Cycle Stories from the Baby Boom Generation

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Presentation outline

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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

Individual factors
- gender

Social factors
- social norms

Physical factors
- land use patterns

Cycling behaviour

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

sustained economic growth

cultural shift
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

Life grid
structured
interview

Cycling timeline
developed/time
for reflection

Semi-
structured
interview

Narrative + explanatory
questions

Life grid + interview narrative
‘lived life’ ‘told story’
Mary’s timeline

- walks to work, to the shops, pictures etc
- walk children to school
- walks to the shops
- walks to wk
- gets a driving license/car
- cycles to work and shops
- gets a bike
- bike
to school
to friends houses

- bus to work
- visit family on the bus

- 1st child
- stops work

- married, moves to Clifton
- moves back to horfield

- 1960
- 1970
- 1980

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37

I ———— starts work sales assistant

round

ball, swimming

—— finishes sport
dancing and youth club

line dancing

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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

Remembers her father got about by bike

Cycled Bristol-to-Bath path with friends

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
Walking history

Walked to school
Walking and bus to work
Walking children to school
Car towards end of working career
Walking for pleasure
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

Continues to walk to work
Walking for pleasure

 Gets a licence in 40s but never drives
“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