

Generational relations: Polish and Irish migrants

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Family and Generational Relations

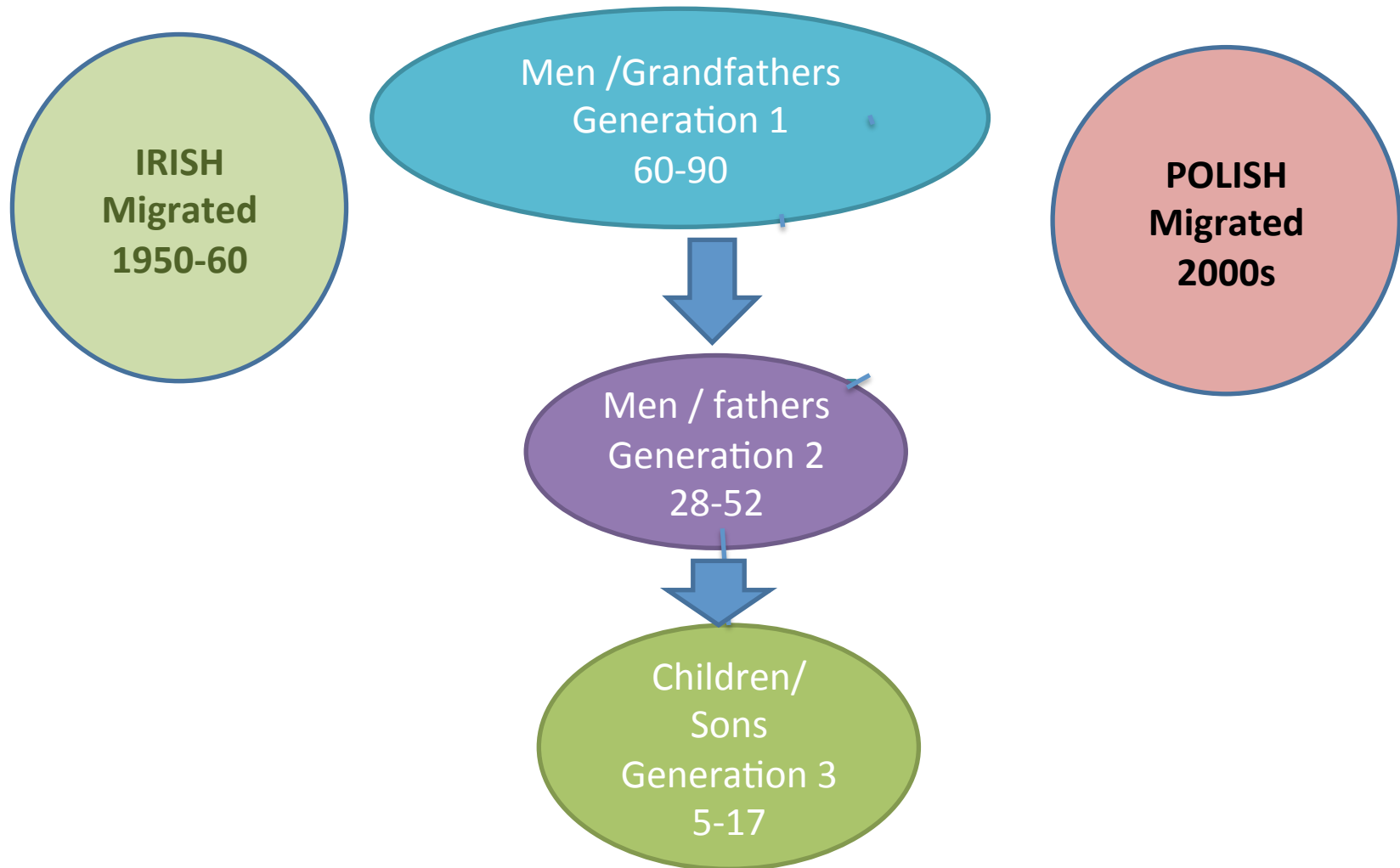
- Families are generational orders as well as kinship networks
- Increased emphasis in contemporary society on vertical relations in context of growth of 'beanpole families' (small families)
- Intra family transmission - at moments in time, over the life course and between generations
- Variety of resources 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



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

Similarities

- European countries
- history of occupation
- Impetus to migrate largely economic
- Established Polish and Irish diaspora in the UK
- Roman Catholic patriarchal societies
- White ethnicities
- Discrimination in migration

Differences

- historical generations
- political histories
- economies
- education systems and attainment levels
- gender opportunities

Migration: different eras, different resources

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

BILLY

Strong ties with younger generation who are geographically close

Transmission of strong work ethic but no transmission of educ/occup status

Upward mobility in son's generation

Disidentification from own father's practices as a father BUT both main breadwinners

WALDEMAR

Strong ties and emotional identification with own father despite migration

Transmission of occupational/educ status and expressive fathering practice

Downwardly occupationally mobile compared with own father and last own job

Different fathering caring practices/ reverses gender order

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