

# Cycle Stories from the Baby Boom Generation

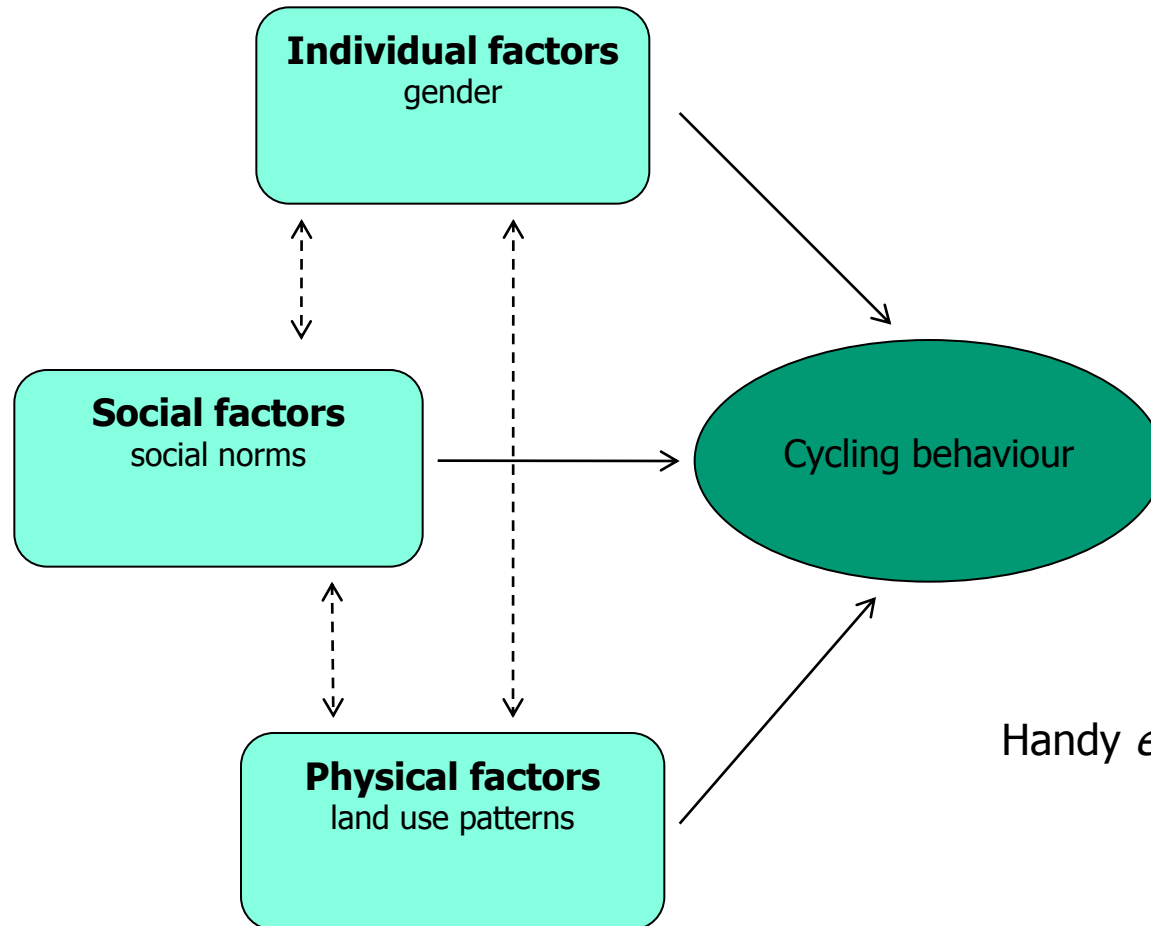
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# Presentation outline

- 2<sup>nd</sup> year of PhD research study 'Understanding walking and cycling adopting a life course perspective'
  - Sponsored by MRC/ESRC
  - Supervised by Dr Kiron Chatterjee (CTS) and Prof Selena Gray (CPHR)
- Introduce the project
  - The life course perspective as a theoretical orientation for cycling research
  - The baby boom generation
  - Life history interviews
- Introduce 'Mary' and 'Sandra'
- Early reflections on interview material and method in general

# Ecological perspective on cycling



Handy *et al.* 2010

# Life course perspective

Life course as inter-related trajectories

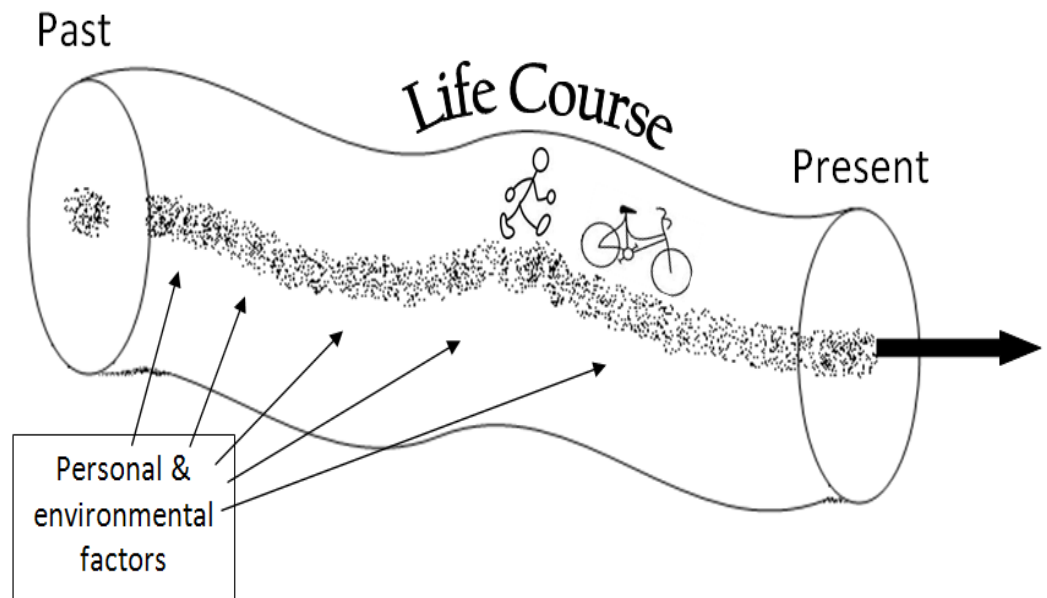
Human agency

Interdependent life courses

Socio-historically embedded

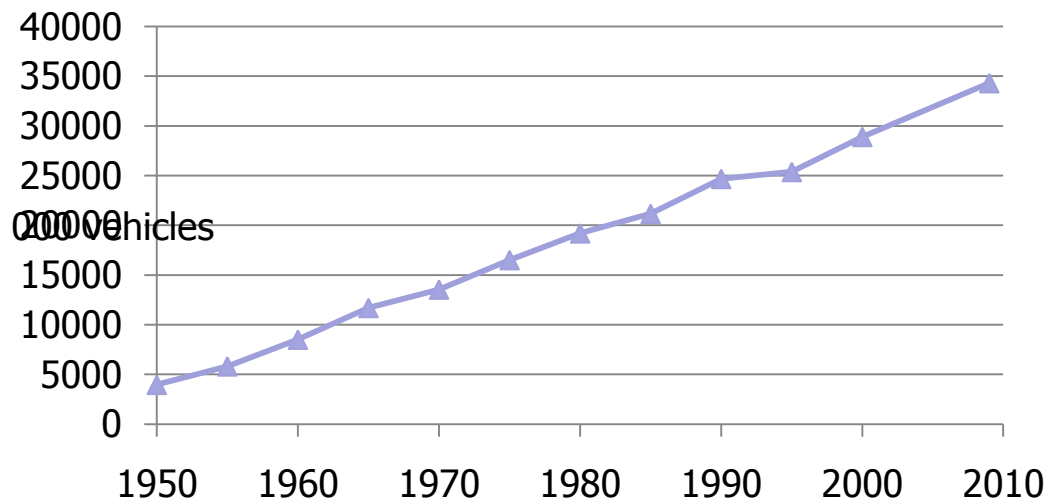
Timing

Life long development



## Hypotheses around physical activity and the life course

- Age-related-decline paradigm
- Context-and-cohort-change paradigm



Source: Department for Transport: Transport Statistics

# Historical context of baby boomers life course

Social and cultural changes

Transition to a post-industrial society

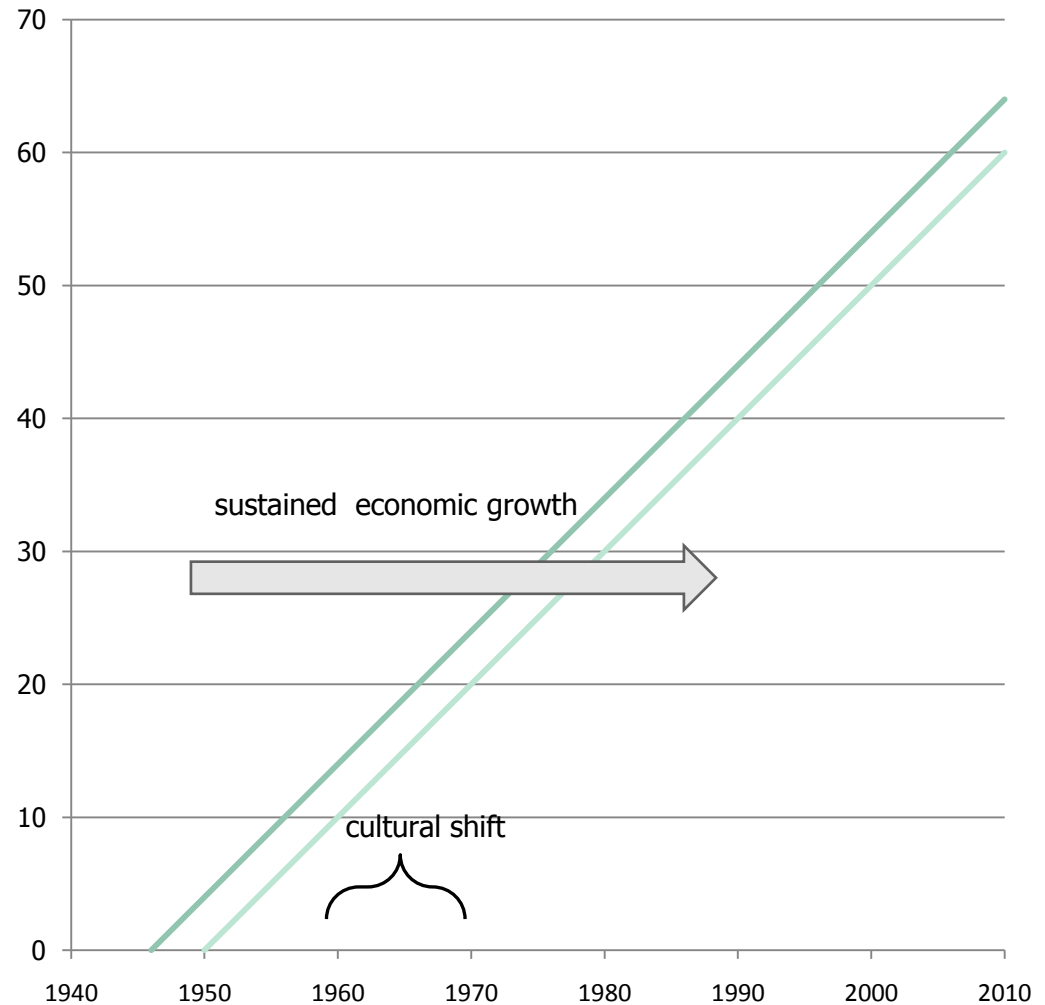
'Consumption society' 'Leisure society'  
Increasing wealth & free time

Women in the work force  
Two income households

Institutionalisation of retirement  
Rise of the third age

Collectivism to individualism

Fatalistic view of health displaced by  
health as a life project

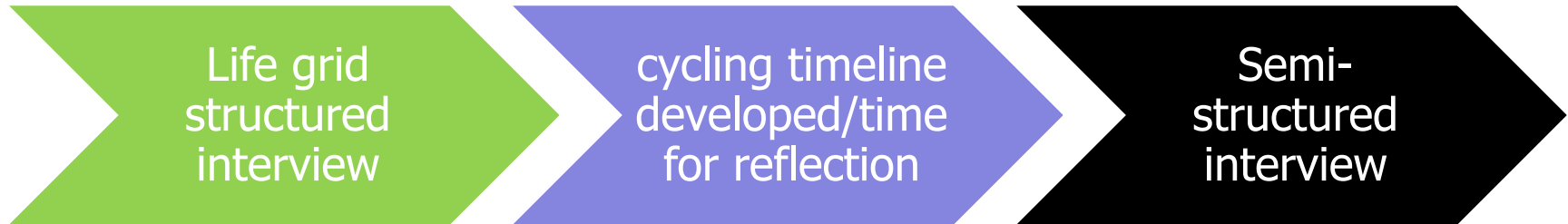


# Research questions

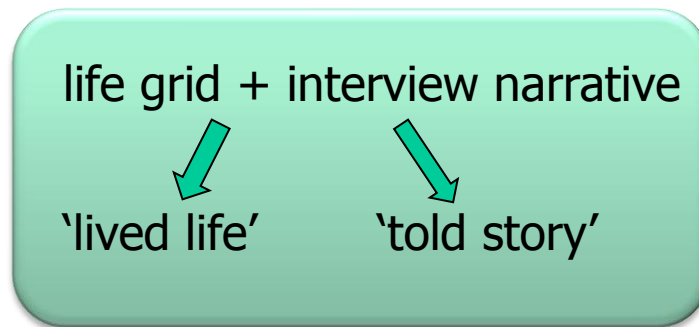
- How does cycling develop (continuity and change) over the life course of individuals?
  - What shape do individuals' cycling trajectories take?
  - Are there common trajectories?
  - How do people narrate their cycling history?
  - Do people have/construct cycling identities?
- How do the cycling trajectories of baby-boom parents compare with their parents/children?

# Method

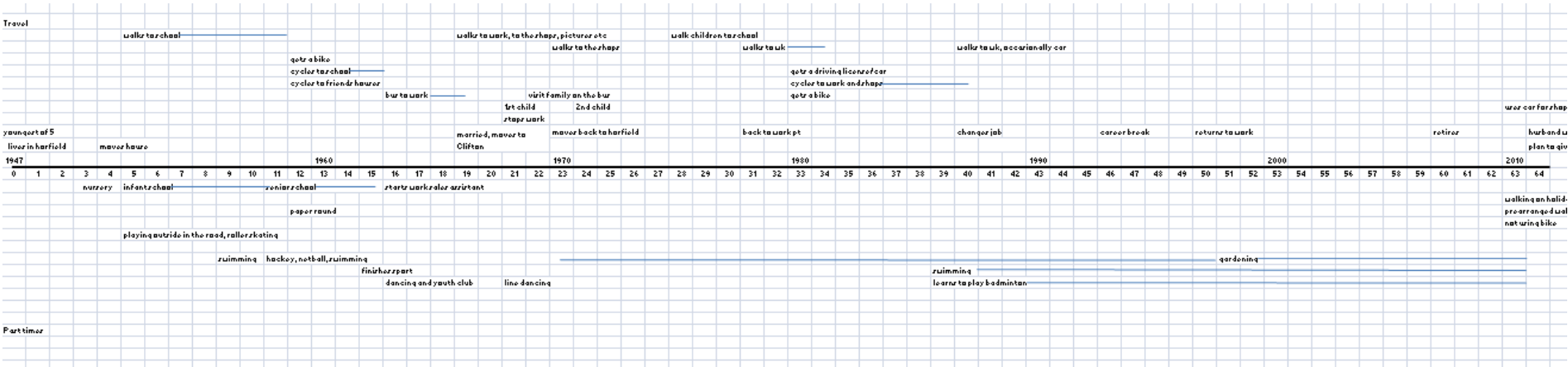
## Narrative-biographical interviews 2 stage interview



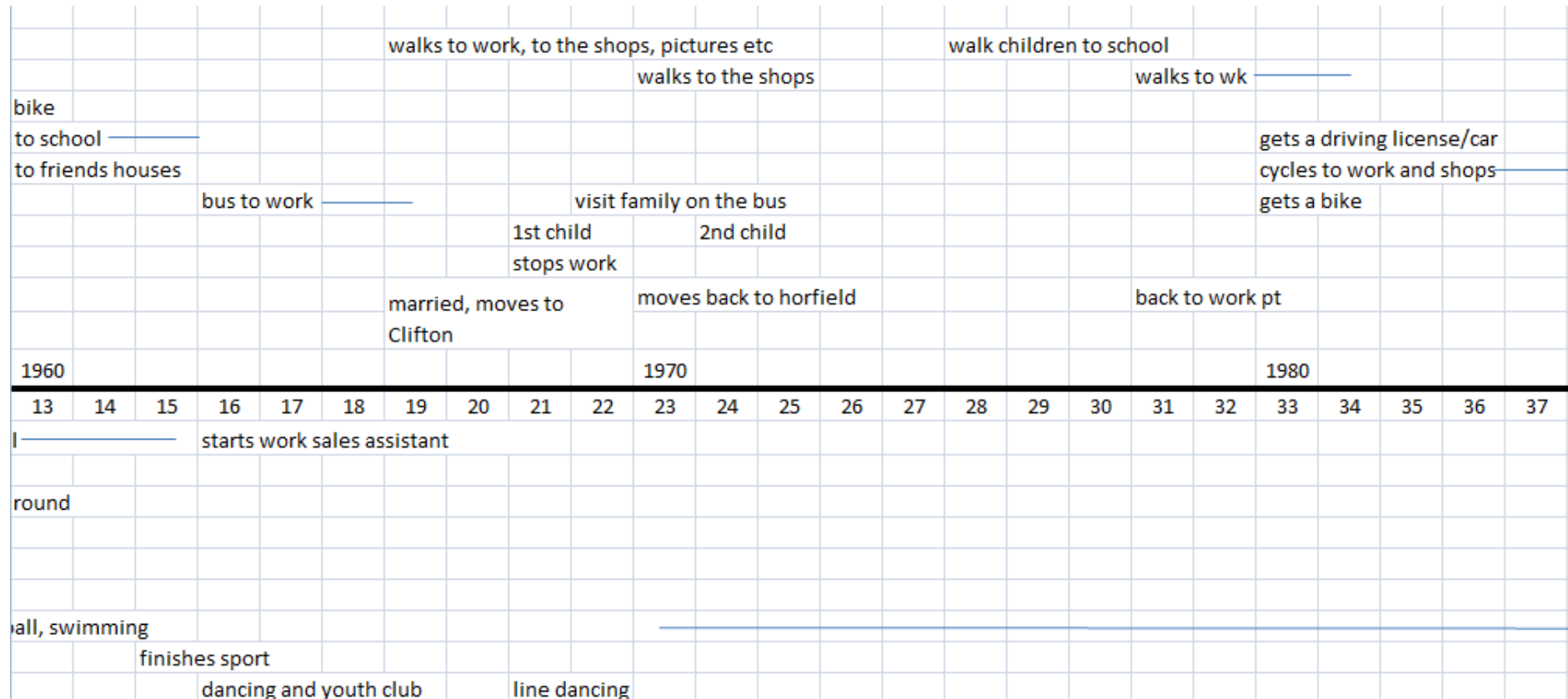
narrative + explanatory  
questions







# Mary's timeline



# Mary

- Retired administrator
- 2 grown up children
- Inner suburbs of Bristol
- Gained drivers licence in her 30s
- organised leisure
  - Swimming
  - Badminton
- gardening

# Mary

- Retired hospital technician
- Left school at 15/16
- Married, 2 adult children
- Inner suburbs of Bristol
- Started driving in her 30s
- Swims, plays badminton, gardens

# Stop-start cycling history

cycled for paper round and to school

Cycled to work and shops after children started school

Bike unused in shed  
–would like to cycle but doubts her fitness and competence to deal with the roads.  
Doesn't want to cycle alone  
Could envisage cycling for leisure

Remembers her father got about by bike

Cycled Bristol-to-Bath path with friends

# Walking history

Walked to school

Walking and bus to  
work

Walking for pleasure

Walking children to  
school

Car towards end of  
working career

# Mary

- “after talking to you last week it made me realise what a major step that was, getting my licence, in changing walking and cycling, you lead a busier life that makes the car necessary, I should have made more effort to walk and cycle but didn’t sadly...”
- “thinking back now, that was the other reason for getting the car, it was supporting my mother”
- “I think there’s been only one time I’ve been cycling with him[husband]you know and we were talking about this this morning because I said about you coming and he told me he used to, quite a bit, before we married, which I didn’t know so I don’t know what the reason is ”

# Sandra

- Fulltime nursery assistant
- Went to college until 18
- Married, mother, grandmother
- Got licence in her 40s but has never driven
- Walks to work, to the shops and for leisure
- gardens



# Discontinued cycling history

Scooter and then  
two-wheeler

No more cycling

No cycling

Doesn't envisage  
cycling again

# Walking history

No family car,  
walking most  
places  
occasionally bus  
Walking with  
friends

Walking and bus to  
work

Walking children to  
school

Walking the dog

Gets a licence in 40s  
but never drives

Continues to walk to  
work

Walking for pleasure

# Sandra

- "scooting that was our thing, we used to scoot everywhere and then later it was our bikes, we used to go to Grandad's allotment on them..."
- "no, that was it then...cycling over "
- " we used to belong to the youth club and quite often we'd just take ourselves off through Eastville Park, through Snuff Mills and on to Frenchay, course it was before they built the M32 then"
- "I'm not very healthy me [ha ha] very lazy, not one of those doing exercise, oh dear"
- "oh yeah we've got plans, I just think we don't want to just stop and .. Vegetate.. I don't think you should do that"

# Early thoughts on W&C histories

- Cycling histories so far discontinued or stop-start
- Walking histories more consistent or gradual
- Gendered
  - For women caring duties, later acquisition of license and car
- 3-part narrative freedom of childhood; pressure of adulthood; expectation of recovering lost freedom in retirement
  - Is this a more general life history narrative?

# What sort of knowledge do life history interviews generate?

- Reflections on the past, made in the present with an eye on the future
- Past walking and cycling behaviour recollected through a 'lens' of time and memory
- What relationship with reality?

# Early thoughts on method

- To what extent is the W&C history constructed in the interview and to what extent does the participants have a pre-existing W&C story?
  - Participants weave a W&C history around a more general life story structure or identity
- Participants ability to recall- key methodological challenge
- My influence on the process
  - eliciting health or environmentally conscious narratives
  - Age dynamic between interviewee and myself