Generational relations: Polish and Irish migrants

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Family and Generational Relations

• Families are generational orders as well as kinship networks
• Increased emphasis in contemporary society on vertical relations in context of growth of ‘beanpole families’ (small families)
• Intra family transmission - at moments in time, over the life course and between generations
• Variety of resources transmitted
• Acceptance/ rejection/ transformation of transmission- patterns of solidarity, differentiation, and ambivalences
Generational Relations

• Generations bounded in particular historical contexts (Mannheim)
• Integrated in a cross-generational succession
• Generation is a relational concept
• Invoke sociological concept of practice and agency
Generational relations
The fathers study

- IRISH Migrated 1950-60
- POLISH Migrated 2000s

Men / Grandfathers
Generation 1
60-90

Men / fathers
Generation 2
28-52

Children / Sons
Generation 3
5-17
An analytic approach: some methodological issues

- Case approach
- Definitional issues (fuzzy boundaries)
- Selection of intergenerational chains (partial families and class heterogeneity)
- Exceptional chains (nonrepresentative)
- Interpretation of experience as well as mapping life course ‘events’
- Narrativity and temporality and context
Migration and Generational Relations

• Generational consciousness created at moments of significant change & historical context
• The resources brought to new society and which transmitted to younger generations
• Which are acted upon in new society
• How lives change over the life course following migration
• The experiences of family members who migrate and those who do not
The Study Approach

- Comparative case approach
- Chains of family members
- Historical/ contextual
- Life course/ biographically sensitive
- Narrative analysis of stories/ interviews
# Comparing Irish and Polish migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• European countries</td>
<td>• historical generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• history of occupation</td>
<td>• political histories</td>
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<td>• Impetus to migrate largely economic</td>
<td>• economies</td>
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<td>• Established Polish and Irish diaspora in the UK</td>
<td>• education systems and attainment levels</td>
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<td>• Roman Catholic patriarchal societies</td>
<td>• gender opportunities</td>
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<td>• White ethnicities</td>
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<td>• Discrimination in migration</td>
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# Migration: different eras, different resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Billy</th>
<th>Waldemar</th>
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| **Billy** b 1935, 75 interview  
Migrated at 14 in 1949  
No qualifications  
Intended to stay 6 m.  
Worked in construction, then became a fitter in a lift company  
Same employer 42 years  
Sends money home  
Suffered discrimination | **Waldemar** b 1970, 40 interview  
Migrated at 36 in 2006  
Qualified teacher  
Intends to return to PL  
Shift worker- guard in leisure centre/ wife a nurse  
Expected to visit and maintains a home in PL  
Suffers discrimination |
### Generational relations and the (dis)identifications in context of migration

<table>
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<th>BILLY</th>
<th>WALDEMAR</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strong ties with younger generation who are geographically close</td>
<td>Strong ties and emotional identification with own father despite migration</td>
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<td>Transmission of strong work ethic but no transmission of educ/occup status</td>
<td>Transmission of occupational/educ status and expressive fathering practice</td>
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<td>Upward mobility in son’s generation</td>
<td>Downwardly occupationally mobile compared with own father and last own job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disidentification from own father’s practices as a father BUT both main breadwinners</td>
<td>Different fathering caring practices/ reverses gender order</td>
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Generational transmission: Fathering practices

**BILLY**
Billy gave his own children little freedom, “they kind of got sheltered a little bit too much” As a father, “I helped out, yeah, the way I could. But as I say there again, I had a very busy job you know”. He brought up his children to be ‘good Catholics’ and feels a failure because they have lapsed; “it just made me feel that I didn’t do something right. I guided them the best way I could.” He passed on discipline, “You know with my upbringing, you know pretty strict myself, I think I kind of passed it on to my children.”

**WALDEMAR**
Like his own dad, Wal encouraged his son and did not push him too much; was calm rather than angry; showed affection; and spent time with him; hugged him. He talked of “providing him with masculinity. For me it’s what I got from my father, a kind of peace and control and I try to grow this in me and build a relationship with my son on this... it’s about being, being by his side all the time.”

BUT different fathering less gendered practices – greater level of care with own son compared with own father with him.
Generational relations and transnationalism

BILLY
Annual voyages back home – long and expensive
‘Used to always go to see my parents every year … on the boat … Cos the boats that time was very very … There was nowhere to sleep or anything you know, we used to have to sleep on the floor. … There used to be all wooden benches, you know no cushions … Kind of cattle boats to be quite honest’

WALDEMAR
Frequent contact: computer technologies and cheap air travel
But still hanging in the present:
“I don’t look so much into the future. Or even the question of going back to Poland. We still say: ‘I don’t know’ … now we are hanging in the present and we are getting to know a different world here. Because in Poland we’ve already discovered everything there was to discover.”
In conclusion

• Migration is a temporal and historically situated process
• Migrants bring and transmit resources from society of origin to younger generations
• Migrants and their children act upon resources transmitted and accumulated in a new society to create new practices with different outcomes
• Migration creates ambivalences, continuities & social transformations
• Migration is a transnational process - ties, assets and cultural heritage retained, strong ties with home