands...operatic society there, and that you know, performing and pantomimes every year, have always been a highlight to go to er, both my grandsons and, my youngest grandson has played football for the school and that so they were, occasions I looked forward to

Andrew, age 70

occasionally I'm a little bit...erm...inspired by the, erm, creativity and their erm, and their sheer dedication to some, some things, I mean the, the oldest lad who plays all these sports, he's so fit, it's unbelievable and he just never seems to get tired, we took him (laughs) we took him up to the Lakes a few weeks ago erm, and...the four of them, but him in particular, he was like a Jack Russell terrier, we did four miles, he must have done 12 (laughs) because he was just up and down the crags and round the hills and he was just wandering, covered twice our distance without any trouble, and that's gratifying from that point of view, makes you think...we all like to bathe in reflected glory don't we? (laughs) I think it's a national trait erm, but, but because of that it is gratifying to think you know, maybe somewhere along the line you've had a little bit of input, whether it be through the parents or...through, through your own guidance

Ed, age 61

I would be on the beach in South Wales walking with [granddaughter] while [wife] got an extra hours sleep in erm, so, and, and you know to do that with grandson or granddaughter is, that's what you do, that's what parents do, that's what grandparents do you know, erm, push the pram around, happy to do that, very proud to show your grandson, daughter off yeah

Reg, age 66

Pride in grandchildren evidently manifests in very different ways. For Ed, practices such as watching and observing what his grandson does translates into pride and gives him purpose and meaning in relation to feeling a part of something good and having potentially contributed to his grandson's abilities. For Reg however, being proud of his grandchildren is part of a performance; walking them around and to use his metaphor 'showing them off'. For Andrew, pride is manifest in his practices of support, including contacting them directly when they achieve something and going out to support them in their interests. Each of these examples are difficult to separate from the practices men engage in with their grandchildren but are revealing of the meaning and significance that men attribute to what they do.

Several factors clearly influence and shape the significance and meaning of intergenerational relations with grandchildren however. Old age has implications for the strength of emotion David felt towards his grandchildren. At 86 years old David spoke of much less interest in his grandchildren than the younger men in the sample:

they're far too busy and, far too many things to do, and of course are at a distance from us which makes a difference too, so really they don't, don't play a large part in our life

David, age 86

While David attributes this lack of interest to them being too busy and too far away, it is because of his and his grandchildren's ages, at 30 and 31 years old that means he is

not overly emotional and expressive about his grandchildren. They have grown up and live their own lives distantly which does not mean that David does not love them but that his discussions of them were not characteristic of a strong emotional attachment to them. Over time, geographical distance and lifecourse transitions of both David and his grandchildren have resulted in less frequent contact and practices of involvement (David explains that he contacts them via emails for special events) so they are a less significant part of his life.

Emotion and the breakdown of relationships in the past restrict Fred from seeing his biological grandchildren. Unlike Charles, discussed in Section 7.1 who adopts a meaningful male role model identity in the absence of his son-in-law, Fred's identity and practices are influenced differently by his own divorce. Having divorced his first wife who left him for another man, Fred remarried a woman with her own children and consequent grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When his biological grandchildren tried to re-establish a relationship with him he explains that he cannot see them very often because it creates tension in his current relationship with his wife:

I don't see...the first children...I mean [granddaughters]working in a care home so erm, it's awkward and I'm on the council. I wouldn't have done it if I'd not known you know, there's a lot to do and I'm on so many committees and so much you know, I just don't find time so, I try and see 'em once or twice a year and er, I don't really, you know, it does upset [current wife] if I go down there you know, so I don't tend to, rock the boat to much (laughs) erm it's awkward balancing things and, trying to keep everybody happy

Fred, age 74

Fred constructs his grandfather id entity through the negotiation and b alancing of people's emotions in his second family and negotiating his obligations to his first family and his new family. Fred did not discuss his own emotions about this element

of his family life but demonstrated that the negotiation of emotion is relational and is complex.

While Fred has experienced divorce in the past, it is the reconfiguration of his family structure over time that impacts the ways in which he can grandfather, in this case restricting his ability to see his biological grandchildren. Peter's narrative supported the view that divorce and the mediation of relationships across generations acts to restrict his practices and contact with his grandchildren and is therefore emotionally difficult:

> going through the divorce was very difficult and [son's] ex has decided that she's going to be vindictive and, part of that is her behaviour with the children...he, did have access to them, but she would pepper the children with all sorts of discreditable details about his behaviour before they went to see him, so they went to see him in the wrong frame of mind which caused him endless problems...so currently they're not actually seeing their father, because it makes things erm, well it just creates too many rows and too many difficulties...erm....so we are actually currently, debating, we do relate after a fashion, we're not terribly fond of his ex-wife but, the way she's behaving, but we can relate to her and, we were debating actually whether in the last few days, whether we ought to contact her, and go, arrange to go and see them direct without my son being involved, and then at least we can report back to my son and say well you know "we've seen them, they're OK, they're doing this, they're doing that" you know...slightly complicated by the fact that at the age of 11 [grandson's] just about to change schools as well which is, a reasonably difficult point of his life anyway, and further complicated by all the background and the upheaval erm, so... it is a loss, it's difficult, we would prefer it generally more convenient, more practical erm, works at a much better level if the 3 generations all meet round the table together or the playing field or the river bank for the picnic or erm, whatever, effectively erm, not seeing them in the conventional way, yes it is a loss erm....but er we're trying to find a way around by possibly seeing them in her company erm...which will maintain contact of sort but erm, not the sort we want

Peter, age 65

Peter's narrative presented here, and also those of Andrew and Steve (discussed throughout the analysis chapters), all of whom are paternal grandfathers suggest that events such as divorce even between younger generations need to be negotiated by grandparents, particularly if they involve conflict. Because women are still considered

160

kin-keepers (Harper, 2005), this is particularly important for paternal grandparents who are commonly excluded from playing an active grandparenting role and having 'their say' (Dench and Ogg, 2002, pg 107, see also Doyle et al, 2010). This suggests that there is a distinct matrilineal advantage (Chan and Elder, 2000) in situations where divorce results in fathers leaving their children's home. In the contemporary context where divorce is prevalent, grandparents have to negotiate their intergenerational relationships, particularly with their children's generation, with little support and few rights (Grandparents Plus Report, 2010). In this example, Peter's daughter subverts the familial and generational hierarchy by controlling access to her children.

While divorce is often the cause of family relationship breakdown, it is the reconfiguration of family relationships that influence the ways in which men grandfather and construct meanings about their identities. While existing findings suggest that paternal grandparents become excluded because of divorce, the findings in this thesis and those of Doyle et al (2010) suggest that this is a static view and that grandparents can try to establish links beyond this. As Bradshaw et al (1999) suggest many men do also try to help their sons to re-build relationships with their children. Interestingly, Peter discusses this possibility in his narrative, suggesting that having three generations together in one space is an ideal situation, and highlighting that cohesive intergenerational relations with grandchildren might be more meaningful in a multi-generational context.

The impact of the divorce also influences the practices that Peter feels he can engage in. While many of the men in Chapter Six, Section 6.4 use virtual and physical spaces

of communication technology to engage in practices of contact with their grandchildren, the conflicting nature of the relationships Peter must negotiate, construct his grandfather identity which cannot be characterised as involved. While he discusses his desire to perform an involved grandfather identity, by playing in fields, meeting around the table and having picnics, which many of the other men describe, the divorce, and consequently the character and quality of relationship with his daughter-in-law, restricts what he can do and how he performs his identity, in ways that differ from other men.

The potential for conflict and struggle in relationships, also related to differences in approaches to parenting, as George's narrative reveals:

> *[being a grandad]; it's nice, it's nice yeah, yeah, no I like, I now understand why my parents didn't want to look after my kids though (laughs) and I was always sort of, I could do with a bit of time off you know, they were happy to see them but they were happy to see them off as well and, well partly it has to do with, I mean, I wouldn't, I didn't bring up my kids the way my daughter is bringing up hers, and I certainly don't want to get into arguments about how you bring up your kids obviously, I mean they should get on with their life, so I don't, but I find it a little strained to be honest; she lets them do anything, so you know instead of teaching them the word 'no', she never says the word 'no', so they start screaming instead, and then so what she does is divert their attention or you know or, it drives me crazy...but it's not that I don't want to see them it's actually quite difficult time wise, you know staying in touch is difficult given that you know I don't want to disturb them when she's with the kids, when it's too late I don't want to wake them up or, wake her up and it's just, and I travel an enormous amount...my partner lives in Hungary so...I feel a bit remiss in a way I suppose because I've got colleagues who are grandfathers and a good friend of mine who's a colleague is constantly travelling down to Reading to see his granddaughter and he's full of her, talks about her all the time, drives me crazy, I think you know "well you may be interested but other people aren't necessarily" I mean should I feel guilty?, you know and I do*

George, age 63

In this example, George, a divorced and still employed grandfather, negotiates conflict with his daughter within the constraints of a large geographical distance and his personal circumstances which involves regular travel and differences in routines.

George clearly does not agree with the ways in which his daughter brings up his grandchildren but in order to reduce the possibility of conflict he distances himself emotionally. This supports findings in a previous qualitative study about grandparent-grandchild relations which found that grandparents try to maintain positive relations by not interfering with the parenting practices of their children (Ross et al, 2005). George's personal circumstances also create more negative emotions including worry and concern. He compares this to other grandfathers he know who he feels perform grandfathering differently to him by reflecting their much stronger emotions towards their grandchildren through their practices.

As Tucker (2003) suggests sharing identities with others is about similarity and it is evident in George's example that grandfather identities are distinguished through meaningful and involved relationships with grandchildren. When George compares himself to his colleague he realises that he is not performing his generational identity as expected and this is meaningful in relation how he interprets the significance of his intergenerational relationships with his grandsons. He also locates this conflict in a generational frame. He compares his own role as a grandfather to that of his parents and makes direct comparisons between his daughter's upbringing and the way in which she brings up her children. Several of the men did this in their narratives particularly in relation to child care practices as Chapter Six revealed. This suggests that the men's intergenerational relations in the past are also a variable influencing the varying forms and multiple identities grandfathers construct and perform and is explored in more detail in the following section.

7.2. Lifecourse, transitions and meaningful relationships

In many of the narratives presented in the previous sections, the significance and meaning of intergenerational relations is very much related to the men's position in the lifecourse and how this has changed over time. As a generational position increasingly bridging middle age (Karp, 2000) the lifecourse perspective has also become increasingly important to understanding how people adopt and negotiate their grandparent identities over time in diverse ways. For the men in the sample who became grandfathers early in the lifecourse i.e. before 50 years old, this was initially a source of some resistance particularly in relation to what it means about their age identities:

I didn't want to be a grandfather at 40 no, no, no I thought it was outrageous no, I was too young to be a grandad I thought, but then you change your mind, as it is now, well yeah it's, it's, it's more or less learning from the first area that you're in but you're coming into the second area then and, it's the same thing, you respond because they're children, you love the children, you want them to get on, you want 'em educating, defining where they want to go, you know what I mean?, that type of stuff

Ray, age 69

It was quite scary, what did Churchill say?, "it's the beginning of the end" (laughs) yes I think, I think, I think while it's, it's er a lovely and unique thing to happen, it's also er, it's a big dose of reality, because I mean you're not going to have any more of your own children and that's finished, I think it's a stage of your life that er....I don't tend to dwell on, put it that way you know, erm, because er, obviously you know you can't fight time, but erm, I certainly felt that, and I've got, I've a friend who's, we take the boat, he felt exactly the same you know, you're a grandad and you think "oh dear, it's a bit scary!" (laughs) you know yeah, yeah

Phillip, age 61

it's another milestone in your life erm, at some stage and you, I think, I think you get to the point where you think "oh well we've done the first bit (laughs) we've done the children, the family, now we've got family number 2" effectively which is erm, a different kind of responsibility because, then you start to think, it's just, you don't, you don't start to do things just for your own benefit, or even your children's benefit anymore it, it's almost like a stewardship where you then continue it on to say you

know "we'll leave them a house in time, we'll do this, we'll do that", so it's, it's
expanding the family but, but it's also er, a different sort of relationship

Ed, age 61

These resistances not only suggest how pervasive constructions of grandparents as old are, but for Ray in particular, the initial transition to grandfatherhood at 40 years old is something he feared, and is reminiscent of a crisis in his masculinity. This 'crisis', described as something troubling men, typically in the context of economic instability (McDowell, 2000) refers to a gender issue resulting at a time of change such as becoming a grandfather. However he also demonstrates that there is a distinct transition to feeling more comfortable with performing grandfathering; obligation, love and responsibility for grandchildren have become more important to him than his age. It is this introduction of a new intergenerational relationship that particularly calls the identities of the men into question.

Both Ray and Phillip prove that being a grandparent is related to subjective feelings about age for many grandparents (Kaufman and Elder, 2003), particularly old age. This is despite the fact that constructions of grandparents as old are no longer appropriate (Attias-Donfut and Segelen, 2002). While becoming a grandfather at 40, Ray related this transition strongly to his age identity suggesting that dominant ideologies of grandparenting are highly influential to the ways individuals feel about becoming a grandparent regardless of their age. From a lifecourse perspective these narratives also support the notion that individual lives are linked (e.g. Elder 1994) and lived interdependently (Holdsworth, 2007; Kemp, 2007). As Bengston et al (2002 cited in Kemp, 2007) suggest events that occur in the lives of one individual have

implications for those around them. Interestingly however, becoming a grandfather at a later age is met with much less resistance as Robert explains:

both the girls are....careful what I say here...old by today's standards...you know I mean [youngest daughter] as I say, gosh was born in 1976, she'll be 33 this year and [eldest daughter] the elder one will be 35 erm, you know when you see things on TV, and people are grandparents at 36 and 40, you know erm, but then you know that's the way it was for my parents and [wife's] parents, you know so it's a family trait that you're fairly mature before it all happens, but then again you know, from a, maybe from a child's point of view, you know I think grandparent's should be old, I mean I know that sounds a silly thing to say, or a strange thing to say but...you know they see their own parents and then they realise that their parents are as old again as they are, you know what I'm saying erm....yeah...I can offer him you know, 62 years of wisdom and....no I'd like to think you know he will ask me things as well you know, so I think a lot of older people will be, because of the environment that we live in, and the part of the country that we live, which will be so different to what he's used to, assuming they don't move of course, which I'm sure they will at some stage once the housing market sorts itself out you know I don't think they'll stay living and working in London erm, but yeah I've got what?, 50 odd years of playing in brass bands and orchestras and all that sort of thing and you know, I'd like to pass that onto him and make him appreciate different things, you know [son-in-law] has got his own interests you know he's big Rugby Union fan as I am, but you know I also like watching other sports and, you know so seeing different things in the countryside, you know in different parts of the country

Robert, age 62

Robert's narrative suggests that the norms of grandparenting are strongly related to age and that being older is actually more acceptable to him. He relates this particularly to being wiser and more mature, and being able to offer something different to his grandson. The varying ages in the lifecourse when men become grandfathers evidently influences how men feel about their identities and suggests that the men's different lifecourse experiences produce diverse futures for them as grandfathers, particularly in relation to their subjective feelings about their generational identities.

Lifecourse experiences evidently influence how men feel about their age and consequent grandfather identities. As Cunningham-Burley (1986) discovered in her study that included grandfathers, comparing the role of grandfathering to their past roles in the lifecourse is one way in which men can begin to make sense of grandfatherhood. It is evident from the narratives that the men (especially the retired men) could reflect more easily on their role as grandfather, because they have more time than when they were fathers:

I find, as do some of the other people I've spoken to who are grandparents, you can give the grandchildren, more time than you can give your own children...the down side of that, that I see is, that if you have the grandchildren for too long, then you could I think exert a greater influence over the children than the parents do

James, age 62

I'm more conscious of things we are doing with [grandson], I suppose it's because we've got more time to think about it haven't we now?, whereas when we were young we had full time jobs, dashing here there and everywhere and you did things because you felt that was right, but now you've got more chance to sort of be, more thoughtful about it I guess really, and try and do things that, to an extent what you've got to do I think, is actually conform to your son and daughter-in-laws erm, discipline standards, but it's never an issue, not, not yet

Reg, age 66

For Reg, having more time allows him to assess the meaning of grandfathering which is relational. He and his wife for example are concerned not to take over the responsibilities of their daughter. Andrew also mirrors this attitude of not interfering, and it is one that has emerged throughout the analysis. This emphasis on not interfering also implies that intergenerational relations with children, as well as grandchildren are significant in the performance of grandfathering. Indeed some of the

men, while considering it a positive role, reveal that the strength of meaning is not as strong when you have a grandfather identity as it was when becoming a father:

I would not like to be a father now, but I'm quite happy to be a grandfather because as I say, they're only there for a set time and er, if they get stroppy you just mention it to their parents (laughs) you go and tell them

Roger, age 74

It's an enrichment to, my life and, it must be an enrichment to theirs and, you can't get much better than that really....it's nothing like as good as when you're first a dad erm, because in a sense we are, one stage removed and erm, no to have a son of your own at 24 and er, and then to follow it up with a daughter, just er, a couple of years later, was, was er, astounding as a parent, we were much more, well I was, I was, much more laid back about it as a grandad, I was really pleased but nothing like, nothing like

Arnold, age 65

Arnold in particular highlights the reciprocity of the grandfather-grandchild relationship, defining the relationship as a mutual enrichment to their lives. However in comparing his grandfather role to being a father, it is evident that he does not consider it to be as meaningful, highlighting the discontinuity between the two roles. This also shows that he identified more strongly with becoming a father than he did becoming a grandfather. Roger talks about having more time as a grandfather to enjoy them and also more distance from his grandchildren in terms of discipline. This comparison also reveals the ambivalences of grandfathering. Like Mason et al (2007) suggest grandparents adhere to cultural norms of 'being there' but 'not interfering' which reveal the paradox of the role. Roger for example is happy to be able to distance himself from disciplining his grandchildren. In this respect the men are performing cultural norms of grandparenthood through their narratives but are locating these in relation to their past lifecourse identities.

Adding to this finding, these norms are also clearly inextricably linked to the men's male identities and how these are constructed. These ambivalent natures of intergenerational relationships are also manifest in several ways. While many of the men are positive about their roles as grandfathers and consider it to have positive benefits, the men who became grandfathers at younger ages, such as those discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.1.2 were initially uncomfortable about becoming grandfathers at ages they perceived to be too young. For these men, the lack of control over becoming a grandfather at a young age acts as a direct threat to their masculinities. For some of the men such as Robert however, it does appear that becoming a grandfather a little later in the lifecourse, either in their fifties or sixties, is more beneficial to the men particularly in relation to age. This highlights the importance of gendered and aged performativities. If connected with maturity and wisdom, grandfatherhood appears more acceptable to the men, but in middle age, is considered less appropriate and therefore against the norm.

For Sam who is related socially to his grandchildren as a result of his late marriage, being a grandfather also has an important influence on his sense of identity, but this time as a man:

I feel much more comfortable as a man, being a grandfather, than I did before I became a father (laughs) because I was late becoming a father and early becoming a grandfather so there's that period in between where I did a lot of growing up and now I feel more like a man now than I did before, when I was in the kind of competing with the peer group manliness you know and er, I always felt uncomfortable in myself and threatened and challenged and so on, that I needed to rise to the occasion, as most men do I think, and now I don't feel that at all...well at least not consciously, I might sub-consciously but I don't feel it consciously...I don't know what it's like from their point of view, I might be a right pain in the backside but from my point of view it's been wonderful, again same word, it's been absolutely marvellous once I've realised what I had erm it, it's been great because er it, it's given me a family almost ready made erm, which is a bit of a struggle, but then these great grandchildren that I was able to, fill up with sweets and then give back

(laughs), spoil them rotten then "here you are" erm, er that, that just came along and, and erm...well it's just like I had my own children you know

Sam, age 52

Sam's involvement with his grandchildren and positive relations with them encourage particular practices such as spoiling them, buying them sweets and as the previous chapter revealed reading and telling them stories. These intergenerational interactions and practices reflect the importance of his identity as a grandfather and suggest that even despite not being biologically related, positive, close and involved relations influence the production of his practices and consequently his grandfather identity. A great deal of discussion in the narratives revealed how the men viewed the differences between being a grandfather and a father and opinions varied across the sample. Ted comments:

There's not a lot of difference between role of grandfather as father, only is you don't have the...the same power with your grandchildren you know, if I shout, when we have a meal and they do owt wrong and I shout at them they turn around and say "I'll tell me dad!" (laughs) and they're all bigger than me so (laughs) bloody grandsons are getting bigger than me as well

Ted, age 66

Ted's example actually contradicts Colin's (in Section 6.1) who believes that the emotional and physical distance from his grandchildren as a grandfather allow him to have more freedom than his son does. However, the lifecourse literatures conceptualise experiences over time as continuities and change that occur throughout an individual's lifecourse (Caspi and Roberts, 2001; Hockey and James, 2001) and this is evident when the men compare their contemporary identities to those in the past. For Ted being a grandfather is also about continuity; there is not much difference

between the two roles for him except for the reduced power he feels has in relation to his grandchildren. In this example his practices of discipline are not taken seriously, reflecting his generational position.

Hockey and James (2003) suggest that family roles and identities have traditionally structured in a hierarchy of age and generation upon which power relations and authority status can be ascribed. As such, as an older generational position grandparenting in this model can be seen as a source of power for men in the later life course; they have built up resources and they might assume the position of a respected elder. As they point out however, in relation to peoples everyday family practices, this model is extremely limited, as Ted's narrative supports. In this example, the relations of gender and the young grandson's embodiments interact to reduce his power over them in relation to discipline meaning that their father is actually the more powerful in the generational hierarchy.

Arnold's narrative differed to Ted's in respect to power in some ways but also reflected that grandfathering is a space for adopting practices that differ to when he was a father, in his case in relation to nappy changing:

it was put to me erm, I think that was a generational thing erm, I was hopeless, as a father in terms of babies, absolutely hopeless, I didn't avoid it, it was just kind of, not my, area of expertise and, I watched our son and our son-in-law, the way they just got stuck in er, and was amazed, they never gave it a thought, but in my day, you see we, we had our children in our early 20's and had finished er, our family by our mid 20's er, and I just had no idea but, my wife was a star er, and didn't seem to have any expectations that I would, help except, except of course, I had to, you know feed them and take them out in push chairs...now you have strollers; push chairs and prams in those days...but erm when, when ours were babies, er when our grandchildren were babies er, I had far more to do with them, far more to do with them, and I, I was the one who would be saying "look you all go out, I will deal with them", "you can't change a nappy", "oh well", I, you know, "just let me try, I can do it" so it felt, I

suppose I'd become kind of modernised a bit, by watching the way, younger people today behave

Arnold, age 65

The previous chapter demonstrated that some contemporary grandfathers are beginning to conduct childcare practices such as a nappy changing. This suggests that as grandfathers men are exploring alternate forms of masculine practice (Smith and Winchester, 1998) that reflect intimacy and are becoming more nurturing, and consequently, in the language of Butler (1993), acts to subvert traditional expectations of masculinity.

However, the reason why Arnold is doing this is not to consciously subvert masculinity; it is because he is re-learning gender appropriate practices while observing and interacting with his son who acts as a marker of social and generational difference. In this example Arnold's sons particularly seem to influence the adoption of these nurturing practices, representing a generational shift in male roles (although as Chapter Six reveals, this is not applicable to all men) and highlighting the importance of relationality in shaping men's grandfathering identities. Arnold's practices are also characteristic of a grandfather who is compensating for his lack of involvement with these tasks in his past fathering; something which he has learnt to refine through intergenerational interaction with his own son(s). Despite the rejection of nappy changing by some of the informants, the interviews have revealed that there is potential for fathering practices of the current generation to reciprocally affect the practices of older men, further highlighting the significance of the men's intergenerational relations with their children and their influence on grandfather identities.

These data therefore contribute, and add to previous research which has examined how fathers base their practices on the legacy of their own father, either rejecting or adhering to what they did in the past (Dermott, 2008; Featherstone, 2009; Semple, 2001). Brannen and Nilsen (2006) refer to these processes as the continuities (e.g. Ray and Jim) and changes (e.g. Duncan and Arnold) of fathering across generations. The data show that this is actually an interdependent process that can also influence grandfathering performances. What this demonstrates is that while some men in later life maintain a traditional understanding of this kind of intimate care in grandfathering others are willing to evolve and refine their practices in relation to younger generations, consequently reworking their male identities throughout their lifecourse as Ando (2005) argues.

Power in the grandfathers' relationships was also discussed in the context of discipline and those with step-grandchildren in particular found it more difficult to perform grandfathering as they would with biologically related grandchildren. These men are also like 'social grandfathers' in that they are an extension of the general category of 'social fathers' who Marsiglio, Day and Lamb (2000) define as father figures that are not the birth father of a child. Due to the increased prevalence of intergenerational relationships across multiple generations, like social fathering, social grandfatherhood has become increasingly common as a result of changing family structures, divorce, co-habitation and increased interpersonal complexity in family relationships. It is evident from the men's narratives that grandfathers are increasingly negotiating relationships with grandchildren that are not biologically related. Appendix 5 shows the proportion of the participants who had social grandchildren. In this sample, social grandchildren were either adopted or step-grandchildren.

The men with step-grandchildren had mixed views about their relationships with them as Steve and Percy's narratives demonstrate:

I don't feel I'd chastise my grandchildren in the same way, as I would my children, and, which is just as well because like it only causes friction anyway, now the funny thing is, my partner has a granddaughter who comes now and again (huff) oh gosh, bigger pain in the bum than a twelve inch depositary \\ she goes out of her way to annoy me...to me she's an undisciplined child and, I believe in discipline so, although \\ now you see this is it because like, I'll go to my ex-wife's and I'll say "oh gosh, you know me step-granddaughter (laughs), she did this and she did that and I", because I tell her off when she's bad, and I do tell her off, only because her mother doesn't do, neither does my partner....I mean one day I was laid on the floor with my laptop and she looked at me and she's kicking the corner of the laptop. "Don't do that" and you know so I'm like "don't do that" because when I've spoke, I have spoken you know....me barks worse than me bite but like I mean, it generally works \\ and, yeah she's upset for 5 minutes, but 5 minutes later she's doing something else, and I was telling my ex-wife about this and she said "well you know it's not your place to tell her off" and my opinion is, well if there's nobody else to tell her off, someone's got to do it you know and, my eldest daughter, she's of that opinion as well, that you know it's not my place to tell anybody else's children off

Steve, age 51

I just enjoy erm, their company erm, because they are so easy to have around and er, erm that's with, if you like my regular substitute grandchildren because there's much more contact isn't there?, and then, with [biological granddaughter] there's the er, you know I'm always happy to receive photographs and to hear her and she'll become more and more, I shall understand her and we shall communicate and then, when I do see her of course it's all the more enjoyable yes, yes erm...does that answer your question?, (Anna: Yeah), yeah you know it's just I regret that it's not possible for, for me to fulfil the role erm, in a more regular way with my natural grandchild but erm, that's just something I've got to come to terms with yeah erm, er because, I hope it's human nature obviously, there's a different feeling inside if, you're related erm, er naturally by blood to (laughs) to, to someone than if you're not, the same my wife would probably the same towards [biological grandchild]

Percy, age 73

For Steve, the non-biological nature of the relationship is problematic because it significantly restricts him from performing his grandfathering the way he wants to, as he feels unable to chastise and discipline her. This is commonly experienced by step-

174

fathers and as Hetherington and Kelly (2002) have found this can affect how men feel about their role. For Steve this causes tension because while he has to interact with his step-daughter in an assumed position as a grandfather, he has less power in the intergenerational relationship than he would with his biological children or grandchildren. For Percy too, while he characterises his more frequent practices of involvement and contact with his step-grandchildren as more salient in creating a good relationship with them, it is evident he considers the biological reality as much more significant, as a part of his identity.

Geographical proximity is also an important circumstance in Percy's relationships. He is aware that the contact is maintained with his step-grandchildren much better because they live locally but being biologically related has much stronger meaning for him. This particularly suggests the nature and quality of intergenerational relationships is contingent on how men perceive the relationship as either biological or social and meaningful or not, creating ambivalence in their relationships.

While relationship status, as a result of changes in the family over the men's lifecourse could result in ambivalent intergenerational relationships as Fred's narrative earlier proved, continuities described by the men also reflected the performances of gender identities, which similarly emerged when some of the men characterised their interpretations of the meaning of their grandfathering. Expanding on describing himself a 'cheeky chappy clown' (see Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1) Paul argues:

in terms of my interactions with them, I am a bit daft with them, because I, I have this sort of erm...burlesque sort of cheeky, chappy clown, basically that's what I do and I didn't think about it but I do, do that and also I think my role is to encourage erm, all the kind of richness of experience for them, so you know along with their mum and dad's erm, you know to take them, to, to enjoy new experiences, especially outdoorsy things you know erm, which they, I mean with [son] and [daughter-in-law], [son] doesn't like animals very much, I mean he probably got over exposed

175

when he was young erm, so one of the things you know, I know I can do with
[grandson], is to make sure he, he comes into contact with animals all the time and
erm, and feels relaxed about it, and things like that so, no I take it, take it quite, and
to reinforce the things, the sort of things that they want, but I'm quite conscious that,
my personality is a bit over the top sometimes so, and [wife] is saying you know
"look you've really, really, really got to be careful to take the lead from, the mum
and dad" erm and so I'm very conscious of that, but they kind

Paul, age 58

And Ed reveals that:

now we've got family number 2" effectively which is erm, a different kind of
responsibility because, then you start to think, is it just, you don't, you don't start to
do things just for your own benefit, or even your children's benefit anymore it, it's
almost like a stewardship where you then continue it on to say you know "we'll leave
them a house in time, we'll do this, we'll do that" so it's, it's expanding the family
but, but it's also er, a different sort of relationship

Ed, age 61

A key point in each of these examples is that both Paul and Ed acknowledge that relationships with their children are significant and meaningful. Relationships across the lifecourse influence how men construct meaning about their identities as grandfathers and it is evident that performing grandfather is a relational project.

7.3. Discussion

Unsurprisingly, being a grandfather is significant and meaningful to the men in this study but this examination has also highlighted that men experience various contradictions and ambiguities in their intergenerational relations both with children and grandchildren. Initially it is evident that the men share the opinion that relationships with grandchildren should be positive and through their narratives the majority of the participants emphasise this. Many of them share the experience that relationships are mutually beneficial to both themselves and their grandchildren. This supports Holdsworth's (2007) approach to intergenerational relations as

interdependent, extending its applicability to the grandfather-grandchild relationship as I suggested was a possibility in Chapter Four, Section 4.2.

Clearly being a grandfather is something that the men identify to be part of their identity; many consider their role to be something unique from any other generational positions, as Colin's example demonstrated and throughout the chapter there is some reflection on how being a grandfather constructs an identity that differs from previous familial identities. The men suggest that their practices which are driven by love and emotional attachment to grandchildren benefit them later in life particularly in relation to their health and well-being, influencing how they feel about their identities. Particularly in cases when relationships with children and grandchildren are mutually influential and beneficial, interactions with grandchildren can also provide the men a context and spaces in which they can be active and counter negative associations with ageing further highlighting that grandchildren not only benefit the men's lifestyles but also influence the men's geographies. This reveals the importance of space and geography for facilitating cohesive intergenerational relations (Vanderbeck, 2007). Grandchildren are also considered in the men's futures and lifecourse progression, offering the possibility of support in the future.

However, the exploration of the emotional aspects of the grandfather's relationships with grandchildren in this chapter also reveals that, across the sample, relationships can be ambivalent in nature and this influences how the men perform their grandfather identity. While several of the men discuss their relationships as something that they clearly enjoy, strive for and consider appropriate for a grandfather to do, some of the men also experience conflict in their relationships or simply do not consider them very significant. The varying characteristics of the men, including the family formation, the

geographical distance that they lived from their grandchildren, the age of the grandfather and his grandchildren and issues of relationship type (i.e. whether or not they had biological or social relationships with grandchildren) all influence the quality and character of the men's relationships with grandchildren; a variable that influences the men's identities and its multiple expressions through practices.

An exploration of the significance and meaning of relationships with grandchildren also revealed the complex generational structure that men are conducting their grandfathering in, a structure that has shifted over time but nonetheless highlights the significance of intergenerational relations to men. Depending on the nature of their relationships with children, grandchildren or even their own fathers, the men clearly distinguished what they do and how they conduct their relationships using these generational identities as a reference for similarity or difference. Past knowledge about how parents conducted grandparenting (i.e. George), observation of sons engaging in caring practices, and a disapproval of how their fathers had behaved in the past (i.e. Mervyn in Chapter Six), all produce varying outcomes in the significance men assign to being a grandfather in that they either reject or copy them. It is the different forms of intergenerational relations that the men are located in throughout their lifecourse's that result in them enacting differing practices and consequently different grandfather identities across the sample.

Relationships with grandchildren also create significant generational power relations as well. In several of the cases regardless of relationship, the men's narratives suggest a loss of power in relation to grandchildren, particularly in comparison to their children. This loss of power marked the men with a specific shared generational identity. This ambiguity and contradiction across the sample suggests that not only do

multiple intergenerationalities exist (Hopkins et al, 2011) but also that intergenerational relations are not fixed; they too are constantly in flux and vary as a result of lifecourse experience, identity and the personal characteristics of the men and their family members. As such, generational identities both past and present are prominent in structuring grandfather experiences and performances of identity.

Overall, this chapter argues that variations in the quality and character of the intergenerational relations that men who are grandfathers engage in are key variables in influencing the grandfather practices and identities examined in Chapter Six, creating their multiple forms. Positive intergenerational relations facilitate grandfather practices and allow men to adhere to the norm of involvement discussed in Chapter Six, but the more ambivalent and conflicting relationships, particularly with children, can become problematic and even a barrier to the men's performances of grandfather identities. Divorce and separation has varied outcomes for the men, shaping the practices that they can or cannot conduct with their grandchildren in different ways. As opposed to family decline and a loss of contact with grandchildren as might be expected, the men adopt varying roles and practices with grandchildren that are influenced by family reconfiguration and have varied outcomes. Therefore this chapter argues that in order to fully understand how men perform their grandfather identities, the quality and character of intergenerational relations (that are shaped and influenced by contemporary trends in different ways and are reviewed in Chapter Two) with both children and grandchildren need to be accounted for; all are interrelated and connected.

However, while practices reveal what men do and where, indicating how identities are performed, and intergenerational literatures can help to explain the varied character

and nature of intergenerational relations that grandfathers engage in separately, it is difficult to directly assess the influences of intergenerational relations, as a result of the men's personal and familial circumstances, on the multiple forms of grandfather identities. The findings in these two chapters are revealing of what men do and also the significance of why they do it, but not how these intergenerational relations directly influence and shape the identities men construct through practices of grandfathering. The following chapter therefore uses four vignettes from the empirical data to do this.

CHAPTER EIGHT: The interpersonal complexities of contemporary grandfathering

8. Introduction

Chapter Two revealed that grandparenting is being implicated and indeed shaped by the reconfiguration of the family, as a result of various factors including divorce, longevity and the increased use of new technologies, something that the profiles of the participants and their narratives have supported so far. While literatures about these trends characterise the contemporary context as in flux and changing, there is little understanding about how individual relations and ties between family members, such as between grandfathers and their grandchildren are influenced by this, or how individuals negotiate their relationships across several generations in their everyday lives. The previous chapter argues that the quality and character of men's intergenerational relations influences not only how men practice grandfathering in multiple and diverse ways but also whether or not they can practice grandfathering with their grandchildren. What is also beginning to emerge is that the social contexts within which men are grandfathering and engaging in intergenerational relations are also significant to how men construct grandfather identities. Antonucci et al (2007) support this claim, arguing that context is fundamental to shaping the life experiences and relationships of individuals and the family.

In order to explore how the quality and characters of intergenerational relations directly influence the multiple forms of grandfather identities that are practiced in variable ways, this chapter presents a more intensive sub sample of four narratives selected from the participants' interviews (this includes the two men who were observed). These four vignettes have been chosen in particular because while there are similarities between their grandfathering in that they all wish to have some

involvement with their grandchildren; they also represent the differences between the participants in relation to their personal and familial contexts and social identities. This allows for a more thorough line of enquiry about how the contemporary social context also creates heterogeneity among grandfathers and influences and shapes identity construction and experiences of contemporary grandfathering. As discussed in Chapter Five narratives are practices that involve 'doing' and performing identities, consequently implicating the social context being narrated and the people within that social context; they are ideal for examining how grandfathering is constructed by the men and revealing more about the circumstances that are shaping and structuring their practices.

The men's accounts are presented in a linear fashion, as a way to map and explore their personal lives in context and to read them through the context in which the narratives are located (Smart, 2010). This contributes further to the findings of the previous chapter because it explains the variation of grandfather identities and practices by considering the contexts of grandfathering that also create the multiple relations that men must negotiate and that have different implications for how they construct their grandfather identities. As such, the narratives are not intended to be representative or typical of the lives of all of the participants. They are real accounts that illustrate the very real differences men are experiencing in contemporary grandfatherhood.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research I am concerned not to over generalise about the men's experiences but to do justice to the richness and complexity in the men's lives. The use of these particular vignettes is one way in which to do this in a restricted space. At the same time, the specific cases test the conceptual framing that

incorporates practice, performativity and intergenerationality, to demonstrate how together, they work to nuance the study of generational identities. In directly comparing how intergenerational relations influence the practice of grandfather identities, the findings respond to the third research question; how do the men's intergenerational relationships and personal and familial circumstances influence what they do?

8.1. Introducing the vignettes

The four participants' stories that feature in this chapter have been chosen for the richness of the data they provide and because together, their experiences reflect more broadly how contemporary grandfathering is variously shaped and contextualised in myriad ways. The men chosen from the study are William, Bill, Arthur and Gerald. It is evident that men engage in various practices with their grandchildren and that this creates particular emotions and meanings, but these vignettes and specific stories help to directly explain how the quality and characters of the men's intergenerational relations influence the practices of grandfather identities that are produced in the context of these relationships. Outlined in each section are short profiles of the grandfathers that have been chosen as representative of the various differences that the grandfathers are experiencing. These present their familial circumstances, and personal characteristics such as their ages at the time of interview, their residential location, information about their grandchildren, work history and marriage status.

8.2. William's narrative – the 'nuclear' family

William lives with his wife and is the oldest man in the sample. He was 88 at the time of the interview. He has one daughter who is married and one grandson aged 28 who he has very close relationships with. William has always maintained regular contact

with his grandson even now his grandson has moved to live in Preston, UK. William is a retired teacher.

I begin with William's story because his family I consider most representative of the bean pole family (Bengtson and Martin, 2002); their family structure of three generations is narrow in formation because William only has one grandson and one daughter. Their family is also most closely representative of the ideological nuclear family. He and his wife remain married, his daughter and his son-in-law remain married and they have one son (Jackson, 2010). At 28 years old his grandson is single but no longer lives with his parents.

This structuring reflects how an ageing society has altered the geographies of living arrangements and consequently the doing of family. Nonetheless, the family has not experienced fragmentation as a result of divorce in any of the family generations. William's narrative in particular painted a positive construction of grandfathering and family which he attributes this to a range of different contingent factors. All of the men were initially asked about their life histories to begin the interviews in order to make them feel comfortable, but it also provided a useful context for how their relationships with their grandchildren had developed. Kinship relations quite often figure into the reasoning behind where individuals live (Mason 2004b) which is something that William reveals when discussing his residential history:

The family I've got now, well that consists obviously, there's my wife er, who's 5 years younger than myself, er my daughter, er son-in-law and grandson, which is [grandson] of course and that's basically the family erm, I did have a sister but she's no longer alive so er, that's what er, basically it I suppose

Anna: Where did you come from originally?

Erm originally?....erm (clears throat) Selly Oak in Birmingham

Anna: Oh right, I can sense a little bit of an accent there

Yes and then erm, we went from Selly Oak to Hall Green in Birmingham and then we went from Hall Green to Solihull and then from Solihull we went to erm, I got married at Solihull and er, we lived on Sutton Coldfield, and then Sutton Coalfield we moved to erm, just outside Blackburn....erm...no that's wrong sorry we went from Hall Green erm...and then we went to Northampton, Northampton then we went to Blackburn, Blackburn we went to Sutton Coldfield...er back to erm, Blackburn and then back again to Sutton Coldfield and then we moved here...so we've had, you know quite a few moves, that was through business obviously

Anna: What was it that bought you here?

Well we, when we decided to retire, because erm, [son-in-law] and [daughter] er, were teaching at Blackburn and [son-in-law] got a position there, er we moved up here erm, otherwise we had a pull down to Lyme Regis you know in Devon, but we decided as we always have that we stuck as a family and so we moved here, and we've been quite pleased, we're out of the rush, near to the Lake District, and the, trains quite close by, buses and that's what we looked at

William reveals that his and his wife's final decision to locate in the North West was a result of having a close family and wanting to live near them. While in the past these decisions were based on his employment, retirement signalled a shift in reasoning when making a choice about moving his residence to be closer to his family. From a performance perspective, his relationships with his family members and his choice to move close to his children and grandson have gained more salience as an older man, whereas in the past this was based on his work identity. His narrative performs family identity rather than a traditionally masculine identity, in that he is foregrounding the importance of his family by reflecting on his past reasoning in which work 'obviously' influenced his decision. This suggests that over time his family relationships have come to matter more than his work identity.

As well as living in close geographical proximity to his children, William also reveals that his grandfathering practices are central to creating and maintaining the strong and supportive relationship he feels he has with his grandson. These practices are also

contextualised and contingent on William being a member of a close family that has experienced no divorce in any generation, and being involved in his grandson's life over an extended period of time. Engaging in practices with his grandson, now 28 years old, have contributed to the extremely positive and rewarding relationship as William describes:

I would say that our relationship is excellent, erm as you know he's a member of the [charity group], in Morecambe, and erm, in January we had our 60th wedding anniversary and people afterwards remarked that they've never seen such a complete relationship before between, erm you know er grandson and erm, grandfather and I put this down to one that we're a very close family, we always have been a very close family erm, I used to get on famously with him when he was young, I remember him playing in here, erm before that we had a large lawn and I used to have a wheel barrow running him round, a little later on he used to push the lawn mower with me, you know that sort of thing erm, I've always been interested with him, right from his early school days er, certainly at college and certainly at university and whenever I can, I've always helped him erm, and I've always been and since I've always been to, you know when he's ever had a certain thing on at the college or university, I used to go and support him and erm, he's always wanted to come on holiday with me, and with my wife as well obviously, except of course when he, when he was at university sometimes and now of course he's got a career it's not so easy for him to come but erm, I, we always had a great time, now I also put this down, apart from having a close family, I think we knew one another quite well, and we respected each other in our different ways, now what I like about him, erm I always encouraged him if he, if he says "can I help grandpa?" I always used to let him help, whether it was in the garden or later on when he wanted to do decorating or bits of carpentry and that sort of thing erm, and also I've encouraged him to ask if he wants any help or advice and I've given it to him and he's thought about it and then he's made his own decision and that's great with me as far as I'm concerned

Anna: Yeah, that's something you respect

Yeah, but we really get on fantastically, we pull each other's leg like nobody's business, and that is why I think (laughs) that a lot of people, when we had that party there was a lot of banter going on (laughs) erm but it comes back that we respect each other, and I think that's what built up you know this great understanding we have with one another (laughs)...it's something that's built up over the years really, er and both of us as I said, we've both looked back on some brilliant times, now he said to once, he said "oh it will be terrible when you die grandpa" I said "no it won't" I said "you just think of all the lovely times we've had, that's what life's all about" so er // but really, it's the fact you know I base it on the fact we've got a very close family and we've got respect for one another, and that's built up over the years

This is an example of how the doing of grandfathering is facilitated by, and acts to strengthen intergenerational relations across generations over time. In performing various practices with his grandson over an extended period he now constructs his identity in a way that emphasises the importance of their relationship. William further reveals that grandfathering is a transitional identity, as evidenced by the his discussion of his shifting practices over time; from doing things and playing with him at a young age, to supporting him at college and university, to giving advice and sharing values when he is older (Waldrop et al, 1999). Similarly this involvement generated through various masculine practices, has created a great respect that has developed over time and means that they still maintain a strong relationship and keep in contact on a regular basis. Each of these practices represents the evolution and transition through multiple performances of masculinity in interaction with his ageing, and also his grandson. The discussions of active practices with his grandson when he was young are reminiscent of the narratives examined in Chapter Six, Section 6.1, in that William constructs and performs his grandfathering in relation to his bodily practices.

One interpretation of this is that men are resisting negative assumptions constructed around their age identities, through uses of space and place that reproduce and reflect their dominance through performances of masculinity, particularly through their bodies. As one of the eldest men in the sample however, towards the end of this narrative, he describes a role reversal, with his grandson helping him out with more physical tasks such as decorating and gardening. This indicates that over time their relationship has necessarily changed and is constantly renegotiated, but is also reciprocal and interdependent; their respect for each other has developed over time through a mutual understanding and sharing of tasks. As such their practices

contribute to the development of their mutual respect for each other, as Nydegger and Mitteness (1991) suggest is important for constructing good relations between men in families.

For William, these practices and close family relationships have facilitated a strong relationship that highlights the importance of kin in contemporary society and challenges change theorists who fear that process of individualisation result in declining kin obligations. William's grandson is also his only grandchild which has allowed him to develop a particularly strong and individual relationship with him. In the narrative that followed, it was evident that though he and his grandson have got older, their relationship is still very strong an d this is reflected in his continued involvement and practices with him:

> *I mean just recently he's been wanting a new car, erm I got him a car before quite well, so we've been with his dad and we've looked at this erm...he's still interested in the garden you know, if he can help he helps out in the garden erm, I have to watch him sometimes but er, he does a good job erm, if, we're going out anywhere er and he's free he often says you know "can I come you know with you?" er and we do the same as him, and of course he's been taking us over to Preston fairly recently and we've been looking round Preston which is, an unknown area to us, erm... we've helped him with his flat obviously, decorating and whatnot but that was about 3 years ago now thank goodness when we could do it, so we do that now you see, erm, I'm still interested in what he's doing there but if he says "oh I'm going to, I'm going to get what's her name to put in here" and I say "what's the purpose of that you know?" and I discuss that with him so erm and he's as I say we're trying to work out this year when he can come on holiday with us but erm, he's got his own friends you see naturally, most of them from university anyway er and so er, he enjoys their company which is a good thing, and seeing something of the world*

While in the past, practices involved practical activities such as gardening and educating, as an older man with a grown up grandchild, William is much more involved in providing financial support and being interested in his grandsons well

being and living arrangements highlighting continuous transition s in the types of practices and involvement men become involved in over time as grandfathers. William further suggests that his reasons to be involved are because he and his wife want to be involved and because, as many of the men suggested; it aids his children who he also has a strong relationship with:

because we, wanted to be, not involved probably, we wanted to help him all he could, in the different stages you know as he's gone through life and erm....no I won't say this because its reflecting on [son-in-laws]'s grandparents, erm when he's really been in trouble and he's had chicken pox you know and all the rest of it, and course my daughter was teaching and erm, at the time and so was [son-in-law] and so we used to go and stay over with him on Monday to Friday erm 'til late home, back on the weekend you see and he's never forgotten that, it's funny erm, and it's little things you know, he often says what we used to do and I think that's good because I've got a lot of joy being, helping him and having fun with him, and he's done the same so er, no I, I you know I always look forward to when he comes, I often wonder what he's going to say (laughs) I give as good as he gives me so, no we have a wonderful time...it's really fantastic

Anna: How often do you see him now?

Usually at the weekends, but he always rings up every, at least once a week sometimes once a week, and we ring him as well, erm but no if he comes home at the weekend which he has to do now more so because he's the President of the [charity group] erm, no, no we see him you know every, most weeks, and we certainly ring one another you know, either my wife or myself or he ring's us erm so we've, we keep in contact, and I want to know you know what he's doing, I mean he's going away shortly to Brussels you know and I want to know who he's going with and, and erm, you know how long for, "where are you off to next?" and then in the meantime he's trying to fit in with us for maybe a day or two but erm ,we don't expect him now of course at his age, but it's nice when he says "well can we come with you?"

Clearly, the form and functioning of William's intergenerational relationship with his grandson has changed over time. As an older grandson, they still stay in contact, which demonstrates the importance of the relationship to them both, but they spend much less face-to-face time together than when his grandson was a younger child. As

such the ways in which they are doing family has altered over time, but the strength of their relationship which is based upon a long period of investment remains.

While their relationship is strong, William is concerned about the extent of his involvement in his relationship with his grandson however. He discusses:

I think when you're a father you're probably closer, aren't you?, to your own father...but when, when you're a grandfather you've got to remember that he's got a father as well so what we don't, we've been very careful of that we don't overrule you know anything that his dad wants to do you see, we'll discuss it, but we don't overrule so I think that, that's where, where the difference is I think....I think when you're grandparents as well, you've got to pull towards helping them anyway but you've got to stand off a bit sometimes you know, erm because I know some grandparents can be very frustrating erm...and domineering in some ways so we've always tried to, you know step back and have a look and well now if he wants, wants to ask us something we've got to think about this, erm what's his dad been saying you know, because we're close to his dad as well so he tells us you know what's going on, same as my daughter obviously erm and I've got the same relationship with my daughter so it's pretty fantastic

Maintaining intergenerational relationships across two generations is a relational and lifelong project. As a grandfather, while keen to be involved and to help in any way possible, he also has to negotiate his daughter and son-in-law, and their needs and obligations as parents. Several of the men are aware of this obligation to their children to be involved but not interfere; as such adhering to the norm of 'being there' but 'not interfering' (Mason et al, 2007) and this is particularly something that men whose families are still intact are wary of because the children's fathers are still around. As such grandfathering involves much more than interacting with grandchildren; it requires a negotiation of the relationality and power relations that a family of multiple generations provides.

The theoretical framework has been useful for William's narrative because not only has it accounted for the ways in which William individually practices his identity, but it also draws attention to his intergenerational relationships with his grandson, daughter and son-in-law, and how these influence what he does as a grandfather. In interacting with his grandson in the garden and being active with him as he was growing up, William was performing a masculine identity, adhering to the norms of an active, youthful bodied masculinity, currently considered hegemonic (Calasanti, 2004). As a space, his body performs masculinity in relation to his grandson through activity but also responds to his grandsons ageing over time. These performances are also transitional and as time has progressed, in different contexts his ability to perform in a masculine way has decreased. This is evidenced by his discussions of his grandson taking over his traditional household roles. One interpretation of this is that in his ageing, his bodily identity is subverting the norms associated with masculinities. This is not a political act, as Butler (1990) would posit, but is a natural outcome of a declining body that is characteristic of ageing made more visible by his practices of involvement with his grandson.

Contact between the men still remains, although as a result of the changing geographical distance and his grandsons increased responsibilities, is much less direct. William's practices are now characterised by telephone conversation as well as face-to-face contact. Generational interaction also necessarily influences the ways in which William performs his gendered and ageing identity and how he uses his agency to choose which identity to perform. In allowing his grandson to take over tasks from him for example, he demonstrates an acceptance of his generational position and that

of his grandson and relinquishes his previous adherence to active masculinities by letting him help.

In performing this relationship, like many of the men in the sample, William is also mindful that he must negotiate other generational identities in grandfathering such as his son-in-law and must not overstep his son-in-laws authority. He also makes a point of emphasising his good relationship with his daughter which has been built over time Intergenerationality therefore influences how men choose to perform their identities in ways that are appropriate to both their grandchildren and their children.

More generally, this framework has revealed that the complexity of intergenerationality relates not only to the performances of masculine identity but also to the lifecourse of grandfathering. As an older grandfather William's narrative reveals that his longevity has facilitated a long-lasting positive relationship with his grandson that is necessarily different to his relationship with him when he was younger. This also reveals that interaction with older grandchildren can be very different to interaction with younger ones.

This account in particular supports Silverstein et al's (1998) model of grandparent-grandchild relations. William's practices define various forms of support for his grandson over time including financial, instrumental and emotional (Hoff, 2007). Therefore while his practices may reflect a continuation of gendered performativities, they have also influenced, and created intergenerational cohesion between the generations, which have in turn shaped the practices that William engages in as a grandfather, constructing his identity.

8.3. Arthurs narrative – the fragmented and geographically distant family

Arthur's story diverged a great deal from William's, representing one of the more complex family structures of the sample in the middle generation. Arthur lives with his wife and was 73 years old at the time of the interview. He also agreed to being observed with his grandchildren, during which two of his granddaughters, and his youngest grandson were present. His family structure has been altered dramatically by the divorce and re-marriage of both of his sons. Arthur has two sons; one who emigrated to Australia with his two children (one daughter and one son) and another who lives locally. Because of a divorce in his (local) son's generation, Arthur has three biological granddaughters (all of which also live locally), one biological grandson and two step-grandchildren (one girl and one boy). He therefore has four granddaughters, two grandsons and two step-grandchildren. Arthur is a retired electrical engineer.

While grandfathering in a complex family structure, initially his attitude to grandfathering was very similar to Williams and that of the other men in the sample:

you can spend more time with grandchildren than you did with your own children, because, when I was working, initially when my children were young, I used to work 12 hour days

if I knew grandchildren were that good, I'd have had them first!

With some more probing and questions however it became clear that his general attitudes to grandfathering are not always reflected in the reality of his family situation. In comparison to William's family life, not all of his relationships with his biological grandchildren are so positive. Arthur's eldest son now lives in Australia with his children and is divorced, something that happened once he had moved away.

193

The geographical distance this creates and having poor relationships with his son's ex-wife, means that he feels that his relationship with these grandchildren is restricted:

before [eldest son] emigrated to Australia, he used to, he had a daughter, just his son was born in Australia, he used to bring his daughter and his daughter used to stay with us at weekends and that and, she used to like that you know er, because there was a strained relationship between me first, me eldest son and his wife, I won't say what we call her but anyway they're divorced now (laughs) er, and then that granddaughter in Australia, she's now 24 I think, 23, 24 er but yeah...we saw them, last time we were there but er...no relationship with them really, they er, er.....it's hard to say...his mother had probably told him a lot of 'porky pies' [lies] about our family, and I know she did and he, so he had a, defence mechanism against us, he used to try and be pleasant, but again he was a, boy in a room, he wasn't athletic or sporty at all, he was a boy in a room, his, he's er, he's 17 now and he can't ride a bike

Anna: Oh really,

Yeah he, he couldn't do it immediately so he didn't want to know so er, and, [eldest son] er, now you're on about relationships, him and [eldest son], his father, he used to spend some time with his father and some time with his mother, but now he's, cut all relationships off with his father

Arthur's narrative contributes to, and reveals the complexities of, the argument made in the previous chapter that the central generation can mediate intergenerational relations between grandfathers and their grandchildren and in this case contribute to a source of intergenerational conflict. This conflict is particularly prevalent in the aftermath of divorce in this case and, as Arthur attributes this to his son's ex-wife, reveals how women as kin keepers can have detrimental effects on the paternal grandparents' involvement with grandchildren. Interestingly, Arthur also draws on a spatial narrative of *'children in rooms'* to interpret why his relationships with his grandchildren in Australia, and step-grandchildren determine the poorer quality relationships between them and reduced practices of involvement. To use a spatial metaphor, these intergenerational relationships are much more distant in both physical and emotional ways.

For Arthur, who has step-grandchildren as well as biological grandchildren, it is evident that the meaning of the relationships between the sets of grandchildren differs in relation to frequency of involvement, for which he gives several reasons:

I can't get my head round the relationship, he's [son], he lives in his own house, and he's bought her [his second wife] a house...so she lives with her 2 children

Anna: Right, but they're together aren't they?

They're still together as man and wife, but they live in separate houses, but er, when [second wife/daughter-in-law]'s children go to their father and [sons] children go to their mother, [second wife/daughter-in-law] comes back to his house with their child [grandson], and I can't get my head round it, it's a very expensive relationship and I think, it was the personalities of her children and [sons] children, that, there was...it just wasn't working out, and they'll probably, when all the kids have flown the nest, they'll probably get back to living permanently (laughs) together with [grandson] which is there's yeah

Anna: Yeah OK so does that make you a step-grandad as well?

Yes, yes

Anna: (laughs) OK, and do you see them as much?

I don't see them as much, as I used to when they all lived together erm, when [son] and [son's first wife] split up, [sons second wife] came to live with [son], with her 2 and the 3 girls, because [son's first wife]....husband didn't want, the responsibility of the 3 kids at that time, and then she changed her mind later on....so they went to live half with their mum and half with their dad and then, [sons second wife's] 2, it, it's very hard to explain!

Arthur attributes this lack of relationship with his step-grandchildren to the confusing nature of the relationships resulting from his sons divorce and re-marriage and their separate living arrangements. While not overly disapproving, Arthur's confusion and discomfort with the situation represents a distinct generation gap (Pilcher, 1998) resulting from the divorce. This has implications for his experience of grandfathering and the practices he engages in, which he discusses:

our three are pretty, pretty good, and [step-granddaughter] and [step-grandson]
used to be...er better than they are now, they just sort of, I can't just say...they ignore
you, you know and they're girls and boys in rooms and I don't like that situation, I
don't like that situation no, you could be there or you couldn't be there. Now we
always buy them birthday presents as we do our own 3, and I think we, we're more
generous that way than, their own parents, they're own grandparents are, because
well, you know we live nearer and have better relations with them I suppose, 'cause
they don't see their own

Arthur makes distinct comparisons between his relationships with his biological and step-grandchildren and the fact that they are step-grandchildren has implications for the practices he engages in with them. To some extent his practices with his step-grandchildren are more functional. Arthur and his wife buy them presents for their birthdays for example, and adopt a grandparenting role with them, interestingly suggesting that living locally is an important element in doing this. This locality he suggests is important for facilitating a relationship which compares to their biological grandparents who he suggests are less generous with them because they live further away. The strength and quality of these relationships was also something that was also observable in his homespace decorations (as discussed in Section 6.2, Chapter Six). During the observations Arthur showed me the fridge, which displayed multiple fridge magnets. These fridge magnets were a mixture of memoirs from places they had travelled to, and personalised magnets that depicted their youngest grandson (see Plate 8.1) of whom he speaks fondly:

Plate 8.1: Personalised magnet of
Arthur's grandson on his kitchen
fridge, displayed with magnets
depicting holiday destinations. Image
taken by author and permission
obtained from the boy's parents ©

197

we had him yesterday, I take him swimming, that's why I couldn't come on Thursday
[for interview], I'm in [gym] and I take him swimming on a Thursday, when he
wants to go; but we usually have him on a Thursday, but we see him regularly.. good
relationship, but with the little, the little fella now, they er [daughter-in-law], his
mother er...her relationship with her two children...she realised she made mistakes,
she didn't let them mix, and she was determined that when she had [grandson]...the
little one he's 3, she was determined that, she was going, to involve the
grandparents, and she does you know, we see him regularly

In his discussions he explains that he is much more involved with his biological

grandson on a more regular basis. This is facilitated by good relations with him and

his daughter-in-law, allowing him to conduct more active and involved practices with

him, such as swimming. As mentioned, this is also reflected in the decoration of his

home space. There were several photographs of their biological grandson and just one

of their step-grandchildren, something I asked Arthur to elaborate on during the

observation:

> *He then...showed me the kitchen. The fridge was located unusually on the top of the*
> *counter and was decorated in its entirety with magnets and photographs. Arthur*
> *explained that the magnets were all from the various places they had visited for*
> *holidays but what interested me the most was that they had a picture magnet of their*
> *grandson (Plate 8.1). On the front of the fridge (which Arthur explained was high*
> *on the side board because of [his wife's] arthritis in her hips) was also another*
> *picture of [grandson] attached under one of the magnets. It was at this point that it*
> *struck me that there were few photos of [his step-grandchildren] and I asked Arthur*
> *about this. He explained that because of the complicated situation of the family, they*
> *were his step-grandchildren and so were not displayed in the house as much. The*
> *photographs were mainly of his biological grandchildren, the ones he sees the most.*

Observation Notes with Arthur's family: 07.08.09

In Arthur's example, the fridge and the magnets as memory and material spaces

reflect distinct layers of meaning in regards to the extension of relationships beyond

the home with grandchildren. The magnet of his grandson and the lack of photographs

of his step-grandchildren that I had questioned him about displayed specific meanings

in relation to the social relations between Arthur and his grandchildren and also the

complexities of the social relationships that have emerged as a result of divorce and

the increased prevalence of step-grandparenting. The quality of relationships with the step-grandchildren for example was particularly represented by their lack of visibility in relation to their biological grandson in this space and their absence from the observations. This aligns with Finch's (2007) argument about the power of displaying family beyond the face-to-face performance of family practices because the material spaces reflect the reality of his grandfathering identity as both a biological and step-grandfather. He also makes an interesting point about the fact that he has a good relationship with his youngest grandson, not only as a result of his practices of involvement with him, but because his mother (Arthur's new daughter-in-law) decided she wanted them to be involved. This further highlights that the central generation, and in this case the mother, has a strong influence over the practices and the involvement men can engage in with their grandchildren but in Arthurs case this is complicated by having two divorced sons each with varying family situations and relationships.

Arthur's narrative also particularly revealed how he considered gender to affect his relationships with his grandchildren. As a married man, Arthur mused over the differences between his role and his wife's:

the one in Australia she used to come as well, they all used to come and stay you know they always liked to stay at nana's

Anna: At nana's, not grandads?

Well it was nana's yeah, well I think it because they're girls but with the little fella it might be grandads I don't know, I don't know yet, but yes good relationship with them ...very good relationship with the grandchildren

Anna: Is your er, your relationship slightly different to your wife's relationship with them, are there any differences at all or, is it quite similar?

*Er, my wife's relationship with the grandchildren...well, with being females, they,
they gel more with the granddaughters, rather than me you know, they see me as a
bit strict I think*

Anna: Oh do they, why is that?

*(Laughs) er, well because I tell them to put things away and be tidy and I, I try to
impress on them that they ought to do well at school, and I give them you know my
experience where I should have carried on and carried on and I didn't until later,
and I started going to college when I was, when I had a family, you know and I say
"you don't want to do that you want to get it out of the way when you're in your
early 20's at the latest, get it done" and er so they I'm a bit, a bit strict er, that
doesn't inhibit them in anyway. I do it in the nicest possible way of course yeah,
yeah, yeah*

*Anna: Yeah, so what extent do you think that er, do you ever sort of feel like, do you
feel like you can discipline them then?*

Oh I do if it's really off, out of order, if it's out of order, I'll admonish them

In discussing his role as a grandfather and his wife's, Arthur suggests that there are

observable differences, differences that he attributes to their genders and the genders

of their grandchildren. Ando (2005) argues that grandparenthood represents a

continuation of gendered roles that correspond with parenting; women adopt more

expressive tasks while men adopt more instrumental tasks, something that Arthur

reinforces. For example the observation was cut short because he was taking his

grandson to the dentist, something he also he does for his granddaughter:

I take her to er, the dentists, the doctors, things like that you know....

Imposing discipline is also a particular performance of masculinity that some of the

men express they should be able to conduct (see also Chapter Seven, Section 7.2) as

part of their role and Arthur is acutely aware that this may result in some of the

distance that he does not feel his wife experiences. He relates this discipline to his

own past experiences however and is involved in the sharing of values (Waldrop et al

1999) but based on learning from what he considers his mistakes. While emphasising

discipline he also describes his involvement in more instrumental tasks such as taking his grandson swimming.

This gendering is also spatial in that his grandchildren refer to their grandparents home as 'nana's' rather than 'grandpa's', suggesting that grandparents also play an important role in (re)producing the gendering of spaces. Mason et al (2007) suggest that being a grandparent is paradoxical and this data furthers this through an examination of grandparenting in fragmented families. Smart (2005) argues that parallel value systems can exist in families. On the one hand for example grandparents will condemn divorce, evidenced when Arthur mentions that he cannot get his head around the relationship his children have, but on the other they still act to support their children and consequently their grandchildren when breakdown occurs. While he is not so involved in the lives of his step-grandchildren Arthur and his wife do just this, they take a very involved role with their grandson, care for him and display him in their home. Smart (2005) suggests that older generations while holding strong opinions about other generations, are unlikely to force these on others. Earlier for example Arthur calls his grandchildren 'children in rooms', something that affects the strength of his relationships with his step-grandchildren in particular. However, he continues to perform family practices such as giving them presents, reflecting his expectations of what a grandfather should do and consequently his identity.

In this respect, Arthur is 'doing family' in similar ways to William, despite the complexity and diversity of his family structure. In Arthurs case however, this is much more complex because he has to negotiate more ambivalent emotions and a variety of intergenerational relations with very different characters. His practices

continue to define masculine practices regardless of relationship type and vary from taking his grandson swimming, conducting instrumental tasks to providing financial assistance in the form of present giving. However, clearly his practices of involvement, and consequently his grandfather identity is influenced by the positive quality and character of his relations with his biological children and while he continues to practice grandfathering with his step-grandchildren this takes different forms to his practices with his biological grandchildren because the relationships are more distant.

This diversity can only be accounted for by the combination of practice, performativity and intergenerationality. While Arthur continues to adopt an involved role, through which he mainly emphasises doing instrumental tasks that characterise masculine performances of grandfather involvement, intergenerationality is required to understand the complexity of his family situation, its influence on his grandfather practices and the context within which he is performing his identity. He is performing grandfathering in masculine ways but he is continuing to do so within the context of the ambiguous relationships he has with his step and distant grandchildren. This highlights how powerful the performativity of male identity is, even in the context of ambivalent and ambiguous intergenerational relations.

8.4. Bill's narrative – the adoptive grandfather

Bill lives with his Dutch wife and was 70 years old at the time of interview. He also agreed to being observed with his grandchildren so there is interview and observation data that explores his grandfathering and his relationships with his grandchildren. Bill has one son who is married and two adopted grandchildren, one boy and one girl. His

grandchildren live within a 30 minute drive from his home. He is currently a part time volunteer counsellor and is a retired lawyer.

In the previous chapter, Percy and Steve revealed that not being biologically related to grandchildren influences not only the practices and doings of grandfather that the men wish to perform, but also that the strength of meaning differs between step and biological grandchildren (also supported by Arthur's narrative to some extent). This suggested that the type of intergenerational relationship, as a result of family structure, be it biological or social, affected the character of intergenerational relations men have with younger generations. Attitudes to adopted grandchildren however diverged from these less positive attitudes to step-grandchildren; Bill has very positive relationships with his adopted grandchildren (pictured in Chapter Six, Plate 6.2) despite them not being biologically related. Bill tells his story during the interview:

For me being a grandfather yes, yeah you might call us a double, a double whammy...we were able to have one child before, [my wife] received her radiation treatment which saved her life erm, our son er, married early, he, he found his wife at uni, which, not usual erm and er after 10 years of marriage, a great marriage, they found she couldn't conceive and yeah I won't go into the detail of that but, erm, we obviously had hoped that we would have grandchildren and when, when it didn't erm, when they didn't then we were, again felt very sad about that, and then they were given the opportunity to adopt, which was extraordinary. We lived down in Leicester at the time and er, when the, when [grandson] was adopted, we came up naturally to see him, and [granddaughter] is number 2 and er, but then I said to my wife there's no point in us being in Leicester, travelling up to Leyland, I don't have to live in Leicester for the rest of my life, and I regard children and grandchildren as a real gift, I love children erm, let's consider moving and we did, some 7 years ago

When asked for more iteration about having adopted grandchildren Bill responds:

this is a complete unknown, as you go through life you meet, erm, erm unknowns and er, er just delighted to have the opportunity to be grandparents, still sad in a sense that the family line stops with our son, but, in reality erm, they're just as precious, you know?...it doesn't affect our relationship in the least at all erm, and it, it won't do and I don't think it need do, we've almost forgotten. Do you know when you're holding a child as a baby and you're playing with them and get involved, you don't think "well you're not my grandson or daughter", they're both legally

Bill considers his involvement with his grandchildren as particularly important for developing relationships with them, regardless of the lack of biological connection. This is reflected in his past decisions to live near them in order to have relationships with them (a similar reasoning was used by William). As a result being a grandfather is very much a part of his identity despite the lack of biological connection. This suggests that being a grandfather becomes more meaningful through direct interaction and conducting appropriate practices and is not always just about a biological reality. Knowing them since they were young children is also important in this for Bill and over time it is clear that biology becomes less relevant because their relationships are more important. Bill's example reinforces the fact that grandfathering is about doing and interacting with grandchildren socially as well as just 'being' biologically related.

The relationships Bill describes with his grandchildren are no less meaningful than those that William and Arthur describe with their biological grandchildren and his position as grandfather, although social, is extra poignant because they were able to overcome the adversities faced before and during the adoption process:

I, I think er, that it's primal actually, the sense of wanting to perpetuate, that's awful isn't it?, but I think erm, yes it is the continuation isn't it of life and you want to see your children fulfilled, and obviously we love our son and, also our daughter-in-law and erm, we were disappointed erm, er we began to accept it working through the bereavement process that that's how it would be and therefore overjoyed, you know but I'm very conscious of, that erm, because of my training that it shouldn't become a doting grandparent kind of thing, do you get that?

As Bill narrative demonstrates, the adoptions have had a significant impact on how Bill performs his grandfathering practices. The adoptions, combined with his training as a counsellor make him wary of not being overly doting, which consequently

influences what he does, and how he performs grandfathering. There was some slight ambiguity between his narrative and the observation however in describing and conducting his practices. During the observations it was clear that he had a great deal of concern for his grandchildren and was very protective of them, as the following passages from the observations suggest:

Bill stood up and went to look for his grandchildren who he had left upstairs using the computer. They were found playing in the loft which was located in the garage outside and required them to use a steep ladder to get up to. When he found them Bill gasped and walked over to see that they were all right. He raised up his arms and called their names, telling them get down. At the noise, his wife appeared and told him not to fuss, 'they'll be fine Bill! leave them to play'. He demonstrated a more overprotective attitude towards his grandchildren that his wife didn't portray. After watching the loft opening carefully for five minutes, eventually, [Bill] motions and asks them to come down. He helped [granddaughter] down the steep ladder from the loft by climbing onto the first few rungs, grabbing her under her arms and putting her down. [grandson] as the older of the two let himself down.

A little later at the beach:

Bill and I discuss the adoption aspect of being a grandfather and it is clear that he is aware of the importance of maintaining strong relationships with them. The pride and pleasure he gets from having the grandchildren around is clear. Several times he watches over them and comments on how much he loves them and how much enjoyment they bring to his and his wife's lives. His wonderment is also evident as he comments that it was never something he thought he could have and enjoy so much. [granddaughter] rushes off to a running stream of sea water which was quite deep which she splashes in, in her wellies [rubber boots]. Bill calls to her "careful, careful, careful" in a jolly but stern voice so that she is aware he is concerned for her but is happy for her to be playing where she is.

Observation Notes with Bill: 05.09.09

Bill is particularly protective over his grandchildren as the observations of his practices suggest. This element of protection is a theme that has emerged amongst many of the grandfathers in this sample and suggests that an element of doing grandfathering is about performing chivalrous and protective masculinities through verbal practices of checking for safety and encouraging children out of dangerous

situations. This protective behaviour also reinforces parenting cultures through grandfathering. As discussed in Chapter Four parents often control the spaces that children use, constructing them as incompetent and vulnerable actors (Valentine, 1997) and this is what Bill is also doing. Interestingly his wife is less concerned about what they are doing, but Bill's performances reflect his need for control over their activities. Consequently Bill is implicated in reiterating the norms that his grandchildren are incompetent actors through performing gendered behaviours, reflecting his concern and protective feelings towards them. This protective grandfathering appears to be particularly strong in Bill's case because of the special circumstances of their intergenerational relationship which influences his practices.

This protective and involved role Bill has with his grandchildren means that he often pushes the boundaries of his bodily capability. In his interview Bill discusses how he feels when playing with his grandchildren:

> the erm young children will start the chasing game you know "catch me grandpa if you can" and I could do myself a mischief so, erm, but I erm, like a lot of men my age I suppose, if I'm well I'll pick, I'll put [grandson] up on my shoulders erm, he's now 10 and growing fast and I, I erm I might occasionally even now try that and my son will say "be careful with grandpa" and I'm aware that I can't do it without you know sooner or later, I'll harm myself...I want to be a dad again... (laughs) er but I haven't got the energy at all, it's very frustrating as a grandfather, we still think of ourselves as 25, look in the mirror and say "oh you poor old man" you know (laughs) yeah

Despite this, in the observation, he engaged fully in physical activities with his grandson, something I reflected on:

> Bill periodically tells his grandchildren to be careful and warns [grandson] not to hurt his sister. He soon joins in with their playing, wrapping his arms round [grandson] from behind, who has his sister squirming around on the floor in a mini play fight. I consider it all to be good rough and tumble family fun. Bill warns them

to be careful as 'this sort of play usually ends in tears'. Eventually [granddaughter] tires and runs downstairs and surprisingly to me, Bill who still has hold of [grandson] picks him off the ground so that he is hanging in front of him almost folded in half. I was surprised by his strength although the strain of this action was clear on his face. He tires quickly, going red in the face and puffing and panting. In this lovely, yet alarming display of masculinity, Bill gushes that he loves his grandchildren. He then (whilst still holding 10 year old [grandson] off the ground) tells me that every time he sees him he is at least an inch bigger and so he is seeing him growing up all the time. He then speaks to [grandson] and says "I won't be able to do this much longer, if anything you'll be picking me up. When do you think you could pick me up?", [grandson] replied "I don't know two years". Bill laughed and put [grandson] down, who runs off down the stairs

In this example, Bill's performance transgresses the norms of wider 'negative' cultural constructions about ageing and decline by engaging in a very physical activity with his grandson that involves holding him above the ground. Despite his awareness that he is ageing in the narrative, his desire to feel like a father again and to be able to be physically active with his grandson reflects his masculinity through the performance of risk taking behaviour with his grandson. This highlights the contradictions in Bill's identities as an older male generation. The observation of this performance, combined with his narrative suggests that Bill is choosing to transgress the norms of his bodily ageing by reproducing more traditional performances of masculinity. In this circumstance and the context of his narrative however, this performance appeared as a resistance to ageing rather than a reiteration of active masculinity particularly because it was enacted in relation to his young grandson. This adds to gender performativity in that it suggests that it is negotiated within the context of their generational positions, relationships and their through the interaction of their bodies.

8.5. Gerald's narrative – negotiating multiple generational positions

Arthurs's narrative in particular highlighted the complex and multi-faceted nature of negotiating grandfathering in contemporary society which shape it and suggest it is

experienced and given meaning by men in very different ways. Another of the more complex narratives was Gerald's which demonstrated how various processes that shape the contemporary context of the UK, either facilitated or restricted his intergenerational relations with his grandchildren and consequently his practices. Gerald is Scottish and was 63 years old at the time of the interview. His narrative represents that described by Mann et al (2009) discussed in Chapter Two.

He is father to two older daughters aged 40 and 38 from his first marriage, and father to a younger nine year old daughter from his second marriage. He is also a grandfather to two grandsons from his second eldest daughter, one aged two years and one aged seven months. Both of his grandsons live in North Devon with Gerald's daughter and son-in-law. Gerald is self-employed and works from home to support his daughter.

Evidently, unique to Gerald was his particular family structure which reflected the diversity of contemporary family relationships. As well as having two older daughters from his first marriage, he also has a nine year old daughter from his second marriage to a younger woman:

> *I suppose I mainly think of myself as a father, because I've got 2 grown up daughters, from my first marriage and, so they're aged; one's 40 and the other one's 37....38?, and the 38 year olds married and had 2 children, so I'm a grandfather as well, but I also have from my current marriage, a 9 year old daughter, we have a 9 year old daughter as well. I still mainly, think of myself as a dad, rather than a grandad (laughs), I'm gradually getting used to the idea of being a grandad...so yes, the oldest grandson is 2 and a bit, so it's only, I've only had a couple of years to get used to it, and it definitely took a while at the start, couldn't think of myself as a grandad, because I had, a 7 year old you know, I, I felt much more, still a dad...erm so yes, [grandson's] a 2 year old and, [grandson] is just 7 months now, 7 and a half months*

> *Anna: 2 grandsons?*

2 boys yes...and I'm married to [second wife], who's 18 years younger than me, hence [9 year old daughter], yeah she, when we met she wanted a, a child. Of course I didn't because I'd had 2 already (laughs) so we had, we had quite a, a sort of difficult 2 or 3 years, where I had to decide you know if I want to be with [second wife], which I did; somehow or other we've got to satisfy her need as well, because she was maybe 30 so, yeah I'm married to [wife]

Being a father to a young child still, is particularly poignant to Gerald and influences his understanding of his generational identity, as a grandfather as he reiterates:

when [second daughter], my middle daughter became pregnant, I just didn't feel as though I was, ready to be a grandfather, because I had [youngest daughter] and because of, some of what we went through to have [youngest daughter] erm....I just, and I'm the main, I've always been the main carer for [youngest daughter], because [second wife] works, almost full time, she works more than me, I'm self-employed, so, so I've always been the one who's been here and been the main carer for [youngest daughter], so that made me really very much a dad, you know, very active and involved dad, so when I realised that [second daughter] was going to have a baby, I just didn't feel ready to be a grandad, like when she said "so what do you want him", she knew before he was born "what do you want [grandson] to call you?". "I don't know, [Gerald], I want him to call me [Gerald]", "he's not going to call you [Gerald], it'll have to be something to do with you being his grandad, that's what you're going to be" and it did take me a few months to get used to it, I was quite resistant, and it was to do with being so much involved with [youngest daughter], as a, as a dad

None of the academic literature about grandfathers has dealt with the ways in which generations have compacted yet it is evident that this can influence grandfathering practices and identities. While positioned within social relations as a grandfather as a result of having grandchildren, Gerald sees his identity very much as a father. This also intersects with other aspects of his life; he works from home (an increasingly typical situation for men in contemporary societies (Aitken, 2000; see Atherton, 2009)), he is involved in his daughter's life as the main carer, and for him, this has created some tension about the way in which he gives meaning to his new identity as a

grandfather. What this suggests is that generation as an intersection of identity can both intersect with other social differences in identity, such as gender and age for example, but also with other generational signifiers such as father, son, and grandfather. Gerald must negotiate multiple senses of self as a result of the generational complexity in his family structure. As Jenkins (1996, pg 4) argues 'identity can only be understood as process. As 'being' or 'becoming'. One's social identity – indeed one's social identities, for who we are is always singular and plural – is never a final or settled matter'.

What this suggests is that while biologically Gerald has become a grandfather, being a grandfather is more of a blurred transition (Valentine, 2003) and his identity as a father overlaps with his grandfather and is not clear cut. This strengthens the argument that the grandfather identity is performative and processual (Valentine, 2003) rather than simply a biological reality, but also intergenerational; he has to come to terms with identity through direct interaction with his grandsons. The discussion with his daughter about being called 'grandfather' rather than his own name also has important meanings for Gerald. Being called grandad or grandfather is very meaningful and an important element of how others perceive him and his identity. This meaningful naming however contributes to Gerald's uneasiness about his new generational position. In relation to Cowan's transition work explored in Chapter Four, Gerald's transition to grandfatherhood is incomplete because of his slow qualitative shift to acceptance of his new generational position (Cowan, 1991).

A second factor in Gerald's narrative was the way in which the large geographical distance between him and his grandsons affects the way he feels about being a grandfather:

the extra complication actually is that they live in North Devon, so there is a kind of geography element that does complicate it and does stress me sometimes, so maybe I've got more used to it, being [grandson] and [grandson's] grandad. I love them to bits and I love being with them, and I can now be, I think what, some idea of a grandad is, but of course I don't see them very often because they're a long way away. So I've got this dad in Edinburgh, who's got Alzheimer's, who I don't see often enough...I've got to see him as regularly as I can, my oldest daughter lives in Glasgow, and works in Glasgow, and I want to see her, as often as possible, and sometimes she will come to me, and I will obviously go and see her, and then I've got another daughter and grandsons, and her husband, in North Devon, so I do get pulled often, I can get quite stressed, as I try and fit, seeing them in with having to be really committed to [youngest daughter], and of course, I'm completely committed to [youngest daughter] er, what she needs and so, I need to be here when she's not at school, so that makes it really complicated, if I was, if I was whatever a normal grandad is, I'd probably be retired, and I certainly wouldn't have a, child to look after, and therefore I would be freer, I would be you know, it wouldn't be a problem to go away for a few days, to North Devon or up to visit my dad in Glasgow, but it is a problem, it's not easy for me so that does cause me some pain sometimes

Gerald finds it very difficult to maintain and juggle his relationships with his family over long distances. His personal and familial circumstances are so complex that it can also cause him distress and even pain. Mason (2004a) found that geographical distance can make some kinship practices harder to achieve, and it is evident that, combined with various other familial factors, doing grandfathering is harder for Gerald because of the geography. This is something that Gerald even iterates during his interview:

it's still, still new, I don't feel as though I've stepped into it fully yet, and partly that's because of the geography, I think I'm a different kind of grandad, partly because of distance. I'd like it to be different, I would like them to live near me or I live near them so I could see them three or four times a week, that's what I'd like, that's what I'd like, that's the kind of grandad I'd like to be and I, if the geography wasn't a problem I could do that, I could still be [youngest daughter's] dad and still see them three or four times a week if it was easier, you know that would be easily done, so I regret that

Several processes are interacting to construct his uncomfortable interpretation of his own identity as a grandfather; being a father to a young child at the same time as being a grandfather, as a result of his divorce and re-marriage, living at a geographical distance to his grandchildren, transitioning only recently to being a grandfather and also being a son still to an unwell father. The fact that his own father is also still alive, lives distantly and is suffering from illness is an added worry as a result of his generational positioning. This restricted ability to provide support is difficult for Gerald. The ability to provide intergenerational support or not can influence the wellbeing of all generations, and can be dependent on the quality of relationships (Merz et al, 2009), and in this case geography and familial circumstances. The fact that Gerald is still a new grandfather means that the importance of grandfathering identities to men are under constant renegotiation and are therefore open to interpretation. In comparing Gerald's narrative to William's who has a strong relationship with his grandson attributed to time and the development of respect, it is evident that grandfather identities are not static, but are fluid and open to transition. Grandfathering has a lifecourse.

The data in Chapter Seven suggests that children have an important influence on the practices that grandfathers can get involved in with their grandchildren and this is also true in Gerald's experiences of grandfathering:

it feels different, I think when, when I'm with [grandsons]...well I suppose that's partly to do with how my, how their mother is, how my daughter is, she is very protective of them, she's very disciplined and, she's got a routine and a way of doing things that help, because she's on her own down there really, all the rest of her family are up here, so she has to have a way of doing it that, takes count of that really, so she's got a, what I sometimes call a very, rigid routine, how she does things with the boys, and with [eldest grandson] you know and so that kind of restricts my access anyhow. When I'm with them I have to fit in with what she's, how she does it, and so it's been that bit in a way, has made it easy just to be grandfather, which is really different in a way from [youngest daughter], obviously

212

with [youngest] I do everything, all sorts of things, that I don't do with grandsons, so I suppose I'm more, it does feel more, just a grandad when I'm with them. So I play with them you know I roll around on the floor with them and, and you know do those kind of play things, but I don't actually do much hands on, like feeding or changing or any of that because she, she doesn't particularly invite that, and I think that's fine with me, I think that helps me keep a distinction, between being a dad with [youngest daughter] and a grandad with them, and of course, what we realised 3 years ago, is that [youngest daughter's] an aunty, she was only seven and, so she's their aunty and that, there's something quite sweet about that, quite cute about that, and obviously she's that much older anyway do she can kind of look after them a bit, so that's quite an interesting difference in the relationship too but, because as often as possible I'll take her with me when I go to visit them, so aunty [youngest daughter], she's the only aunty at her school of course, she's got a bit of, a bit of fame from it...and she's got these two big sisters, women you know who are her big sisters and she has a pretty good relationship with both of them

Like Steve whose narrative is discussed in the previous chapter Gerald's daughter is very protective over her children and there is a sense that daughters have a strong influence over the practices that grandfathers can engage in. Gerald does not do the more intimate practices of grandfathering such as nappy changing because his daughter will not allow it. Instead he conducts more instrumental practices such as playing. In this respect the practices and performance of grandfathering that his daughter allows him to conduct are significant in distinguishing his role as a grandfather rather than father.

Interestingly Gerald also suggests that the practices that his daughter allows him to be engaged in, or not, allow him to keep a distinction between his father identity and his grandfather identity. Not conducting certain practices with his grandchildren distinguishes his identity; identities are about what people are not as well as what they are (Jenkins, 2004). This confirms that the performance of generation is mediated by the men's children, and that it is different to performing fathering. As such it is not only the structuring of gender that shapes how he can perform grandfathering, but also

generation. Further, the importance of examining grandfathering practices are emphasised, while demonstrating how the interviews have been successful in relation to finding out why grandfathers engage in certain practices and not others.

8.6. Discussion

The intention of this chapter was to intensify and reveal the depth of complexity of the interpersonal and social contexts that shape men's practices of grandfathering. The vignettes strengthen the argument that the varying characters of intergenerational relations also create a great deal of difference and diversity in contemporary grandfathering identities, reflected through the men's practices. The men's interpersonal complexities are also overlapping and the grandfathers have to negotiate multiple possibilities specific to their familial contexts including the geographical distances/proximities that they live from their grandchildren, their family structures and the ways in which they define their relationships, as either biological or social. As Mann et al (2009) suggest, some of the men, such as Gerald, are also negotiating the crossove r of generations resulting from these processes while others are still members of nuclear families that have not experienced fragmentation and overlap between the generations.

These relations are significant for the men in terms of how they feel about being a grandfather, and how grandfathering becomes part of their identities. As this intensive examination of four of the accounts has revealed, differences in contemporary grandfathering can be attributed to the multiple processes that are characteristic of contemporary society and shape how men 'do' (or do not do) grandfathering and also how the men interpret being a grandfather as a facet of their identities. It was evident that when several of these processes affected just one grandfather, grandfathering

could become a difficult role to fulfil and accept, particularly in Gerald's example. A deeper understanding of Gerald's ambiguous identification with being a grandfather for example is established through combining intergenerationality with performativity in that it is only in direct, active interaction with his grandchildren that he really felt he had a generational identity. By not nappy changing, he is performing what is expected of masculine behaviours and also respecting his daughter's wishes and performing an appropriate generational identity.

This particularly highlights that the men's intergenerational relations with children influence the practices and consequently the identities that men can perform as grandfathers but are also significant in shaping male performativities in grandfatherhood. Gerald's gendered practices are regulated by his intergenerational relationships and the personal and familial circumstance in which he grandfathers. This example also further highlights the importance of space for facilitating intergenerational relations and performing identity because for Gerald it is only in direct interaction in his daughter's home that he can enact grandfathering and adopt a grandfather identity.

The intensive nature of examining these narratives also confirms that the form of these personal and familial circumstances can create different functions and meanings in relation to grandfathering. The prevalence of step-grandfathers in the sample especially reflects this; through his homespace decorations and narrative, Arthur for example reveals the extent to which he continues to grandfather for his step-grandchildren but that he has a less involved relationship with them than his local biological grandchildren because they are not biologically related. This is further embedded and reinforced in the displays of his relationships in his homespace. Bill

however, who has adopted grandchildren has a much more involved role despite the lack of biology. He attributed this to lifecourse events; the loss they all experienced when they realised that his son and daughter-in-law could not have children meant that when adoptions were approved they gained something deemed more special in the context of that loss.

What this suggests is that there are several relationalities and intergenerationalities (Hopkins et al, 2011; Mason, 2004b) in the narratives based on the types of relationships that the men have, ranging from cohesive to ambivalent to conflicting, each concepts that characterise intergenerational relations more generally. Without examining the influence of intergenerational relations, the strength of emotion and feeling towards grandchildren, and the influence of all the generations in the family on how the men perform their identities in these conflicting, ambivalent ways, may have gone unacknowledged. Put simply, intergenerationality accounts for what is driving the men's involvement and their feelings about it, as well as influence of the generational identities of the men's children for shaping the men's experiences, while performativity accounts for how they put this into practice (or not) depending on how they feel about performing their identities as men. Similarly the ways in which both gender and generation structure contemporary grandfathering has been highlighted and it is apparent that generation can influence how men are positioned not only in gender hierarchies but in specific generational contexts.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9. Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to explore the influence of intergenerational relations in the family on contemporary grandfathering and grandfather identities. This provides a more critical understanding of being a grandfather in contemporary society and how men's identities are influenced by this generational position. It also aims to recognise the complex ways in which relationships with different generational groups are involved in the lives of men who are grandfathers. Justifications for focusing on grandfathers are three fold; a) there is growing recognition that grandfathering is becoming increasingly important and significant to men in contemporary societies, and even a normal stage of the family lifecourse (Hoff, 2007), b) grandfathers as a social group in their own right are beginning to gain some academic attention, but c) existing literature is gender and age biased towards women and grandchildren and uses dated and uncritical theoretical approaches that do not account for the difference and diversities of grandfather identities. In order to overcome these critiques, the research employed a methodology that only included grandfathers, to develop understandings from men themselves about how they construct and perform their identities, about the meanings and significance they attach to being a grandfather and about the specific contexts in which they do this.

The empirical data collected for this thesis contributes to several literatures; adding to the small amount of research that focuses specifically on grandfathers, and also to intergenerational geographies. The analysis chapters provide a detailed account of men's relationships with grandchildren and children and also their practices and the contexts within which men conduct them, using men from the Lancaster District area

217

of the UK as a case study. These responded to the first three research questions established in Chapter One, Section 1.3 and found that while past conceptualisations of grandfathers suggest they have homogenous identities that are reducible to rigid gendered categories, these data present a significant challenge to that. This final chapter addresses the fourth and final research question by summarising the empirical findings of the thesis and exploring how these data have provided a useful case study for developing, and testing a more powerful analytical framing for the study of identity construction in social geography. This is followed by suggestions for future research and implications of the study for policy.

9.1. Main Findings

9.1.1 Empirical Findings

The empirical chapters (Six – Eight) have revealed several key factors that construct and shape contemporary grandfather identities, each of which I summarise and integrate here. Chapter Six reveals that men perform multiple practices of grandfathering suggesting that grandfather identities are a doing and are achieved and accomplished through the doing of family relationships in appropriate ways. These practices and their everyday geographies not only reveal how the men are engaged in the lives of their children and grandchildren, but also how these create grandfather identities that are varied, heterogeneous and multi-faceted. Therefore while men are conforming to a norm of involvement which suggests a shared similarity that defines what a grandfather is, the qualitative differences between the men's practices and their interactions with other generations that characterise the men's grandfather identities are in fact more interesting and revealing. The form of grandfathering practices (and consequently the identities) that the men enact, reflect that even in grandfatherhood

there are multiple masculinities, that are intersected by age; across the sample there was varied involvement in grandchildren's lives that reflected sometimes contradictory forms of masculine behaviour, constructing male identities around more feminine practices such as caring and nurturing but also instrumental and sport focused tasks. These practices are also relational in gendered as well as generational ways; men produce their identities not only in relation to their children and grandchildren but in relation to their wives. What this does not account for, however, is why grandfathers are involved in grandfathering so Chapter Seven explored in more detail, the meaning and significance men attribute to their relationships with grandchildren.

The exploration of the importance of intergenerational relations highlights the emotional and reciprocal nature of grandfather-grandchild relationships and reveals the awareness men have about why relationships with grandchildren are significant to their everyday lives. This discussion of meaning is also revealing of what controls and structures men's ability to perform grandfathering and consequently suggests that generational identities are contingent on the quality and character of intergenerational relations, not only with grandchildren but also with children. Relationships with children are critical in whether or not men have access to, and contact with grandchildren and they also act as social markers against which men make sense of their practices and consequently their identities. These two chapters reveal that grandfather identities are performed through various practices that represent masculinities, but are also relational and regulated by multiple gendered and generational identities in the family context. Finally, Chapter Eight explored the implications of this interconnectedness in four specific vignettes chosen from the

sample of participants. In particular this chapter highlights the importance of the men's personal and familial circumstances in structuring the men's practices and the quality and character of their intergenerational relations with children and grandchildren. These specific contexts that are a microcosm of a range of intergenerational relations and identities also create difference between the men's practices. The current context, characterised by family fragmentation and reconstitution, clearly influences how men construct and interpret their identities as a grandfather, creating multiple identities for individuals, as a result of for example, overlaps with being a father and conducting social as well as biological grandfathering.

According to the empirical findings then, contemporary grandfather identities in this context are individually constructed through various practices that reflect difference but are also structured by diverse personal and familial contexts that result in varied outcomes in relation to the quality and characters of intergenerational relations. The performances of grandfather identities are contingent not only on practices but on generational interaction and relationships in the family context. Grandfather-grandchild relations are significant in shaping men's practices and uses of space when men 'do' family, as are relations with children.

9.1.2. Informing existing approaches to identity construction

The empirical findings of the study are clearly significant in that they contribute a data set that is specific to men who are grandfathers, and challenge existing constructions of grandfatherhood. However, the literature review chapters of the thesis also argued that multiple approaches to identity are required to account for the complexity of grandfather identity construction and to find out how intergenerational relations

influence this construction. Therefore another contribution of this thesis is reflection on how multiple theoretical approaches applicable to the gender, age and generational identities that construct grandfather identities, inform social geographical understandings of identity.

Empirically, grandfathers have provided an interesting case study for testing this currently unique combination of theoretical approaches to identity. More generally these data reveal that generation is a key facet of identity that not only situates men relationally by generation as well as gender and age, but is also important in producing multiple masculinities in grandfathering. Relevant theories including Connell's (1995) theory of multiple masculinities as a social practice, Butler's (1990; 1993) performativity theory and intergenerationality (Hopkins and Pain, 2007) were reviewed, and the grandfathers practices, geographies and relationships were analysed as practiced and relational identities. As discussed, initially, the empirical data backs up the argument that existing approaches to grandfather identities are too essentialist and do not account for the difference and diversities of grandfather identities that evidently exist. However it is argued that the combination of the concepts of practice, performativity and intergenerationality theoretically overcome the lack of family context that Butler's (1990; 1993) theory in particular offers, and tests the power of the concepts of intergenerationality and practices of masculinities, on an older generation as opposed to just children, youths and young men. Together the concepts not only account for the men's individual constructions of grandfather identities, but also how this is structured and influenced by intergenerational relations with both children and grandchildren, and in particular social contexts.

This combined approach helps to inform existing approaches to identity construction because it highlights the importance of generation for developing more nuanced understandings of identities in the family. Initially, both Butler and Connell's approaches reveal that men continue to conduct a variety of practices that they interpret as appropriate to their gender. Variation emerges in the men's practices because the men either adhere to or subvert traditional expectations of male identity. The multi-faceted nature of intergenerationality, which defines generation as a social identity and implicates intergenerational relations in this construction (Hopkins and Pain, 2007) has proved invaluable for making sense of these practices however. In drawing attention to the importance of generation and intergenerational relations with children and grandchildren, deeper understandings of the men's practices and subsequent construction of grandfather identities can be developed.

It is evident, for example, that the men's practices are not only structured by gendered expectations but are also justified and produced through the influence of generational relations and interactions with children and grandchildren, and to some extent also wives and partners. In discussions of young men Mac an Ghaill (1994) suggests that we should consider more than gender differences; we should also account for the relations between young men and women in their peer groups. As grandfathers as a case study have shown, the same can be said for older generational identities except that the peer group, especially post retirement and explored in this thesis, includes the family.

This influence of intergenerational relations creates differences between the ways in which older men perform their grandfathering identities, resulting from the complex

intersection of lifecourse experience, gender, age and familial relationships that define the men's personal and familial circumstances. Men perform their identities through their practices of grandfathering, but this cannot be divorced from the practices of their wives or children and their control over access to grandchildren. These individuals also structure and regulate how men practice their grandfather identities.

The exploration of the men's involved practices in Chapter Six particularly supports this argument. Engagement in more nurturing and intimate feminine practices such as nappy changing usually defined as 'women's work' (Aitken, 2000), are either rejected altogether or are conducted in the context of positive relations with the men's wives and daughters (i.e. James) and their sons (i.e. Arthur). This suggests that rather than constructions of age being an important influencing factor on what men do as grandfathers and how they perform their identities as literatures suggest (Ando, 2005; Davidson et al, 2003; Mann, 2007), generation and intergenerational relationships are more significant. It is evident that the diverse, heterogeneous and multifaceted nature of grandfather identities that are simultaneously gendered and aged, are also significantly influenced by both generation and geography. In different spaces, at different times, the men perform masculinities that reflect being sporty, being active and being outdoors, adhering to specific cultural gendered performativities, yet at other times they display masculinities that are reactive to various markers of social difference and are respective of their children and grandchildren's lives. For Jim and Ray for example, not nappy changing is always what being a man has been about and ageing has not altered this attitude; it has reinforced it.

For the other men who do practice more feminine tasks and reflect variation between grandfather identities, it is only in the context of intergenerational relations that this is considered appropriate. Across the sample, men who are grandfathers are simultaneously challenging, subverting and also supporting a range of, sometimes contradictory masculinities, but do so in relation to experiences and interactions with children and grandchildren. Therefore while some argue that the intersection of age may act to de-gender men (Spector-Mersel, 2006), in fact men can use their intergenerational relations and interactions as a resource to justify their practices that they consider to be ge nder and generation appropriate, defining their grandfather identities.

The empirical findings also draw attention to the importance of the lifecourse and the men's fathering identities. Individually the men explore difference in their grandfather identities by comparing their practices to what they did in the past and also to their own parents, particularly fathers. Generation is a key marker of identity difference (and sometimes similarity) for individual men as well as between men of different generations; highlighting that grandfathering is a distinct role and identity in its own right that results in the performance of multiple masculinities across the lifecourse. Grandfathering practices also reflect a transition in male identity that is influenced by either generational difference or similarity from younger generations, such as children and grandchildren, or generations past including parents. Overall, men's practices of grandfathering are a complex product and negotiation of various meanings from the lifecourse, and through multiple relations with other generational identities. Hurd Clarke and Griffin (2007) found this process occurring in their study of how women 'do gender' in relation to their older mothers, and it is evident that this is also relevant

for older men too. It is already known that young men who become fathers often define their identities, and make sense of their masculinities in relation to their own fathers (Brannen and Nilson, 2006; Finn and Henwood, 2009) but this study has also demonstrated that this is reciprocal and men who are grandfathers also consider their sons markers of generational difference, situating the construction and practice of grandfather identities intergenerationally.

The finding that intergenerational relations with other generational identities are significant for influencing men's practices, nuancing existing understandings of the practiced and performed nature of identities, is supported further when relationships with children are also characterised by conflict. Children, and in particular daughters in this study, are exercising control over the men's access to grandchildren and which spaces they can conduct grandfathering practices in, as Steve explains. This is particularly the case for the paternal grandfathers in the study and while this is not a new finding (Chan and Elder, 2000; Dench and Ogg, 2002), it does reveal more about how grandfather identities are constructed, not in isolation, but in relation to significant others and in the context of gendered generational relations. In some instances, this allows men agency to conduct practices they may not have done in the past as practices of nappy changing suggest, but for others, these generational interactions mark a shift in generational power relations that deem older men less powerful than their children.

These findings support the multiple masculinities theory in that across the sample men engage in varying practices that are always about being a man but reflect varying degrees of power, but also suggest that the relationality of grandfather identities is an

important facet that structures how men interpret and adapt their male identities in the context of intergenerational relations. Essentially an exploration of the men's intergenerational relations with both children and grandchildren is revealing of the status of the grandfathers as an older generational identity in the family and further reveals more about the quality and character of intergenerational relations in this particular contemporary context.

While the thesis has generated more critical understandings of grandfather identities and how they are constructed and performed in diverse ways as a result of the influences of intergenerational relations, in turn grandfathers as a case study have also informed understandings of generational identities as performed and performative as well as relational. The empirical data therefore adds to the existing literature about identity because it shows that the family and contexts where familial and intergenerational relationships are performed have important implications for the ways in which men perform their identities, particularly later in the lifecourse. While individuals may perform the power relations of age, gender and generation and so on to reproduce and transform their identities and familial roles in different ways, this can be either facilitated by or disrupted by generational relationships (in this case with children and grandchildren) and the social and familial complexities of everyday life. As such, while the theories of Butler (1990; 1993) and Connell (1995) argue that identities (and masculinities) are multiple and variable because individuals engage in varying practices that either sustain or subvert social structures such as gender or age, the reality is more complex than this and in fact this process is also distinctly influenced and structured by the relationality of identities and generational power structures across the lifecourse.

Interaction between the theories in this thesis is reciprocal in that generational difference clearly influences gender and provides potential for men to subvert gendered performativities in the context of intergenerational relations, but performativity also regulates gendered expectations of men of a certain generation, structuring how men perform masculinities that are considered appropriate for gender and age. To some extent this provides evidence of the strength of Hopkins and Pain's (2007) definition of intergenerationality because it accounts for both the performed nature of generation as a social identity reflecting similarity and difference, but also that generation is relational and structured through relations with others.

Generation is perhaps unsurprisingly a central facet of subversions and transformations to male identities given the historical contingency of identities as Butler argues (1990; 1993 and see Chapter Three). However in grandfathering, these transformations seem less political acts and more products of the influences of intergenerational interactions with other generations in the family over time. In order to understand the very nature of identities, and the ways in which they are produced in the family, you have to understand the nature of an individual's intergenerational relations and the key contexts that create and sustain these relationships. It is this approach that reveals the difference and diversities of grandfather identities and suggests that different intergenerationalities create multiple identities and practices. These theoretical musings suggest that theories of identity, particularly those that are intergenerational in nature, should consider the performed, performative and intergenerational nature of identities because the three are mutually constitutive and together provide more powerful and critical understandings of generational identities such as being a grandfather.

Future approaches to identity construction, particularly in the family, should also acknowledge how the quality and character of relationships with other generations also explain how and why individuals perform their identities, either challenging and subverting performativities or supporting them. In support of Hopkins et al (2010) multiple intergenerationalities exist between grandfathers and their family members and are key to the production of identities for both the young, old and middle aged in family contexts. These should be considered in more detail in situations where intergenerational relationships are significant and structure individuals' everyday lives. It is finally evident that grandfathers inform understandings of identity construction because their complexity can only be understood using a conceptual approach that accounts for both the intergenerational and performed nature of generational identities, a dialogue that this thesis has begun to develop but will require more intense critique and development in future research.

9.2. Reflection on the Research Design and Future Directions

While this research is revealing of the complexities of grandfather identities in the context of the family and intergenerational relations, there are innumerable directions for future research to progress beyond understandings of grandfather identities and identities more generally, not least because as an academic research field in their own right, grandfather identities are only just becoming established. Throughout the first half of the thesis I have argued that grandfathers have received limited attention and I have responded by contributing to the field both conceptually and empirically. However this limitation also presents an opportunity to set a future research agenda that builds upon what I have established in this thesis. In this section I therefore reflect on the research design and outline potential avenues for future research.

9.2.1. Expanding the scope of the research

Even in this micro context and relatively small research sample, grandfather identities are clearly diverse, multi-faceted and contradictory. Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue that intergenerationality will have varying meanings at particular times and in particular places (Hopkins and Pain, 2008) so future geographical research could expand the scope of the analysis of grandfather identities by exploring a variety of different places, contexts and scales. Chapter Two of the thesis examines the contemporary trends shaping the UK context that are seen to influence grandparenting in this study, but research on grandparents is also being conducted in a variety of different international contexts including the USA, China (Zug, 2009) and Taiwan (Yi et al 2004). Increasingly grandparenting is a global phenomenon with diverse implications at various scales. Hopkins (2006) for example has shown how the constructions of young Muslim men's religious identities are structured by gender, generation and locality, through which they negotiate contradictory discourses of masculinities. Edmunds and Turner (2005) also suggest that generations should be considered as global generations. Contemporary grandfathers are grandfathering in an Internet generation for example that has created increasingly globalised intergenerational contacts and doings of family. As various global events occur, grandfathering will necessarily adapt and change in ways that are implicated at global scales. Even at the National level, grandparents are beginning to be implicated. Chris Fox states in response to the 'grandmentoring' scheme being piloted in Manchester UK, that grandparents are an untapped intergenerational resource for helping tackle serious youth problems. These schemes speak to several debates that current British Prime Minister, David Cameron's 'big society' wishes to tackle such as building social capital in an ageing population (MMU News, 2010). As a result, despite having

few rights or support to care for their own grandchildren, grandparents, and their values and histories are being considered a resource for solving youth issues. There are also issues at a transnational level and grandparents have become part of the global migration flow to care for their grandchildren which has raised issues of potential crisis including issues of deportation (Zug, 2009). At each of these scales there is potential for future research advancement relating to the issues and barriers created for grandparents as a result of wider societal trends such as the changing structures of intergenerational relationships, changing family definitions and population ageing (Costanzo and Hoy, 2007). Cross comparative analyses of grandparenting across various international countries may also be more revealing of the variations in social context in which family life is presently being experienced across the globe and be revealing of the multiple performativities of grandparenting as shaped by context.

9.2.1. Increasing the diversity of the sample

The conceptual approach used and developed in this research has only been tested empirically on grandfathers from a small area of the UK so far and while it nuances and refines existing approaches to identity, this raises further questions about what other identities it could be applied to.

As Chapter Three implicitly suggests, identities are constituted of innumerable differences and in this study there is little emphasis on the how the intersections of class, sexuality or ethnicity are inextricably intertwined with grandfather identities and influence their intergenerational relationships and what do. This reflects a limitation of this study and is something future research could examine. This is potentially an issue with the recruitment conducted for the research and may in fact be telling in respect of

the fact that the men who chose to be involved in the research process had the privilege, time and resources to be interviewed and/or observed. Even in this fairly homogenous sample there were quite distinct variations in the men's identities but these may be intensified by targeting various ethnic, sexual and able identities. Some limited previous research has explored the importance of grandfathering for black older men in rural areas (Kivett, 1991) and also gay grandfathering (Fruhauf et al, 2009) but there is much more that can be done from a geographical perspective that accounts for the implications of these identities on intergenerational relations and on the multiplicity of grandfather identities in various places and at various scales. Increasingly the diversity of the sample may raise more questions about the antagonisms between different generations and reveal more about the relationality of different identities across generations.

Having explored the meanings and significance that the men in this study attach to grandfathering it is evident that while they all consider being a grandfather to be a generally positive thing there is diversity in the relationships the men have with other generations. While there are ambivalences across the sample and some issues of conflict there were no particularly sensitive discussions of cases of abuse or complete rejection of being a grandfather because of the breakdown of relationships; no worse case scenarios. This is in part likely to be a result of the recruitment strategy which purposefully sought men who define themselves as grandfathers, an approach that was more likely to attract the more positive cases. Future research with men who are grandfathers and the conceptual approach could be applied to the more negative and sensitive cases in which the importance of the grandfather identity is increasingly conflicted and perhaps even irrelevant although this would require a more targeted and

sensitive recruitment strategy. This is because the intergenerational approach which is key to the conceptual framing of the research also accounts for the emotional and affectual elements of intergenerational relations as well as how generation forms a specific identity.

Another identity that the research has not focused on is that of being a great-grandfather, an identity that is likely to become more normal in an ageing society such as the UK. Two of the men involved in this study were also great-grandfathers and one was about to become one which he proudly revealed during his interview. These men also discussed some involvement in the lives of their great-grandchildren as a consequence of involvement with their grandchildren, but because this was not the main focus of the research, this data has not received much attention in the thesis. Future research could also apply the conceptual framework to the great-grandfather-grandchild relationship and identity, which represents another intergenerational relationship, but one generation removed again. This research could explore how various interactions across three or four generations influence what men do in their families particularly as they age.

This research focuses on men specifically because of existing critiques of grandfather research more generally, but it may also be applied to grandmothers and the ways in which performativity and the influence of intergenerationality shapes and structures their roles with grandchildren. Being a grandmother is also a gendered and generational identity and while there is a broader literature focusing on them, this framework raises more questions about how grandmothers construct their identities in multiple ways as well. Similarly, the findings of this thesis suggest that the gendered

nature of being a grandfather is relational; the men justify their practices and produce their identities not only in relation to their children and grandchildren, but in many cases in relation to their wives or partners. Researching women and men together may provide a solution to the gender bias of existing grandparent research and also provide a more nuanced perspective on women's identities as grandmothers.

9.2.4. Innovation in methodology

While the interviews and complementary observations generated useful data, there were issues with them that future research could avoid. In Chapter Five, Section 5.2, it is revealed that one of the interviews was unsuccessful. This is because the interview, which was arranged through a gatekeeper, generated a limited narrative. On arrival, it was evident that the participant was unable to speak clearly. While I was aware of this potential and the interview was conducted to accommodate his individual circumstances, this limitation suggests that further consideration of methods most appropriate for understanding grandparent identities is required for future research, particularly if it includes older participants. The methods conducted in this research were also intergenerational in nature. While they only included grandfathers, the interaction between me and the men was intergenerational. It is important however to reflect on the implications of intergenerational research, particularly for academics and professionals aiming to understand and plan for an ageing society (Grenier, 2007) that necessarily includes grandparents. Grenier (2007) states that there have been suggestions that researchers in intergenerational research tend to be younger than the participants themselves (a facet of the research employed for this study) which creates issues and raises various challenges. She explains that in particular, belonging to a different generational cohort and the varying constructions

and perceptions of later life can lead to mis-interpretations of the data and in the field, holding the potential for conflict between generations. To overcome these issues, others have suggested that older people should be involved in the research process itself. Participatory approaches therefore may be a future methodological consideration in researching with older generations including grandparents, as Hopkins and Pain (2007) suggest with children. This innovative methodological approach could encourage grandparent participation in research in their local areas and could contribute to the advancement of grandparent rights and innovation in policy from the perspective of grandparents. A growing number of studies have found for example that grandparents feel they can benefit from peer support and training around youth issues (Dunning, 2002). Getting grandfathers involved in interviewing each other could therefore also potentially be of interest to stakeholders and practitioners, particularly those involved in Intergenerational Projects (Pain, 2005), although this is also likely to raise its own methodological challenges that future research may examine.

Grandparenting practices in the family at a personal level and the positive morals and values of intergenerational relationships found in this data set may also have the potential to influence and transform cohesion between generations at the community level and for creating more inclusive public spaces (Pain, 2005). This is especially important for men who are thought to be increasingly likely to become socially isolated in older age (Davidson et al, 2003b). Grandfathering as an intergenerational process involves interaction, activity and cohesion between younger and older people and is certainly possible within the family sphere and community based practice could

learn from the morals, values and practices that drive these relations between generational groups.

Future research could also explore more innovative methodologies that incorporate the men's children as well as grandchildren. This study found observational practices with the men and their families to add value and context to the interview data (see Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2), but there are also methodological issues with conducting research with family member's together (Aitken, 2001; Valentine, 1999) and these should be considered before embarking on this kind of research. With more time and planning, several observations could be organised over time in order to document relationships and interactions with grandchildren, as Forsberg (2007) did. The fact that grandparents do not tend to live with grandchildren does also present a challenge in terms of organisation, and there are also ethical issues involved such as getting permission from parents to observe their children on a regular basis. Several studies are also increasingly beginning to advocate auto-photography approaches and diaries (Latham, 2003; Phoenix, 2010) as a method of generating detailed and revealing data about identities and doing human geography in the field. This would provide a useful way of accessing the areas of the men's lives that were difficult to access in interviews and during observations and allow the participants to control access to children and grandchildren. It may be that future research could also include women in the research methodology as previously mentioned, particularly in human geography where grandparent research is in its infancy. If women are to be researched alongside men, it is imperative that analysis does not replicate existing gender biases in grandparent research however.

9.3. Wider implications of the research

Research with grandparents in the UK is particularly important because the UK is currently lagging behind other European countries in recognising the role that grandparents are playing in family life (Grandparents Plus, 2010) despite the work and support of several charity organisations such as Age Concern, the Grandparents Association and Grandparents Plus. There is some acknowledgement in existing family and grandparent specific policy about the role they have the potential to play in families (i.e. see Age UK, 2011, Grandparents Plus, 2010, Thane, 2010) although this remains very limited, because of the invisibility of grandparents more generally. Another issue with existing policy is that it assumes a static understanding of family and identity and does not account for the complexity of contemporary family life and its implications for constructing multiple identities. For example there is still focus on the nuclear family (Grandparents Plus, 2009) and an assumption that all family relationships are either cohesive or conflicting, resulting in a loss of access. In 2006, Age Concern (2006) recommended that future policy and practice should take account of the changing role of grandparents and that choice and rights are the key facets that underpin their policy objectives. Interestingly however, grandparenting is still being reduced to a subset of ideals and norms that do not account for the diversity of grandparenting identities that exist. A key assumption for example is that grandparents can care for their grandchildren and that they save the economy more than £33 billion a year (Age UK, 2011). While this may be true for some, it does not account for those grandparents living distantly or those who are still in employment. In a contemporary climate where retirement ages are set to rise (Direct Gov, 2010), this poses a significant challenge to the provision of informal child care.

Policy does need to be more considerate of gender because men are as involved in the lives of their grandchildren as women (supporting Lesson and Harper, 2009). At times they are even adopting male role model positions, particularly when fathers are absent. Taking account of gender is considered particularly essential for paternal grandfathers because these men are understood to have the least legal rights with regards to access to their grandchildren (Separated Dads, 2010). This is complicated however by the quality and character of the men's intergenerational relationships, which may not always be cohesive in character, particularly with children-in-laws. Similarly, transformations in male lifecourses can vary between men and women. Men are expected to work longer in their lifecourse yet have few possibilities to care for their grandchildren as a result of poor financial provision from the welfare state. Interestingly, Grandparents Plus (2010) have labelled future plans for paid grandparent care as 'granny leave', a feminine construction that assumes women take more care of grandchildren than men. While this may be the case (they report that 6 out of 10 women care for grandchildren while 5 out of 10 men care for grandchildren (Grandparents Plus, 2010)), men are still clearly involved in the lives of their grandchildren in various ways that involve care and their role is likely to continue to transform as projected increased retirement ages (Direct Gov, 2010) and start to impinge on the time they have to care for grandchildren.

Current policy initiatives do not account for the possibility that grandparent care is likely to decline due to rising employment rates for both men and women (Gray, 2005) but it is evident that some grandparents are still working when they become grandparents and may not always be there to provide support. In reducing grandparent to grandmother, policy does not reflect the current diversity and complexity of family

life and ignores men altogether. It is now less easy to assume that grandparents will always be capable of providing informal care because of current demographic trends, so the provision of formal support for families by the state is more than ever a requirement and requires improvement.

Understanding grandparent involvement through the advocacy of rights is not altogether straight forward however, because while policy advocates grandparent rights for involvement which can be cohesive between the generations, the ambivalent and sometimes conflicting relationships between grandparents and their children and grandchildren (some of which have emerged in this thesis and some of which have been an absence) is not always recognised and policy should account for and support, families in this situation. There are legal difficulties in relation to the quality and character of personal relationships in the family and also in relation to how being a grandparent is defined. With the increased prevalence of step and social grandfathering for example (of which some of my participants are involved), which can often result in very strong positive relationships between the generations, defining access still lies with biological grandparents in the eyes of policy. An interesting fact is that 20% of step-grandfathers compared to 11% step-grandmothers had more contact with step-grandchildren on a regular basis (Smith, 2005).

Rather than thinking in terms of rights that are biologically determined, it is recommended that in line with other relevant research (Doyle et al, 2011) future policy takes into account men's agency in performing grandfathering (either social or biological), reflecting the continuous changes in the UK's social and familial structuring and acknowledging the importance of relationships across generations regardless of biology. This study has shown that the men's grandfathering varies

between men and where one man may adopt a male role, another may resist becoming involved. As Peter narrative shows, as paternal grandfather, it is he who attempts to negotiate seeing his grandchildren, thus using his agency to become more involved with his grandchildren again.

The findings of this research therefore challenge existing understandings of what a grandparent is and what it means, and the thesis presents a key critique of existing family policy. The empirical findings highlight that men are involved in multiple and evolving intergenerational relationships with grandchildren that vary in form and character, and construct a multitude of identities that are both structured within a context of dynamic demographic trends and shaped individually by men who have the agency to make choices about their involvement. Even without exploring the roles of women and their multiple identities, it is evident that there is great variation in this small but specific social group.

With regards to relationships, there also remains a limited view in family policy of the influence of familial generational relationships (Thane, 2010); narrowly focusing on how older generations provide support for younger generations and belying the importance of younger generations for older ones. The findings in this thesis continue to support academic arguments that generational identities in families are in fact beneficial to both young and older generations and are reciprocal in nature and that future policy should be aware of how this influences ageing in contemporary societies. An important finding to highlight is that while divorce may result in separation for some families, it does not always mean an outcome of conflicting intergenerational relationships. What is more significant is that the personal and familial contexts, and relationships men are situated in are taken into consideration.

Arber et al (2003) suggest that men are more likely to suffer from isolation in older age, particularly because women are considered central to maintaining family relationships. Therefore it is important that policy, practice and service support considers how men might get more involved in family and social relationships, try to maintain cohesion and benefit from support. As this research has shown, intergenerational relations are not one directional, grandfathers also benefit from social inclusion in relationships. As such intergenerational policy in particular should consider the reciprocal effects of generational relations and not just on children and youth; support and activities should aim at benefitting all generations involved. In support of Dunning's (2002) suggestion future policy should also take into account the increased heterogeneity of grandparenting and respond to transformations affecting their role. The contemporary social context is dynamic and multi-faceted and is influencing family structures and geographies. Future policy needs to be context aware and considerate of this potential diversity.

To conclude, it is evident that despite the recommendations and advocacy of Age UK, Separated Dads and Grandparents Plus, current family policy remains insensitive to the diversity of being a grandparent, and particularly a grandfather in contemporary society. As discussed in Chapter Two and found through recruiting and interviewing just a small sample of men who are grandfathers, there are increased possibilities for step-grandparenting, becoming a grandfather through marriage without having biological children and men still being in employment, to name just a few. The intersections of gender and intergenerational relationships, which can sometimes result in less cohesive relationships in the family also interact and intersect to produce

specific family situations that have varying implications for rights to access between the different generations in the family.

This thesis has revealed the limitations of existing policy which is currently reducing grandfathering to a subset of ideals and norms usually centred on women, something that the evidence presented strongly challenges. This is not endorsed by legal experts and means that current policy does not acknowledge the legal difficulties in defining rights for such an increasingly diverse group of people.

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APPENDIX

1. Familial Profiles of the participants

David – age 86, has 1 daughter, 3 sons and 7 grandchildren that live at a distance. He lives with his wife.

Ted – age 66, has 3 sons, 6 grandchildren (3 girls and 3 boys) and 1 great-grandchild due. He lives with his wife.

Colin – age 68, has 1 daughter and 1 son and 2 grandsons on his daughter's side who live in Belgium.

Steve – age 51, has 2 daughters and 1 son, and 2 granddaughters and 1 grandson who live locally. He also has a step-granddaughter as a result of his re-marriage.

Mervyn – age 72, has 1 son with 3 granddaughters and 1 daughter with 1 son and 1 daughter. They all live at a distance from him and his wife.

Duncan – age 70, lives with his second-wife and has 1 daughter with a son, and 1 son who has no children.

Paul – age 58, has 3 sons and 2 grandsons, both babies. Who live at a distance from him.

Sam – age 51, has 2 step-grandchildren. He married late to a woman who already had children, who then had their own children.

Fred – age 74, has 2 daughters from his first marriage and 4 grandchildren and an adopted daughter from his second marriage. He has 1 grandchild from his adopted daughter. He lives with his second wife.

Charles – age 65, has 1 daughter with 2 children (1 girl and 1 boy) and 1 son, who has a daughter. The daughter and her children live with Charles and his wife and his son lives at a distance. He is visually impaired.

George – age 63, has 1 daughter with 2 sons and 1 son with no children. He lives with his partner, at a distance from his grandchildren.

Arthur – age 73, has 3 sons. The eldest has a son and a daughter who lives in Australia and the second eldest has 3 daughters, a son and 2 step-children, a girl and a boy.

James - age 62, has a son and a daughter. His daughter has a baby daughter and his son was expecting a child. He lives with his second wife and is local to his children.

Robert – age 62, has 2 daughters, the youngest of which has a baby son, who lives in London.

Andrew – age 70, has 2 sons and 2 grandsons and 2 granddaughters who live locally. He lives with his partner.

William – age 88, has 1 daughter and 1 grandson, aged 28 who lives in Preston. He lives with his wife and is a retired teacher.

Arnold – age 65, has 1 son with 1 son and 1 daughter, and 1 daughter with 1 son and 1 daughter (2 grandsons and 2 granddaughters). His son lives in the USA and his daughter is local.

Roger – age 74, has 1 son with 3 children (1 girl and 2 boys) and a daughter who has a young daughter.

Wally – age 56, has 3 children living with him and 3 older children. He has several grandchildren and lives near them all. He does not see his son's grandchildren because of a family dispute.

Gerald – age 63, has 2 older daughters, one of which has 2 sons, and a younger daughter who still lives with him in central Lancaster. He also lives with his second wife. His grandsons live in the South of England.

Percy – age 73, has a daughter and a granddaughter living in Canada, and a step-daughter who has 2 step-grandchildren who live locally. He lives with his partner.

Reg – age 66, has a son and grandson living in Scotland and a daughter and a granddaughter living in Oxford. He lives his wife.

Bill – age 70, has 1 son and 2 adopted grandchildren, a girl and a boy with his wife and lives local to his grandchildren.

Philip – age 61, has 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren (1 boy and 1 girl). He lives with his wife, and his grandchildren live in Skipton.

Ed – age 63, has 2 daughters and 6 grandchildren (3 girls and 3 boys). He lives his wife and is local to his children and grandchildren.

Ray – age 69, has 6 children, 4 from his first marriage and 2 from his second. His eldest daughter has 3 children (1 girl and 2 boys) and his son from his second marriage has 2 daughters. He lives with his second wife.

Jim – age 71, has 2 sons, the eldest who has 2 children (a girl and a boy) and his youngest who has 2 children (also a girl and a boy). He lives with his wife at a distance from all of his grandchildren.

Timothy – age 70, has 2 sons, who have a son each. He lives with his wife and his children and grandchildren live next door.

Alan – age 72, has 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls. The eldest daughter has 2 children (a girl and a boy) and his eldest son has 2 daughters. He lives his wife and they live at a distance from their grandchildren.

Peter – age 65, has 4 children, 2 are biologically his; 2 are not (they are his partners). His biological son has 2 children (a girl and a boy) that live at a distance. He lives with his second wife.

Jonah – age 84, has 1 daughter, 2 grandsons (one a step-grandson) and 2 granddaughters. His grandsons and 19 year old granddaughter also have their own children so he has 2 great-grandsons and a great-granddaughter. His daughter lives in St Albans and his granddaughter and his great-grandchildren are local.

2. Interview Schedule

<div align="center">

GRANDFATHERING
</div>

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce the topic – I am interested in how you as a grandfather interact with, give meaning to and understand your obligations to your grandchildren

- Promise confidentiality and anonymity

- Request recording permission and get consent forms signed

- Tell me about your family, who do you define as family?

GRANDFATHERING

Meaning and identity

- Tell me what it means to be a grandfather?

- Describe your relationship with your children

- Does it compare to being a father? In what ways?

- Have you ever not enjoyed being a grandfather?

- What/who might make it difficult, if anything?

- Are you expected to be involved with the grandchild(ren) or is it something you want to do?

    o Describe further

- What do you understand to be manly?

- Does being a grandfather challenge this?

  o Describe how?

- Is it important for a man to be a grandfather?

AGE

- How old is/are your grandchild/ren?

- Does their age influence what you do with them? – e.g. babies different to teenagers

  o Explore

- Describe the implications of your age for grandfathering

- Describe a time when interacting with your grandchild you have felt your age

ACTIVITIES/INTERACTIONS

- Describe what you do with the grandchildren?

- How often do you do these things?

- Are there any restrictions to the grandfather role?

- How do you **contact** your grandchild(ren) if direct interaction is infrequent (if at all)?

  o Explore

- Who typically facilitates communication between you and the grandchild(ren)?

- When you became a grandfather how did you feel? Describe when you first saw/met your grandchild(ren)

- Describe a time when your grandchild(ren) taught you something new or influenced you in a surprising way?

GEOGRAPHY – SPACE AND TIME

- Describe a typical grandfathering activity

  o Where did you go, what did you do, how often do you do it?

- Are there any grandfathering activities you do that involve just you and your grandchildren and not your wife?

  o Explore

- What spaces and places do you use together with your grandchildren?

  o Where do you go, when, how often?

- Is locality/distance an important factor in your relationship with your grandchild(ren)?

  o In what ways?

- Are there any spaces you go to avoid the grandchildren?

GENDER

- Does your role as a grandfather differ to your wife's role?

  o Explore – in what ways

- Do you take them to different places to your wife?

- Describe what is particular/unique about being a grandfather

- If you have boys and girls:

  o Are there any differences between the ways you interact with girls and boys?

  o Why?

- Describe any activities/places you go which causes tension between the girls and the boys?

INTERGENERTIONALITY

- How have you, or how would you like to influence your grandchild(ren)?

- Have you passed on any morals, values or beliefs to them?

- Do you notice any similarities or differences between you and the grandchildren?

  o Describe them

- Describe what you have and haven't got in common with the grandchildren

- Did you know your own grandfather/father?

  o Describe what were they like as grandfathers?

- Did they set an example of being a grandfather with your own children?

- Describe how you are different/similar?

- If you didn't have an example how do you know what being a grandfather is?

EVERYDAY LIFE/IDENTITY

- When not with the grandchildren, what do you do in the rest of your life?

- Can you tell me how being a grandfather affects this, if at all?

- How does grandfathering impact the rest of your everyday obligations?

  o Describe in what ways

- Do you discuss grandfathering and your grandchild(ren) with other men?

  o Describe a situation

- (If retired) How did retirement impact your life?

- Describe how this affected you being/becoming a grandfather

CONCLUSION

Finally,

- Describe a positive experience you have had with your grandchildren

- Describe a less positive experience you have had with your grandchildren

- In summary, what does it mean to you to be a grandfather?

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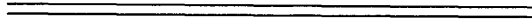
SUMMARY

- As you know this interview has been about being your experiences, views and understandings of being a grandfather. Is there anything that we haven't discussed here today that you wish to talk about? Are there any further questions I might have asked you?

- Do you have anything extra to show me, such as photos etc that you think may aid my research?

- Would you be willing to ask one of your grandchildren to be interviewed? Would you be willing to take part in some ethnographic research?

- Thank the interviewee for taking part and stress confidentiality

3. Proforma: Consent Forms and Participant Information Forms

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: A geography of grandfathering and male intergenerational relations

Hello, I am a PhD student from the Lancaster University Geography Department and I am doing a research project about grandfathering. In order to do this I would like to interview men who are grandfathers in order to understand how men in families relate to and understand the grandfather identity. You will be asked to discuss your relationships with your grandchildren in particular with a focus on your shared activities, spaces and meanings given to being grandfather.

The University understands that you are willing to be interviewed. It is important to both the University and me that only people who want to participate do so. We make sure of this by asking you to sign the following form to confirm your participation and agreement to be interviewed. You do not need to answer every question and may leave at any point.

The interview will be recorded and I will then use what we have discussed to help me in my research and any relevant future research. As a researcher it is my promise that your name be kept anonymous and that your identity will not be revealed intentionally. It is likely that I will quote something that you have said. If this is the case I can confirm that the quote will be used in the correct context.

The date, time and location of your interview can be arranged at your own convenience and I can be contacted either by email or by telephone.

For further information about my research project you can access my Personal Research Webpage at:

http://geography.lancs.ac.uk/department-staff-and-contact-details/anna-boden

Many Thanks

Anna Boden

Geography Department

Lancaster University

Lancaster

LA1 4YD

Email: a.boden@lancaster.ac.uk

Tel: 01524 510221

I (Print Name):...

consent to be involved in this research and to be tape-recorded. Furthermore I consent

to Anna Boden using my interviews as part of her research data if used in the correct

context.

Signed:...

Date:..

PARTICIPANT DETAILS FORM

Full Name...

Age..

Current Occupation..

Contact email..

Contact Telephone Number..

Participant Address..

....

....

<u>Ethnic Background</u>

White		**Black**		**Chinese**		**Asian**	
English	☐	African	☐	Chinese	☐	Bangladeshi	☐
Irish	☐	Indian	☐	British	☐	Other	☐
Scottish	☐	Caribbean	☐			Pakistani	☐
Welsh	☐	Other	☐			Other	☐
Other	☐						

Religion or Belief

Anglican ☐   Catholic ☐   Other Christian ☐   Buddhist ☐

Hindu ☐   Jewish ☐   Muslim ☐   Sikh ☐

☐
N/A

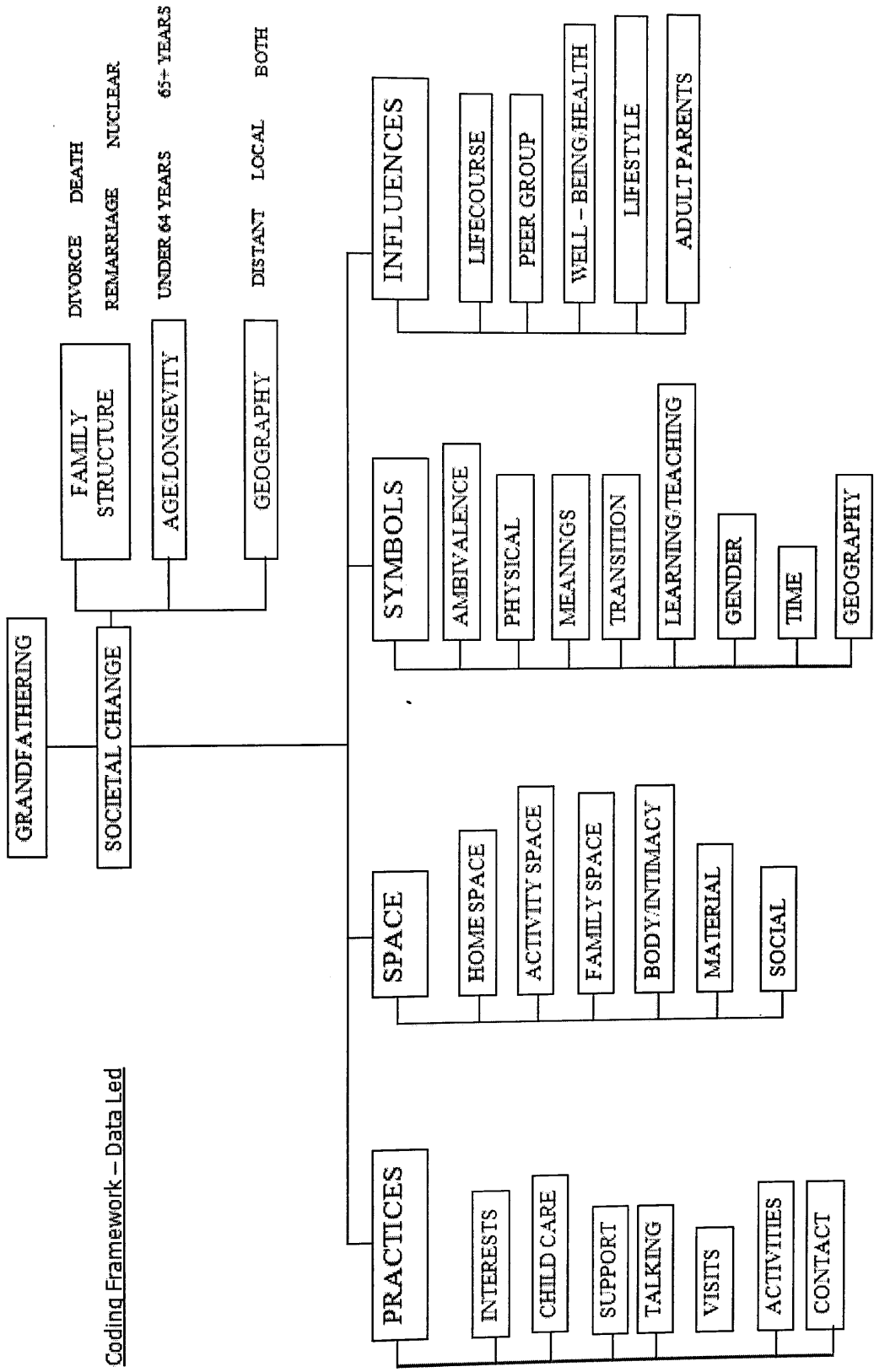Other, please specify...

Thank-you for filling in this form. It is intended purely for aiding my research analysis and for identifying respondents,

Anna

4. Coding Framework

Coding Framework – Data Led

GRANDFATHERING

SOCIETAL CHANGE

FAMILY STRUCTURE — DIVORCE   DEATH   REMARRIAGE   NUCLEAR

AGE/LONGEVITY — UNDER 64 YEARS   65+ YEARS

GEOGRAPHY — DISTANT   LOCAL   BOTH

PRACTICES
- INTERESTS
- CHILD CARE
- SUPPORT
- TALKING
- VISITS
- ACTIVITIES
- CONTACT

SPACE
- HOME SPACE
- ACTIVITY SPACE
- FAMILY SPACE
- BODY/INTIMACY
- MATERIAL
- SOCIAL

SYMBOLS
- AMBIVALENCE
- PHYSICAL
- MEANINGS
- TRANSITION
- LEARNING/TEACHING
- GENDER
- TIME
- GEOGRAPHY

INFLUENCES
- LIFECOURSE
- PEER GROUP
- WELL – BEING/HEALTH
- LIFESTYLE
- ADULT PARENTS

5. Geographical Locations of grandfathers and grandchildren

Name of grandfather	Place of residence	Place where grandchildren live
Arnold	Garstang	• Texas, USA • Preston
Steve	Morecambe	Middleton (near Heysham)
James	Lancaster	Lancaster
George	Lancaster	Glasgow
David	Morecambe	Canada
Ted	Lancaster	Lancaster
Roger	Lancaster	• Sheffield • Cheshire
Ed	Hest Bank	• Morecambe • Bolton-le-Sands
Charles	Lancaster	Lancaster
Reg	Hest Bank	• Glasgow • Oxford
Fred	Morecambe	• Chelmsford (biological) • Crawley (biological) • Thornton, Cleveleys (step)
Gerald	Lancaster	North Devon
Wally	Morecambe	Morecambe
Percy	Lancaster	• Lancaster (step) • Canada
Sam	Lancaster	Lancaster
Paul	Kirby Lonsdale	Cheshire
Philip	Heysham	Skipton
Thomas	Leyland	• Wigan (biological) • Lancaster (step)
Bill	Carnforth	South Manchester (adopted)
Andrew	Morecambe	• Lancaster • Grange-over-sands
Colin	France (Lancaster)	Holland
Robert	Morecambe	London
William	Carnforth	Preston
Jim	Tunstall	• Hereford • Surrey
Alan	Morecambe	• Halifax • Cambridge • Cheshire • Kent
Peter	Tatham	Liverpool
Timothy	Tunstall	Tunstall
Mervyn	Kirby Lonsdale	• London • Oxford
Arthur	Halton	• Australia • Slyne-with-Hest

| Ray | Morecambe | • Colne |
| Jonah | Lancaster | • Lancaster |

6. Relationship types between the grandfathers and their grandchildren

Relationship Type	Number of Participants	Participants
Biological grandchildren only	23	Arnold
		James
		George
		David
		Ted
		Ray
		Gerald
		Jonah
		Charles
		Reg
		Colin
		Mervyn
		Andrew
		Philip
		Robert
		Timothy
		Jim
		Ed
		Alan
		Roger
		William
		Peter
		Arthur
Step Grandchildren Only	1	Sam
Biological and Step	4	Steve, Percy, Thomas, Peter
Family by adoption	2	Bill, Wally
Step and Adopted	1	Fred
	TOTAL	31