

Understanding change and continuity in cycling through life history interviews

Heather Jones
Dr Kiron Chatterjee, Prof. Selena Gray



University of the
West of England



bettertogether

Outline

- Background
- Life course perspective
- Life history methodology
- Cycling biographies
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusions
- Next steps



Research aim

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

Background

Individual not population change over time.

Associations btw behaviour and physical, cognitive and social factors

Overlooking influence of previous experience

Influence of locations, attitudes and inter-personal relations have over time

Life events trigger behaviour change

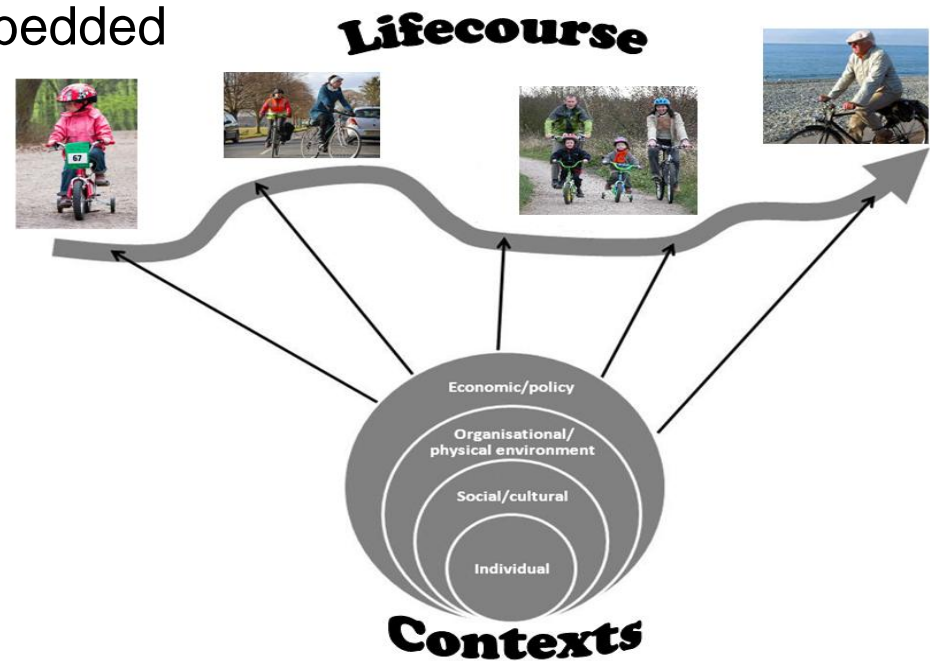
Isolated events in short-term time frames



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)

- Trajectories - life-long developmental pathways
- Linked lives, historically embedded
- Timing, human agency



Research aims

- **To understand individual change and continuity in cycling over the life course**
 - the impact of events and transitions
 - how present behaviour relates to cumulative, earlier experiences
 - Influence of linked lives
 - Influence of historical context

METHODOLOGY

- **Challenges**

- life-long view
- Lack of existing longitudinal data
- Cycling trajectories - relatively unknown phenomena

- **Biographical approach**

- Reconstruction through individuals' recollection and reasoning
- Contextualise behaviour development within life course
 - lagged changes
 - avoid spurious linkage of event and behaviour change



Life history interviews

2 stage interview

1st: life history grid

1 week interval

2nd: review timeline

	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963
age	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
life events	Born Harrow, Middlesex. Same dir. only child. house wife										family moves village nr Cambridge		goes to boarding school		
walking					walked locally		walked to school								
cycling												cycles to school			
past times												exploring countryside on foot + by bike			sports at school
car access	no car at home														

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
age	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
life events		teacher training	teaches in P.N.G.	RTA	Knee injury		Birmingham starts teaching	moved suburbs	marrried	Sunderland HM		daughter born			son born
walking							walking to wife				church shopping friends				
cycling											cycles to school			bike stolen	
past times		fell walking													cycling on holiday using father
car access											bedroom	wife has a car			

Participants

Two ten-year birth cohorts

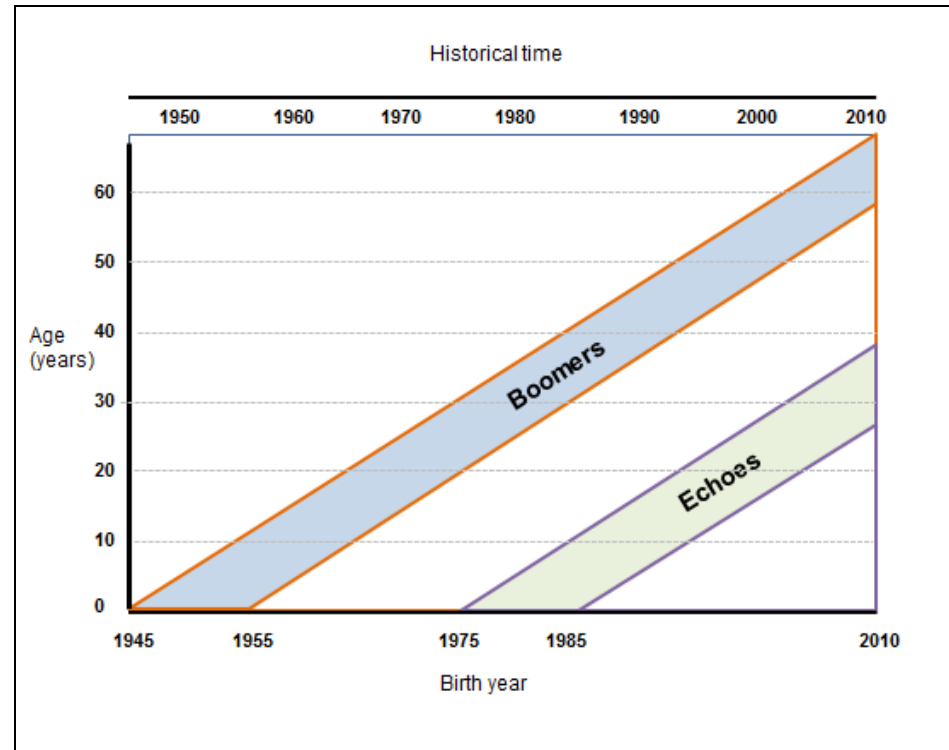
C1 1945-1965

C2 1975 -1985

Distinct historical locations

Earlier and more advanced
stage of adult life course

parent-child dyads



Analysis

33 visual and interpretive cycling biographies

Distinction between biographical detail and narrative structure

Timing and circumstances of change and continuity

Engagement with cycling over the life course

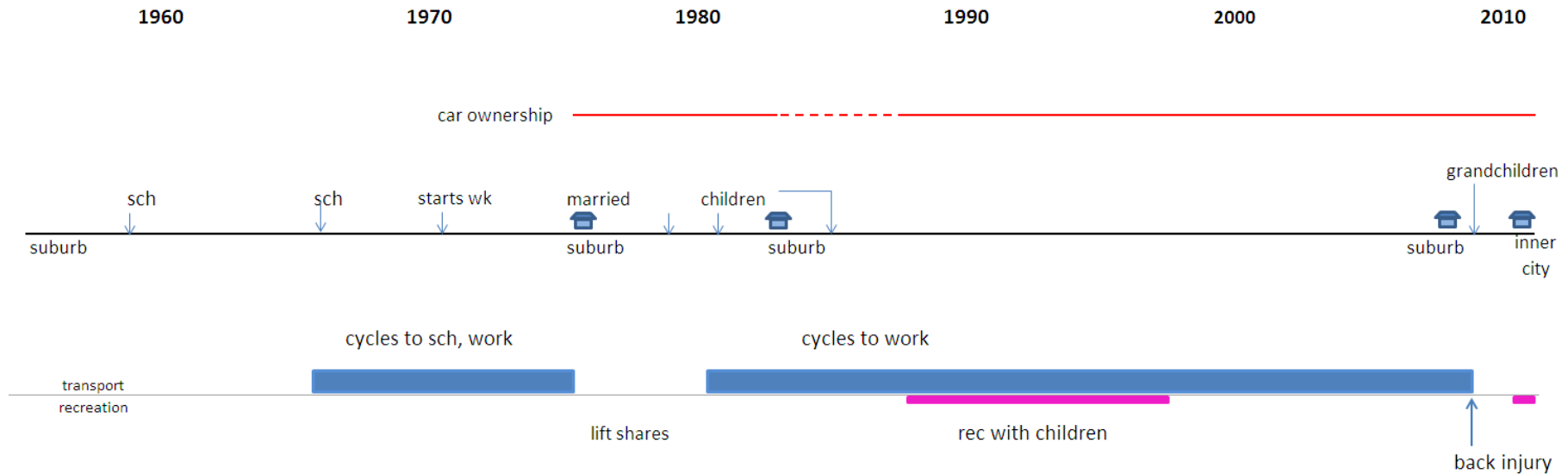
Individual

Cohort

Dyads –influence of events in linked life courses (parent/or child)

FINDINGS

Sean



Cycled regularly to school from age 10

Started apprenticeship cycling to work

4 years lift sharing before returning to cycling – financial, practical

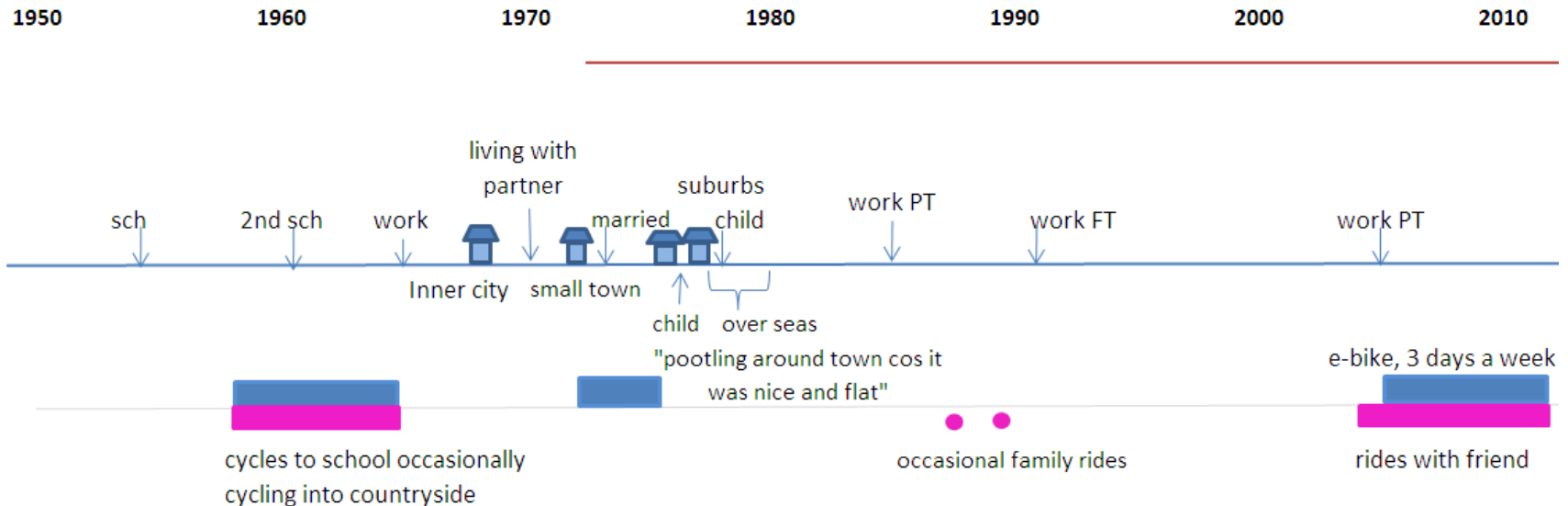
Over 3 decades cycling to work, occupational and residential stability

Back injury

Residential move

Adaptive change to recreational cycling

Belinda



Cycles occasionally to school, mostly for recreation

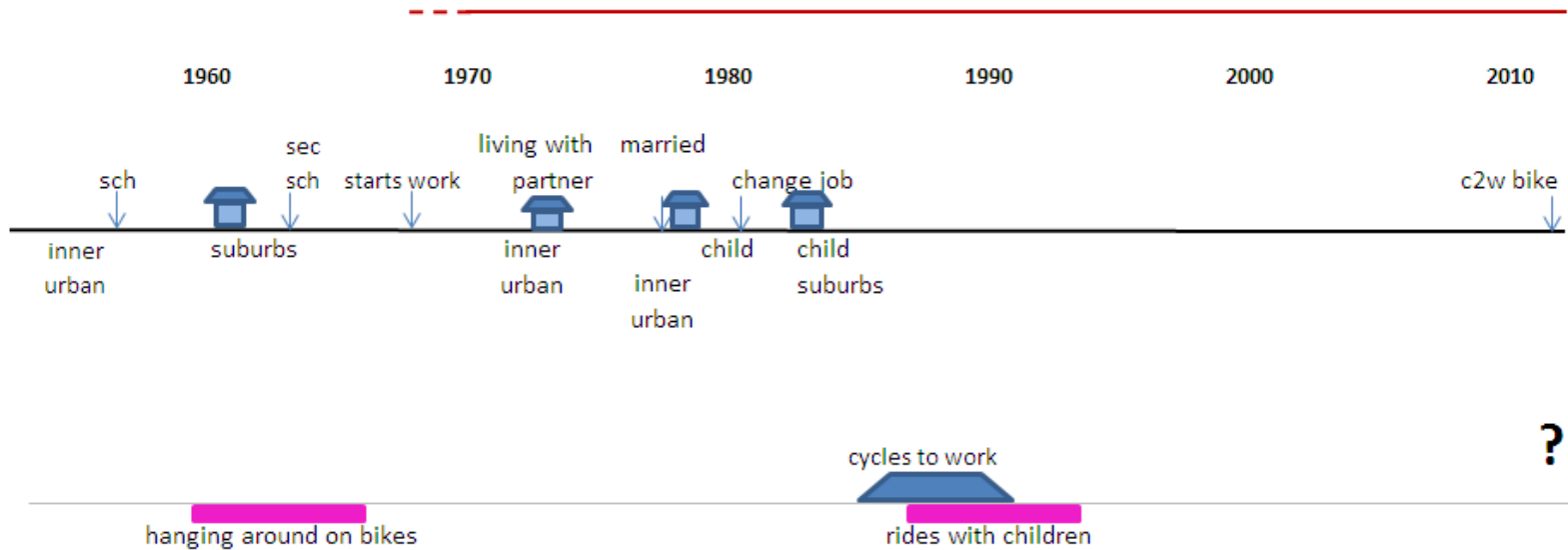
Late twenties cycles locally

Occasional family rides

Starts rec cycling with friend in her fifties

tries cycling to work, gets e-bike

Alan



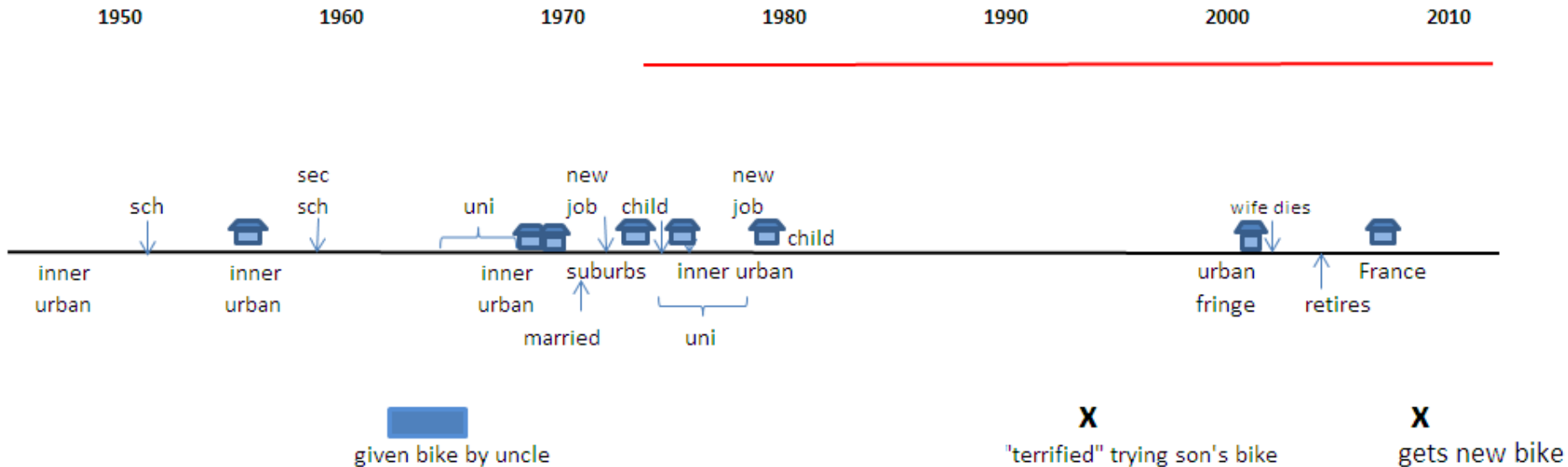
Hanging around with friends on bikes

Cycles to work to let partner have car with children

Cycles with his children

Gets a new bike to try cycling to work – fitness motivation

Don



Given a bike at 15, uses it to get around

Always walked to work, tried sons bike, intimidated by traffic

Retires to rural location, tries cycling for recreation— bike not used

Individual change and continuity

Opportunity structure reconfigured in the course of changes in **location, mobility resources, role, health**

- Events often multiple and interrelated
- But behaviour frequently stable through events

demoted or abandoned in youth + transition to adulthood

Diminishing, adaptive or restorative changes through adulthood

Failed returns common

Early experiences

Boomers

later and less access to bikes,
greater spatial freedom

cycling extension to mobility

Echoes

longer and greater access,
spatial boundaries more restricted

Males engage in specialist cycling
females interest waned in youth

Transition to adulthood

Boomers

Males early shift to motorbikes/cars
Females later car access

cycling as supplementary mode

Earlier labour market entry,
partnership and family formation,
suburbanising

Echoes

Females got cars for work, males
variable

some males cycling for rec and trans,
females occasional rec cycling

Residential histories distinguished by
university. Urban living: active travel +
public transport viable alternatives

Mid and late adulthood

Transport cycling often diminished with car access

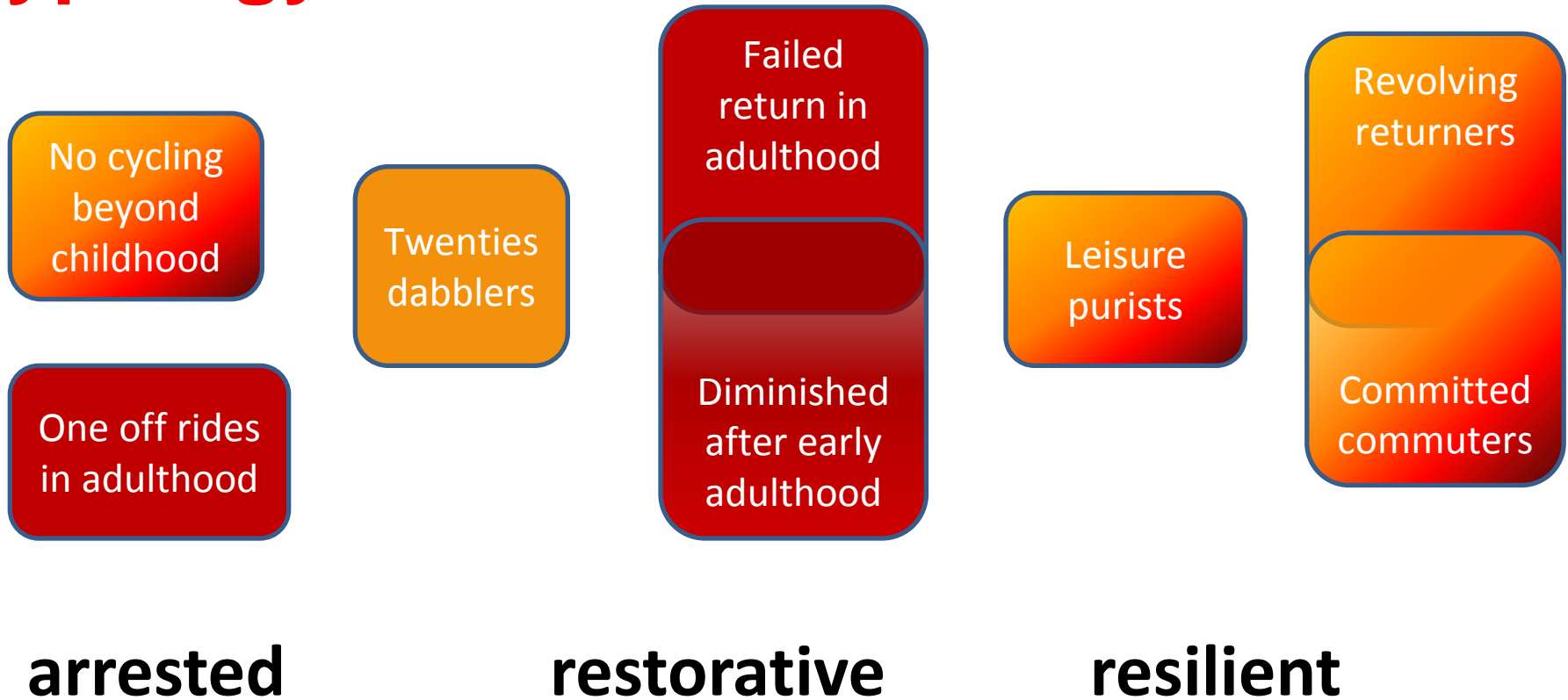
Occasional family rides and failed returns common

Restorative changes

Adaptive changes

Aspirations for cycling in retirement

Typology



DISCUSSION

Mechanisms of trajectory development

Role socialisation

Stress adaptation

Capital accumulation

Schwanen *et al.*: travel behaviour habits “embodied intelligence”

Earlier experiences: generative and enabling of returns?

Schwanen, T., Banister, D. and Anable, J. (2012) Rethinking habits and their role in behaviour change: the case of low-carbon mobility *Journal of Transport Geography*, 24: 522-533.

Influence of earlier experiences



Restorative trajectories: cycling in youth and early adulthood
Generative and enabling? Accumulating embodied intelligence?

Boomer women better positioned by life experiences to restore cycling?

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

Graduates in younger cohorts better positioned by urbanising move for HE to restore cycling in young adulthood than non-graduate peers?

Implications for practice

- **Sensitive periods**

- Emerging adulthood: promote multi-modality
- Later life: prevent diminishing, support adaptive and restorative changes

- **Translation for practice**

- Value brief early periods as generative and enabling of later returns
- Respond to potential for restorative, adaptive and diminishing change in later life.
- gender/cohort dimensions in readiness for restorative change

CONCLUSIONS

- Opportunity structure evolves over the life course
- Life-long potential for change
- Sensitive periods for development
- Earlier experiences generative and enabling
- Influence of linked lives
- Gender/cohort distinctions in readiness to restore cycling



Next steps...

PRICELESS Design

Promoting **I**ndependent **C**ycling for **E**nhancing **L**ater-life
Experience and **S**ocial **S**ynergy through **D**esign

How the built environment shapes the willingness and
ability of older people to cycle

Explore further mechanisms of trajectory development in larger
collection of biographies

Heather Jones

Heather6.jones@uwe.ac.uk



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