

## Life History and Social Change Project & Methods of Life History Research

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- Overview of 'Life Histories and Social Change Project'
- □ Why Life History?
- □ What Methods?
  - Interview Styles
  - Life History Calendars
  - Network Analysis
- Analysis

## The Life Histories and Social Change Project

- Develop a substantial database of **qualitative life history interviews incorporating some systematically collected data**
- Respondents selected from 'Living in Ireland' survey carried out as part of the European Community Household Panel (1994-2001)
- Focus on three key cohorts of people born during the twentieth century
- Funded by Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences

## Our Sample

- Oldest cohort (born before 1935)
  - Economic hardship
  - Rural economy with high levels of emigration
  - Minimal state support
- Middle cohort (born 1945 -1954)
  - Born into rural economy
  - Expanding state economic and social intervention
  - Recession during respondents middle years (1980s)
- Youngest cohort (born 1965-1974)
  - Many reached adulthood during incipient years of 'Celtic Tiger'
  - Period of state deregulation and neo-liberal social policies

## Why Life History Research

- Experiences of social change
- Understand more about individual lives from the perspective of the individuals themselves – what the quantitative interviews may be missing
- Information about strategies, biographical resources, opportunities, aspirations, constraints. Turning points
- Thick description of context
- Changing forms of participation and identity
- generating ideas and sensitising concepts

## Life History Research 2

- Age effects - due to stage of life (teenager, middle aged)
- Period effects - due to effect of industrial period (2008 crisis)
- Cohort effect- similarity among individuals (baby boomers, Gen X)

## Lives as cases

- Reconstruction of life narratives incorporating multiple longitudinal data sources
  - Individual survey responses
  - Calendar sequences
  - Network schedules
  - Life story interviews

## Combining Methods

- Benefits
  - Validity and reliability
  - Facilitate systematic comparison
  - Lives as wholes
  - Location of lives in historical times

### References

- Laub and Sampson (1993)
- Singer et al. (1998)
- Elliott (2005)

## The Life History Interview

- BIM
  - biographical interpretative methodology
  - Tom Wengraff
- Semi structured
  - Paul Thompson

## BIM

### Interview One

- opening question (SQUIM)
- No interruptions
- Note taking

### Interview Two

- questioning (narrative permitting questions: **PINS**)

### Interview Three

- semi structured

## Getting a PIN

- *Can you tell me the story of?*
- *Can you tell me what happened?*
- *Can tell me how that situation developed?*
- *Can you tell me how all that came about? Can you tell me about all that happened?*
- *Can you remember a particular occasion on which you felt stupid? (rather than 'what do you mean by feeling stupid?' or 'what was it like to always feel stupid?')*
- *Can you tell me about a particular meal that you had?*
- *Do you remember any particular occasion when you had this particular feeling thought or a specific moment when you felt this way?*
- *Do you remember a particular occasion, incident, event, example? And then follow it up with Can you tell me about that occasion, how it all happened?*
- *KEY PHRASES:- Occasion, happening, event, incident, moment (less better: situation, time, phase, example)(even less better: do you remember any images, feelings, thoughts)*

## Interview Report Sheet 1

### Set Up Information:

1. Name of Interviewer:
2. Interviewee Code:
3. How was the interview arranged
4. Interview location (address)
5. Date of the interview

### Information on the Interview Process

6. Where in the house was the interview conducted?
7. Who was present during the Interview
8. Were there any interruptions?
9. What time did the interview start?
10. What time did the interview finish

## Interview Report Sheet 2

### Initial Impressions

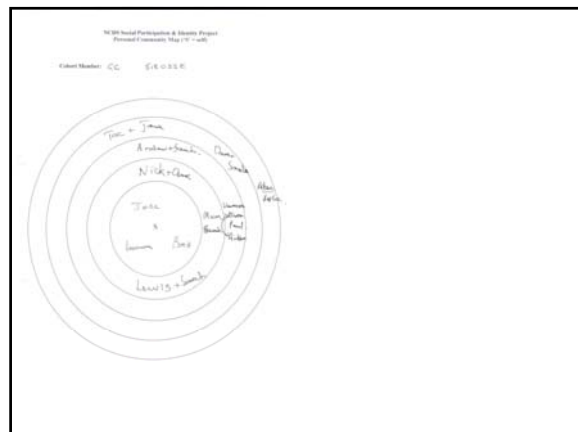
11. What were your initial impressions?
12. What issues were particularly interesting?
13. Were there any problems with the interview?

## The Life History Calendar

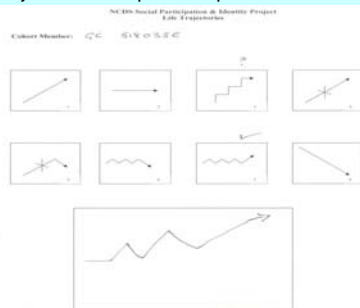


## Network Schedule

Name	Respondents Life Stage				Connection to respondent	Loss contact with respondent?
	childhood	Starting out	Raising family	Today		
Mary	yes	yes	No	no	neighbour	yes



19. If you had to depict your life up to now by means of a diagram, which diagram would you choose (show line diagrams sheet and ask them to mark which one with a tick), or if none of these apply, can you draw a more representative pattern in the blank box?



Year/Date	Age / Life Phase	Significant Event	Source of Information
1948	0	Childhood	C
		Lives outside a small town, in a cottage on an acre of land.	E
		Father in a farm shop, mother runs farm, 2 sons, 4 girls.	E
1950	4	Family get an electric light in the kitchen. Water comes from well.	E
1952	6	Starts to read primary school.	E
		This, the birth of Mary on her, at it was very obvious in the classroom and at the whole school as far as she was concerned. If you were the daughter of a head manager or a farmer or another head or a manager or some part of any position or opposed to being the daughter of a labouring man, you know it and she knew it and she made sure you knew it and she did. She divorced all those who, who had.	E, C
		County comes to stay for two years (1953-54).	
1955	9	County comes.	
1956	10	Father dies of cancer.	E, C
		Mother works in chicken factory.	
		A woman her mother works with was important friend.	
1958	12	Grandmother died.	N.A, E
		Life about grandmother in interview about 4 years to half for men and a half years.	E, C
1962	16	Family	E, C
		Lives back to mother working in post office in Tighthead.	
		Left that changed for me. I was 16, I had because Mary was, well she was a strong person on me and she knew what she was about. But when he died she was her mother's friend. So I, she always wanted me to be a teacher or something and my mother going to school was very important. I didn't go on to the... but I would have been. Mother telling herself we all finished as she was girl's school.	
1963	17	Worked in western town, manufacturing industry.	E, C

## Life Maps

- Validity and reliability
- Facilitate systematic comparison
- Lives as wholes
- Location of lives in historical times

Thank You