



**Maynooth  
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## **Inequalities: social connections in early adulthood and class-formation**

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FLaG Workshop, University of Leeds, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022



# Overview

- The substantive question: social connections in early adulthood and social mobility
  - Linking unstructured life story interviews to formal data on retrospective social network schedules
- Introducing the Life Histories and Social Change dataset
- Methodological approach
  - Necessity analysis
  - Process tracing
  - Identify necessary and sufficient conditions?
- What we know from Living in Ireland data
- Some examples from my initial work
- Challenges
- Your questions and suggestions!





# Social connections in early adulthood and lifetime social mobility

- Literature on ‘social capital’ – that is, access to resources through participation in social networks - indicates a positive impact on labour market success and higher incomes
- ‘Bridging’ social capital – i.e. ‘weaker’ social connections - may be more important than ‘bonding’ social capital in promoting career development (c.f. Granovetter 1973)
- Men and those in higher social positions have greater access to the *kinds* of connections that promote labour market success (Lin 2000)
- Social capital may be partly inherited and contribute to class-formation through practices of social closure (Alecu et al. 2022)
- Early adulthood considered to be a key period for shaping personal networks across the life course (Aeby et al. 2019) and therefore social capital in this life phase may be especially consequential
  - Some research suggests that ‘bonding’ social capital more significant in early adulthood (Neves et al. 2019)
  - Qualified evidence of a positive relationship between social capital and achieving a stable position in the labour market (Andersson 2021; Graham et al. 2015)
  - Some evidence that early career social capital affects long-term income development (Oinas et al. 2020)





# Introduction to Life Histories and Social Change

- Three birth cohorts of Irish people
  - Before 1935
  - 1945-54
  - 1965-74
- Data on each case
  - All were participants in 'Living in Ireland' panel survey 1994-2001
  - Life story interviews
  - Life history calendars
  - Retrospective social network schedules
- Available for re-use: 98 life story interviews in IQDA/Digital Repository of Ireland (including some curated audiofiles)
  - Formal data currently restricted to original researchers



## 📁 Objects in this Collection

|       |     |
|-------|-----|
| All   | 236 |
| Audio | 135 |
| Text  | 221 |



# The retrospective social network schedule

Case Summaries(a) (,) (b)


|   | Connection to Respondent | Kin Connection to Respondent | Sex of Connection | Childhood | Starting Out | Raising Family | Today | Lost Contact with Respondent |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|-------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Female            | No        | No           | Yes            | No    | Lost Contact - Other         |
| 2 | Kin                      | Sister                       | Female            | No        | No           | Yes            | Yes   | Still in Contact             |
| 3 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Female            | No        | No           | Yes            | Yes   | Still in Contact             |
| 4 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Female            | No        | No           | Yes            | Yes   | Still in Contact             |
| 5 | Kin                      | Other Kin                    | Female            | Yes       | No           | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 6 | Kin                      | Brother                      | Male              | Yes       | No           | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 7 | Kin                      | Father                       | Male              | Yes       | Yes          | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 8 | Kin                      | Sister                       | Female            | Yes       | Yes          | Yes            | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 9 | Kin                      | Sister                       | Female            | Yes       | Yes          | Yes            | Yes   | Still in Contact             |

a. LHSC ID Code = 201  
 b. Limited to first 100 cases.




# Methodological strategy: connecting data form

- ‘Necessity’ analysis of relationship between structure of social ties (vertical kin, lateral kin, non-kin) in early adulthood and household income group in 2001
- Linking process-tracing (life story interviews) to necessity analysis to identify causal mechanisms (see Goertz and Mahoney 2012)
  - (0,1) Check for measurement error
  - (1,1) Specify causal mechanism
  - (1,0) Identify factors preventing outcome
  - (0,0) Can be used to further test causal hypothesis (but least ‘interesting’ cell)
- Potentially, identifying range of factors that provide both necessary and sufficient explanation for membership in high income group in 2001



|                         | Vertical kin only (x=0) | Lateral kin or non-kin (x=1) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| High income (y=1)       | 3 (0,1)                 | 40 (1,1)                     |
| Mid to low income (y=0) | 12 (0,0)                | 37 (1,0)                     |



Necessity analysis showed almost all high-income participants reported lateral kin or non-kin ties in early adulthood

(0,1) should be empty for necessity  
(1,0) should be empty for sufficiency



## Before we begin:

what else do we know about people in the different necessity clusters?

Based on analysis of LHSC participants' **Living in Ireland Data**

### Clusters:

(1,1) Lateral or non-kin ties early adulthood; higher household income 2001

(1,0) Lateral or non-kin ties early adulthood; middle or lower household income 2001

(0,0) Vertical ties only in early adulthood; middle or lower household income 2001

\*Two cases 'unknown'

|                                     |            | (1,1) | (1,0) | (0,0) | Total |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Cohort                              | <=1935     | 9     | 16    | 8     | 33    |
|                                     | 1945-54    | 19    | 15    | 2     | 36    |
|                                     | 1965-74    | 11    | 6     | 5     | 22    |
| Sex                                 | Male       | 18    | 13    | 7     | 38    |
|                                     | Female     | 21    | 24    | 8     | 53    |
| Irish social class Father           | Non-manual | 24    | 16    | 6     | 46    |
|                                     | Manual     | 13*   | 21    | 9     | 43    |
| Highest level education Mother      | <=Primary  | 18    | 25    | 12    | 55    |
|                                     | < Leaving  | 12    | 6     | 1     | 19    |
|                                     | Leaving    | 8     | 2     | 0     | 10    |
|                                     | Any Third  | 1     | 3     | 1     | 5     |
| Made ends meet child                | Easily     | 17    | 11    | 3     | 31    |
|                                     | Difficulty | 22    | 26    | 12    | 60    |
| Highest level education Participant | <=Primary  | 2     | 14    | 4     | 20    |
|                                     | < Leaving  | 4     | 12    | 3     | 19    |
|                                     | Leaving    | 15    | 6     | 3     | 24    |
|                                     | Any Third  | 18    | 5     | 5     | 28    |
| Make ends meet today                | Easily     | 34    | 21    | 6     | 61    |
|                                     | Difficulty | 5     | 16    | 9     | 30    |
| Total                               |            | 39    | 37    | 15    | 91    |



# What do we know about differences by income category?

| Household income group (2001) | Mean total ties (LHSC) | Mean non-kin ties (LHSC) | Member club or organization (LHSC, N) | Member Club or organization (LII, Percent) <sup>1</sup> | Number of cases (LHSC) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Lowest                        | 8.11                   | 2.61                     | 11                                    | 30.5%   | 28                     |
| Middle                        | 7.71                   | 3.13                     | 14                                    | 45.8  | 24                     |
| Highest                       | 10.43                  | 4.93                     | 29                                    | 65.3  | 40                     |
| Total                         | 9.01                   | 3.75                     | 54                                    | 46.3  | 92                     |

1. Population sample, 2001, Living in Ireland participants corresponding to LHSC cohorts. Longitudinal weight applied







Examples of linking life stories and social network data

# CLIFFORD AND NANCY

LHArchiveA13 and LHArchiveA30



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# 'Clifford's' social network schedule (born 1926)

Case Summaries (a) (,) (b)

|   | Connection to Respondent | Kin Connection to Respondent | Sex of Connection | Childhood | Starting Out | Raising Family | Today | Lost Contact with Respondent |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|-------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Male              | No        | Yes          | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 2 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Male              | No        | Yes          | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 3 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Male              | No        | Yes          | No             | Yes   | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 4 | Friend                   | Not Kin                      | Male              | Yes       | No           | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |
| 5 | Kin                      | Uncle                        | Male              | Yes       | No           | No             | No    | Lost Contact - Death         |

- a. LHSC ID Code = 113
- b. Limited to first 100 cases.



# Pen sketch of 'Clifford's' life story

- Clifford describes himself as the first 'employee' of the nascent [semi-state organization], where he worked his way up to being a senior manager and remained for the whole of his career. Before that he worked in insurance and started out as a draughtsman. His father was a professional footballer and then worked as a 'brass finisher,' but it is clear that Clifford's grandparents on both sides were business owners - his paternal grandfather was a partner in a metal working firm, and his maternal grandmother's 'people' owned 'trading schooners.' His maternal grandfather was a shoemaker. His mother's parents and unmarried siblings lived next door.
- Clifford mentions his uncle as a significant influence in childhood. He briefly mentions a 'brother' [i.e. teacher] in his secondary school as a possible influence, and he also seems to have been influenced by a local milkman for whom he worked 'as a hobby' when he was about 14.
- Unfortunately, while he identifies friends on his social network schedule when he was starting out, it is not clear who these were from the transcript. Also, unfortunately, there is no information about his own family (wife, children).
- Clifford does make interesting comments about social class - specifically in relation to education and about work as source of community and sociability. He briefly describes renting before owning his own house. Also talks about the importance of 'respect' as a value for children.



# Clifford's description of working for the 'milkman'

INT: Were you paid for this job?

RESP: No, and do you know what it never occurred to me, I liked doing it, I loved it and it never occurred to me that maybe I should be getting something.

INT: Was it the company of the milk van or was it an important job?

RESP: I just like the whole...

INT: Was it the milk lorry or the...

RESP: The horse, and I liked the pals and I liked the milking and the general...

INT: Can you remember your parent's attitude at that stage when you would have said to them; I have a little job, or whatever?

RESP: Well you see I hadn't got a little job! You see, and it never occurred to them to say, should that not be a little job! It was a hobby. It was no different than if I had been hanging around at the harbour and was taken out on the boat. And my milkman, he was one of the first around here to build glasshouses for tomato plants and this would have been around 1940s and that was the beginning of the tomato growing in Ireland. And he built... he had a brother, a carpenter and they built greenhouses in what was the stable yard of an old estate which had fallen into ruin. But anyway sure this was heaven to me, not only was I delivering milk but I was looking after tomatoes for nothing and I loved it. And even yet when I go into a glass house, whether it is my own or anywhere else, and I smell the tomatoes...

INT: It brings back memories.

RESP: Oh totally, totally, yeah and it was more of a novelty then because I had never seen tomatoes grow and we grew them from seed [unclear] all the different things. And it was a heated house you see so there was always this lovely warm, damp, growth smell of it. But this for me was a buzz, I was only a kid.



# 'Nancy's' social network schedule (b. 1930)

Case Summaries (a) (,) (b)

|   | Connection to Respondent | Kin Connection to Respondent | Sex of Connection | Childhood | Starting Out | Raising Family Today | Lost Contact with Respondent |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Neighbour                | Not Kin                      | Female            | No        | No           | Yes                  | Yes Still in Contact         |
| 2 | Work Colleague           | Not Kin                      | Male              | No        | Yes          | No                   | No Lost Contact - Death      |
| 3 | Kin                      | Father                       | Male              | Yes       | Yes          | No                   | No Lost Contact - Death      |
| 4 | Kin                      | Mother                       | Female            | Yes       | Yes          | No                   | No Lost Contact - Death      |
| 5 | Other                    | Not Kin                      | Female            | Yes       | Yes          | No                   | No Lost Contact - Death      |

a. LHSC ID Code = 130

b. Limited to first 100 cases.





# Pen sketch of 'Nancy's life story

- Nancy's father was a cattle dealer and farmer. Her mother's family owned a small farm. Her parents eloped. Nancy mentions that there were 'airs' on her father's side. She describes having a woman work for the family when she was a child and going on holidays with her mother. During the war her mother's health deteriorated and the family moved into a flat in the town for the sake of her mother's health, believing the house in the countryside was damp. They retained the farm and planned to move into a new house that they built, but the war interfered with the work. Her father then took up gambling. Nancy hoped to go to university but intimated she didn't get a scholarship and therefore she couldn't afford to go. She started out working as a typist and got a job in an estate agent's. She explains how her mother had money that she used to get the farm going again. She describes being a great reader her whole life and she links that to her mother's membership of a library. The estate agent went out of business and she got another job with a solicitor. She describes getting further training in shorthand and typing and attempting to progress her career by going into the civil service [my interpretation]. She did in fact get a job in the 'town hall.' [At end of interview she describes an illness that prevented her doing an exam as being a turning-point. Perhaps that was a key part in her decision to marry also]. She describes doing a lot of hitch-hiking around Ireland with friends before she got married. [At the end of the interview she reverts to this as a time in her life when she had freedom]. She married her husband in part because she couldn't face going in to work to do more typing. Her husband had purchased a farm with money saved from working in England [I think - this part is a bit unclear]. Her first baby born at home died. Raising family - all her children went to secondary school, boarding. She had a woman come in to help her, like her own mother. She talks about husband attending marts, so perhaps he was a dealer like her father (again, a bit unclear). She describes playing a game of '20 questions' with her children after dinner 'just to get them interested in finding things out.' She and her husband borrowed money to extend the farm from 128 to 400 acres. She describes being booted out of house and off land when her son inherited, once husband turned 65 [and possibly already had Alzheimers. At the beginning of the interview she spends quite a bit of time describing how she cared for her husband through lung illness and later Alzheimer's]. She was shocked her husband didn't leave her the house. Her comments at the end of the interview - on the Iraq war, Afghanistan, Socrates - indicate a well-read and thoughtful woman.





# Nancy's description of starting out

INT: So when you finished the leaving what age were you?

RESP: I was 19 by the time because I had to wait 2 years, it was 6 years to the leaving at that time.

INT: So it would be 1949. So where did you go?

RESP: I just said to myself, well I could get a job so I went for 3 months to shorthand and typing and I did that for 3 months.

INT: Was that your own idea, did you hear about it, did your friends put you onto it?

RESP: I can't remember now, it must have been well known and I went anyway and I had trouble with it and I wasn't a great typist after 3 months, you can imagine, but anyway I got a job in the @@Mid West County Ireland## [unclear 01 12 25 12] company. I left there then...

INT: How long were you with them?

RESP: I was getting 30 shillings a week then and the money was very scarce, I can remember at home.

INT: Did you have to hand up a lot of it or some of it?

RESP: Then I moved to @@Michael Fitzpatrick##, he was a great friend of Donacha O' Malley, do you remember he died he was the fellow brought in free education and he was there and I remember at the time and then DeValera was coming down and he would always stay in the same place, [unclear 01 13 19 21] and he was staying there and he was introduced to Donacha O' Malley and because I'd say the O' Malley's are Fine Gael. He'd have been probably an uncle of that fellow that started the PDs, you know.

INT: Dessie O' Malley.

RESP: I think his brother is a solicitor there in [unclear 01 13 47 12] Street. So that is it, so I got a job in @@Michael Fitzpatrick##'s anyway, he was an estate agent and I got £2 a week and I'd have to come home then and I'd give my mother the £2...

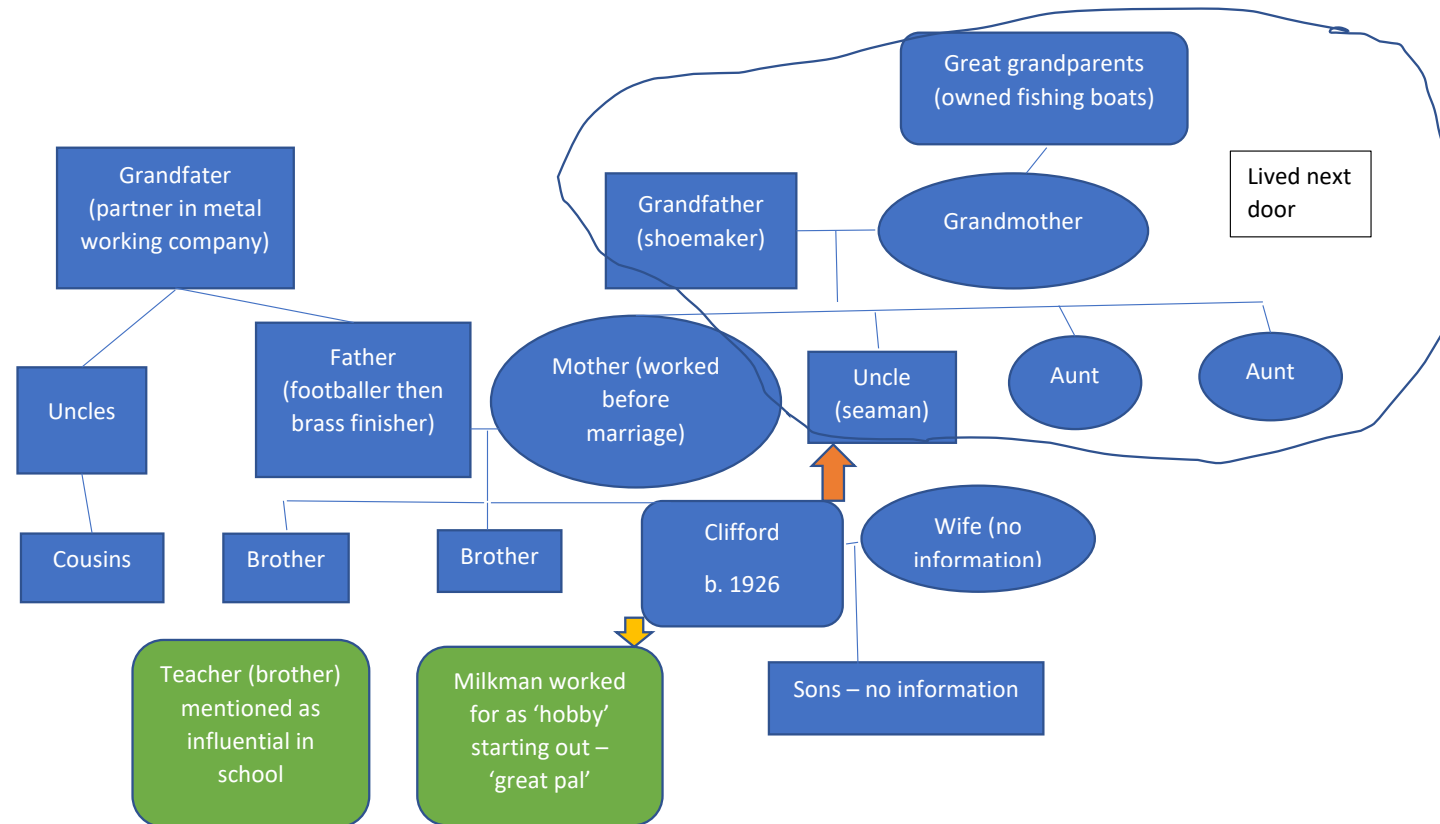


# Making sense of connections in life stories

- Method of collecting retrospective network schedules makes it challenging to cross-reference with connections mentioned in life story interviews
- “The figurational approach places research participants in two roles: firstly as narrators of their personal relationships and secondly as informants about the people, relationships and relational settings in their lives. The two positions give access to different kinds of material that are seen to provide both insider and more ‘factual’ or outsider perspectives to family relationships...Through the questionnaires, research participants report various – and from their perspective often quite insignificant-looking – details which take a different form to a narrative. They are organised by the researcher that has an outsider's view of the particular web of relationships.” Castrén and Ketokivi 2015)



# Mapping connections referred to in life story - Clifford



# Initial thoughts from reading first few (1,1) transcripts

- Life stories reveal participants started out with forms of economic and cultural capital that were comparatively exceptional amongst people in the first birth cohort (based on my familiarity with the corpus of life stories)
- Provides support for ‘social closure’ effect described by Alecu et al (2022)
- May not be possible to specify mechanisms through which lateral and non-kin ties ‘worked’ to promote social reproduction/class-formation
- Will be interesting to see:
  - Whether similar pattern of social closure continues, and if it exists across all three cohorts in (1,1)
  - What processes might explain cases in (1,0) – follow up on education clue, is there evidence of networks being mobilized differently?
- **Comments and suggestions?!**





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