

Change and continuity in walking and cycling through life course events and transitions; insights from life history interviews

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bettertogether

BACKGROUND

Physical activity:

- (life-long) physical activity beneficial
- Potential of routine walking and cycling

Knowledge limitations

Predominantly cross-sectional study

- Associations with contemporaneous factors
- Overlooks influence of previous experience
 - locations, attitudes and inter-personal relations

Change over time

- Population level time series data
- Longitudinal studies short term time frames
 - Life events trigger behaviour change



Research Aim

- To understand change and continuity in individual behaviour over the life course

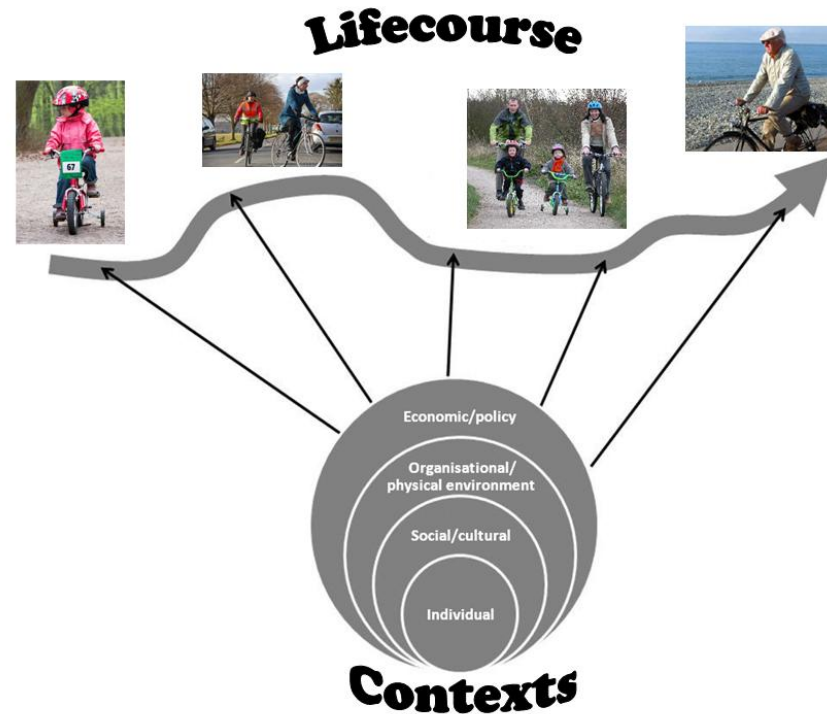
Life course perspective

“any point in the life span dynamically as the consequence of past experience and future expectation as well as the integration of individual motivation with external constraint”

(Giele and Elder, 1998)

Principles and themes

- Trajectories, turning points, transitions
- Linked lives
- Historical context



Research objectives

- **To understand change and continuity in individual behaviour over the life course**
 - the development of behaviour through events and transitions
 - how outcomes relates to cumulative, earlier experiences
 - Impact of events within parent-child dyads
 - differences in trajectories between cohorts

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodological challenges

- No existing longitudinal data

Retrospective, biographical approach

- reconstruct through recollection and reasoning
- behaviour contextualised in relation to life events and transitions
- lagged changes, spurious linkage of event and behaviour change

Bonham and Wilson (2012) women's start stop cycling biographies

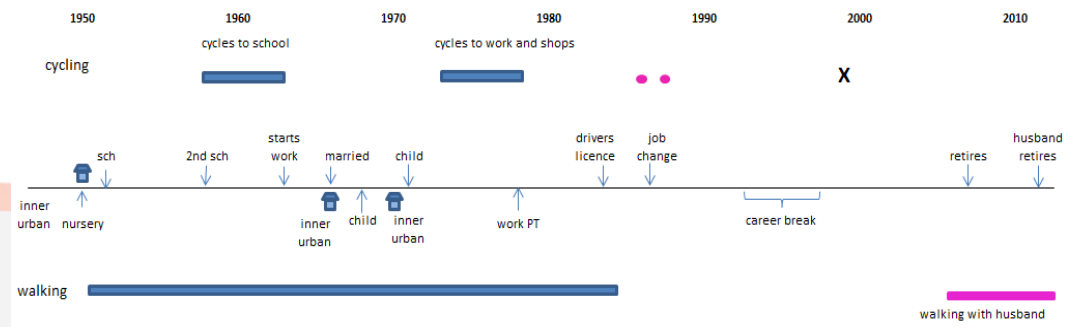
Bonham, J., Wilson, A., 2012. Women cycling through the life course: an Australian case study. In: Parkin, J. (Ed.), *Cycling and Sustainability*. Emerald, Lewes, UK, pp. 59–81.



Biographical interviews

- **Two stage interview**
 - 1st: life history calendar
 - 2nd: review personal timeline
- **visual and interpretive biographies**

	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
age		11	12	13	14	15
personal events		moves to secondary school				starts 6th collg
walking						
cycling		continues cycling to school	→ bus to uses bi in			
past times		playing in the fields woods etc				
car access		family gets a car				



Participants

Two ten-year birth cohorts

C1 1945-1955

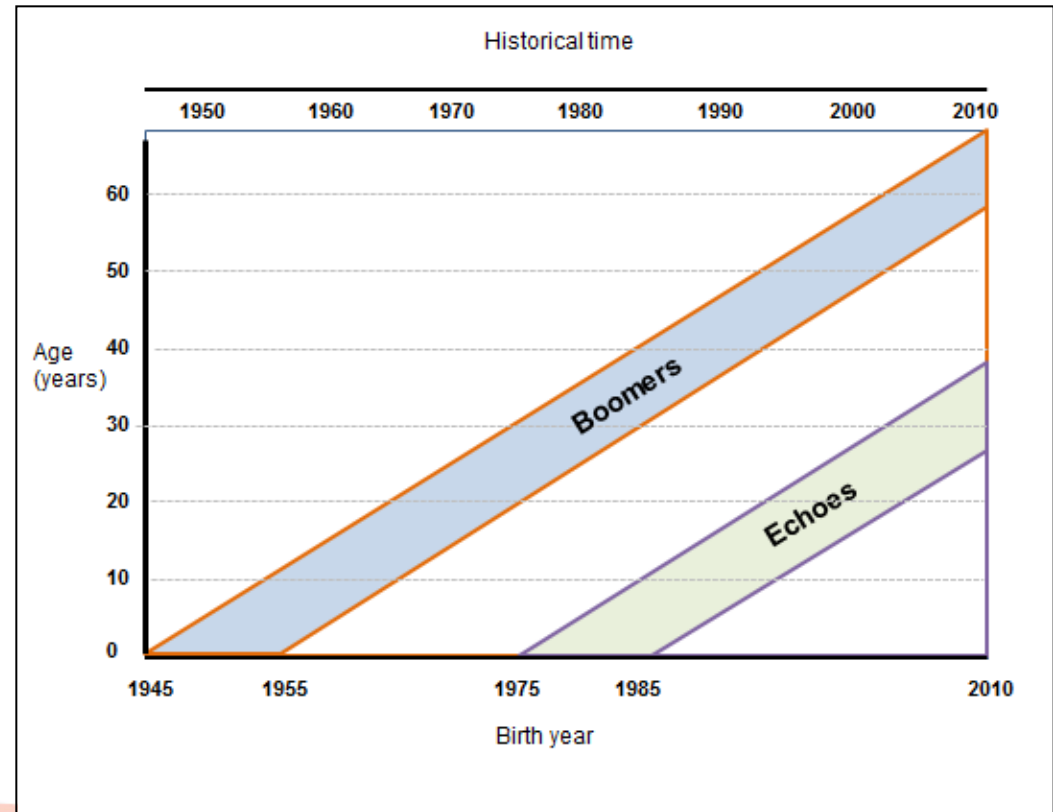
C2 1975 -1985

Distinct historical locations

Parent-offspring dyads

community groups

33 biographies

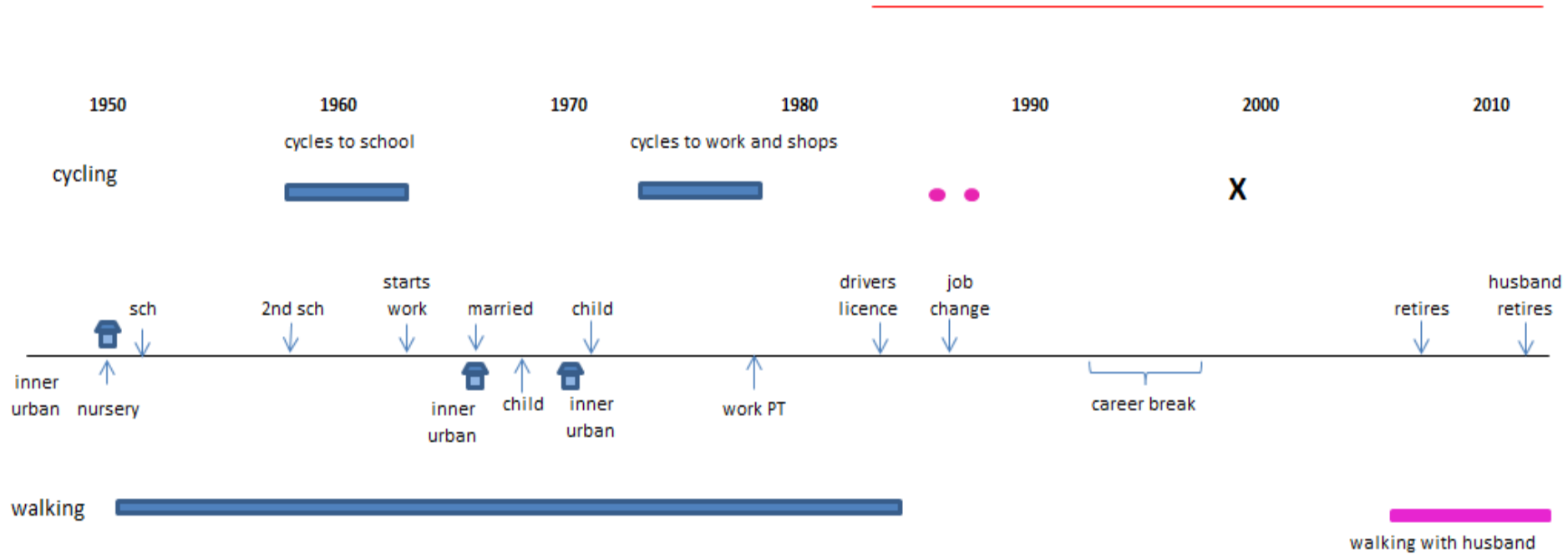


Analysis

- Flexible data-led exercise, iterative, comparative
- Timing and circumstances of change
 - Focused on key periods
- Holistic form
 - Typology construction
- Individual cases
- Dyad
 - Intergenerational impact of events
- Gender-Cohort groupings

BIOGRAPHIES

Carmel



FINDINGS



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Behaviour change and life events

Ascribed to changes in **location, mobility resources, inter-personal roles and health**

- often multiple and interrelated events,

but, also,

- behaviour frequently stable through events

Holistic form

- much behavioural stability with a few changes

Transition to adulthood:

New behavioural patterns established in the course of location, role and resource changes

Mid-adulthood:

Trajectories often stable, walking and cycling often precluded by roles and activity spaces

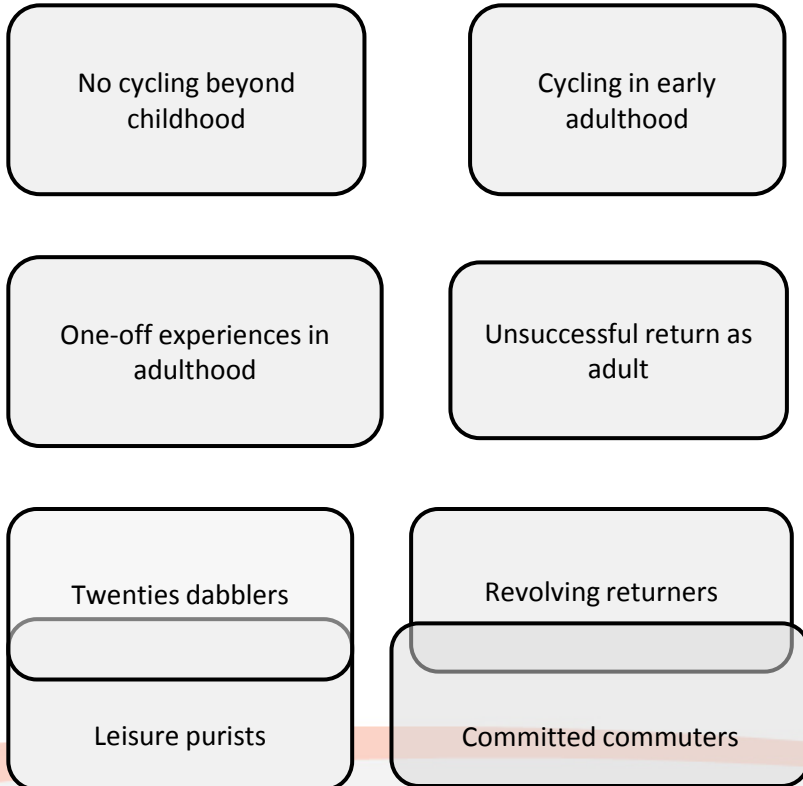
some changes ascribed to events

Later adulthood:

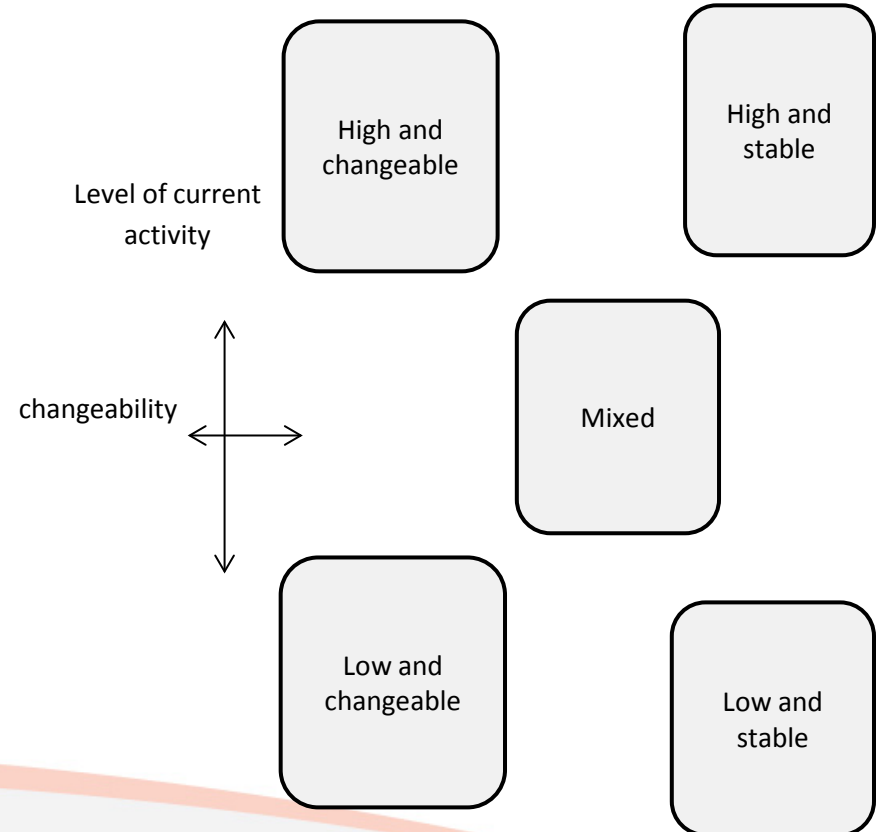
potential in the context of evolving family and employment commitments

Holistic form - typologies

Cycling



Walking



Diminished – restorative – resilient

Comparative insights: Boomers vs Echoes



Early experiences

Boomers:

independent walking

Lesser bike access but greater spatial freedom

cycling extension to mobility in youth

Echoes:

escorted walking, greater car access within family

Greater access, more restricted spatial boundaries.

Gender differences

Males - specialist cycling

Females - interest waned



Transition to adulthood

Boomers:

Earlier role transitions

Car access

some recreational and transport
cycling

Echoes:

prolonged transitions

Car access

higher education, graduate
employment

some males recreational and
transport cycling,
females occasional recreational

Mid and late adulthood

Diminishing changes: locational changes, injury

Mostly men

Restorative changes: locational changes, health events, role changes

Mostly women

Adaptive changes: Electric-bikes, commute to recreational cycling

Events in linked lives

- mothers' employment and children's educational changes
- Care needs and location changes for ageing (grand)parents

Longer term influence of trajectories



restorative cycling trajectories - engagement in youth and early adulthood

Failed returns

Walking trajectories - car access

DISCUSSION



Life course framework

Changes in macro context

economic factors & spatial planning transportation factors & spatial planning cultural values & norms health /environment/ risk family structures

relative stability

Transition to
adulthood

gendered life course

Work –
retirement
transition

latest
walking/
cycling

Changes in micro context

mobility resources locational decisions interpersonal relationships & roles health

Time

Longer term mechanisms

Role socialisation, Stress adaptation, Capital accumulation

Schwanen et al (2012): travel behaviour habits “embodied intelligence”

Earlier experiences: generative and enabling of restorative change?

Boomer women better positioned ?

- Later automobility
- Employment shaped by motherhood
 - disruption and limitations to mobility

Changes in these factors for females in younger cohort

Schwanen, T., Banister, D., Anable, J., 2012. Rethinking habits and their role in behaviour change: The case of low-carbon mobility. *Journal of Transport Geography* 24, 522-532.

Contribution of a life course perspective

- Life-long opportunity structure
- Timing
- Historical context
- Inter-generational aspects

Implications for policy

- Value of early experiences, even if brief
- Later life potential for restorative, adaptive and diminishing change
- sensitive periods
 - Emerging adulthood: promote multi-modality
 - Later life occasions for intervention e.g. Downsizing moves
- gender/cohort dimensions in readiness for restorative change

Next steps...



How does the built environment shape the experience, ability and willingness to cycle through middle and later life?