

AMERICAN LIVES IN A NEW CENTURY: A PROJECT HISTORY, 1962-2015

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PREFACE –this project history tells the story of how the appointment of Glen Elder at U-C Berkeley’s Institute of Human Development led to a career-long involvement in longitudinal studies of American lives in the 20th century. Out of this came Children of the Great Depression (1974-99) with its life course perspective, followed by cohort comparisons (Oakland & Berkeley) of people born at opposite ends of the 20s, and now a book in process based on members of the 1900 generation – the parents of the Berkeley Study members. Discovery of the remarkably rich data archive on this generation (birth dates 1890-1905) over four decades ago led to a series of chapters on social change in the family, and now to a book on families and lives in Depression and War through collaboration with Richard A. Settersten, Jr. and Lisa D. Pearce.

THE BEGINNING

The seeds of this long-term project were sown in 1962 when the new director of the famed Berkeley Institute of Human Development, John Clausen, invited Elder, a new PhD in sociology and social psychology, to become his research associate on a longitudinal study of people who were born in 1920-21 and grew up in Oakland, California. By the 30s, the Institute (then called Child Welfare) had become a pioneer in the study of children over time, adding two studies of children drawn from a cohort born in 1928-29 in the city of Berkeley. They were known henceforth as the Berkeley Guidance and Growth studies. Jean Macfarlane directed the Guidance Study and Nancy Bayley was director of the Growth Study. A number of members of the Growth Study were also counted as members of the Guidance study. The entire membership of the Guidance Study is referred to in this project as the Berkeley cohort of 1928-29.

By the time Elder arrived at the Berkeley Institute in 1962, the study children in both birth cohorts, Oakland and Berkeley, had been followed across multiple waves of data collection. They were now middle-aged adults with children and a large number of the younger Berkeley study members had living parents as well. Longitudinal studies were still exceedingly rare. However, Elder’s research role on the Oakland study project gave him an unusual opportunity to acquire this research experience and to come up with ways of thinking about the changing lives of people as they aged. It also exposed him to family and socioeconomic change in the Great Depression. He could see that not all families experienced a significant decline in their income between 1929 and 1933.

This observation led to the identification of Oakland families in the middle and working class who lost heavily during the worst years of the 30s and to families that managed to avoid such losses, along with evidence of the social and psychological impact of this change. These observations resulted in analyses that became the foundation of the book, “Children of the Great Depression: Social Change in Life Experience” (1974), with its documentation of the biographical impact of historical change and a conceptual perspective on the life course.

The diverse Depression experience of the Oakland families is well-represented by this study, though it could not tell us about the generality of the findings. Would an older or younger cohort differ significantly on the Depression’s effects? The developmental or career stage hypothesis suggested that younger children from deprived families would be more vulnerable to heavy income loss than older children. In many respects, an ideal group for this comparison was the Berkeley cohort with birthdates in 1928-29, since both of the cohorts’ data archives were located at the same Institute. Elder began to explore this option.

As Institute director, John Clausen gave Elder permission to access the Berkeley data archive, and he quickly determined whether it included income data that would enable an assessment of family income in 1929 and in 1933, the worst year of the Depression. The intensively studied Berkeley families (N=111) did have such data, and Elder found that the less intensively studied families (N=99) had a mix of socioeconomic data (income, dependence on welfare, etc.) that would enable estimates of nondeprived and deprived status that roughly matched findings for the intensively studied Berkeley families.

With these data in hand, Elder began work on a two year research proposal to be submitted to the National Science Foundation in the summer of 1971. It included a year of data collection and coding at the Berkeley Institute followed by a year of data analysis at the Institute for Research in Social Science, UNC-Chapel Hill. The proposed grant, entitled “Economic Deprivation in Personality and Achievement (GS-35253),” was approved in the summer of 1972, and preparations were made to establish a research team at the Institute soon after Elder arrived in Berkeley with his family at the end of August.

Looking back on this time, it is clear that any exploration of a large data archive leaves open the possibility of “serendipity”—such as starting out to develop something and ending up by developing something else (Merton, 1968). A purposive exploration can be transformed by totally unexpected discoveries that occur even after much preparation and orientation by the archivist and staff. This kind of discovery need not lead to discarding the original plan.

Instead it might expand the project and change the timetable. With this reflection in mind, consider the archival year (1971-72) at the Berkeley Institute of Human Development.

A PLAN AND SERENDIPITY

The primary objective of the Institute year was to develop measurements that would enable a systematic comparison of the Oakland and Berkeley cohorts, 1920-21 and 1928-29. This required a survey of the early childhood years of data obtained from interviews and ratings on the parents and study members, and secondly a survey of the adult years of the study members and parents. Elder focused initially on the parent interview data to ensure sound measurements for the cohort comparisons, assisted by the project coders.

Compared to the scarcity of the Oakland data on parents, the amount of archival data from the Berkeley parents seemed immense. For example, they were interviewed about their parents and social background, using a survey form. Much of it turned out to be filed uncoded according to individual families who were followed over the years and even across the generations. The sole project director, Jean Macfarlane, was trained as a clinician with a focus on children in families, and the amount of uncoded data stored according to family units in the Berkeley study tended to reflect this orientation. The case assemblies could be used to understand the individual child in a family.

In the Oakland data archive, we lost track of the parents by the end of the Depression decade and the onset of World War II. By contrast, the Berkeley parents were interviewed periodically across the 1930s, and also followed across the 1940s up to a major intergenerational interview in 1946-47. This interview focused on the parents' life experience up to the end of World War II and on the relationship with surviving parents and their children who were in transition to the adult years. This includes the military service of sons in the study. At the end of the 1960's, the surviving parents were interviewed for a final time about themselves, their children and spouse. This treasure trove of parent data far exceeded what we needed for a comparative study of the Oakland and Berkeley cohorts, but it opened Elder's eyes to the extraordinary possibilities of "studying the parents' lives as a project" in itself.

The remarkable depth of data on the parents and the extent to which much of the essential parent data for the cohort comparison were not coded called for a major unplanned commitment of project resources. We first organized the most essential data by the identification number of each study member, followed by the preparation of codebooks and application of the codes. This process

increasingly led to decisions that broadened the scope of the archival work well beyond that needed for the cohort comparison study.

Four complex data sets were generated from the coded data, with a focus on the family. The young age of the Berkeley study members when the economy collapsed (two to three years) gave added value to our efforts to code all qualitative information that depicted family life from 1929 through the 30s. One data set focused on family relationships across the 1930s and another one covered relations with kin, marital interaction, and the changing household composition. The development of coding manuals and the coding process itself became an especially demanding conceptual operation. Life record data on the early years of the parents, on the parents' lives across the 1930s and 1940s, and on the adult lives of the Berkeley study members were transferred to magnetic files for transport back to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Institute for Research in Social Science (now the Howard Odum Institute).

By the end of the Berkeley project year (summer 1972), data files had been prepared with two analytic themes, one as planned for "The Comparative Cohort Study: Oakland and Berkeley, and one focused on the 1900 Generation of parents, with emphasis on "Social Change in the Family".

1-THE COMPARATIVE COHORT STUDY- measurements to enable a comparative study of Depression hardship in the lives of the Oakland and Berkeley study members up to their middle years. In theory, the young age of the Berkeley study members placed the males, in particular, at greater risk of Depression hardship, when compared to the older Oakland adolescents. This career stage hypothesis was proposed initially by Norman Ryder in (1965). To understand the full meaning of drastic income loss, we needed to obtain measurements of family patterns before income losses and unemployment. This pre-Depression information was available on the Berkeley families (though not on the Oakland parents) and was added it to the data files for transport back to Chapel Hill.

2- SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE 1900 PARENT GENERATION - BERKELEY STUDY - to investigate the impact of socio-economic change in the Great Depression and WW II on family adaptation and the life course. Family and life-history data on the pre-depression family patterns would enable the proposed study to assess continuity and change into the Depression. Data were also available on income loss and unemployment across the 30s. The Berkeley data archive included socioeconomic records for mothers and fathers that covered the war years.

Data preparation at Berkeley included the able coding assistance of Stephen Schultz and Jerrold Buerer, along with Natalie Luchese as a half-time administrative member of the staff. Janice Stroud and Elizabeth Wilson provided coding assistance for most of the year. Marjorie Honzik, senior member of the Institute staff (and long-time associate of Jean Macfarlane) provided much valued guidance regarding the Berkeley study, as did Rose Fox, an administrative assistant at the Institute and Carol Huffine. Barbara Burek, the Institute archivist, played a most important role in our project across the 70s.

During the NSF year back at UNC (1973-74), the project followed a plan that viewed research on the Berkeley families as a first step toward the comparison of the Oakland and Berkeley study members. Berkeley family life before the Depression enabled us to understand the continuities and discontinuities that were carried into the 30s. As a whole, this work provided essential insights concerning the meaning of the Depression's effects. Were they concentrated among families with distinctive vulnerabilities, such as economic dependence, or did its effects extend across the adaptive and maladaptive families in the 20s.

Four chapter length manuscripts were developed during the second year – they focused on family migration and settlement in the city of Berkeley, on the education and worklife of mother and father, and on the stability and instability of their marriage up to the 1930s. Most of the Berkeley parents in the 1900 generation settled in Berkeley after migrating from other countries and the eastern part of the United States. Attractive life opportunities and access to advanced education were major incentives for both the mothers and fathers. And lastly, men played the most important role in determining the harmony and stability of their marriages. These chapters represented the foundation of the project's final report to the National Science Foundation.

This year of research was supported by the Institute for Research in Social Science where it was housed (now the Odum Institute). The project also received valuable support from Angel Beza, the assistant director at the Institute. Tom Hastings and Don Kacher, sociology graduates with methodological training, provided expert assistance in data analysis. They continued as research assistants over the next two years in a related National Institute of Mental Health project, along with Sheila Bennett, one of Elder's doctoral students in sociology.

Two major phases of the project's history emerged from the transformative experience of our National Science Foundation study. The first (I) is centered on the Depression's family impact in the Berkeley study and its relevance for understanding the differential effect of hard times on children of different ages

–the younger Berkeley children and the older Oakland youth. The new research here is largely focused on the Berkeley data archive. The second phase (II) extended this work across the lives of the Berkeley parents and children. Using the panel study, the parents were followed into old age and their children into the middle years.

PHASE I – DEPRESSION’S IMPACT ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN’S COHORTS – NIMH-MH25834 – 1974-79

Project research on the NSF grant was extended three more years by the NIMH grant and also by Elder’s visiting appointment as senior research fellow at the new Boys Town Research Center in Omaha, Nebraska. A UNC colleague, Richard Rockwell, joined the research team at the Center along with David Ross, as a research assistant. Charles Morrissey, an oral historian, agreed to work with us to do interviews with key staff at the Berkeley Institute and also with accessible members of the 1900 generation who were living in the greater San Francisco area. All staff interviews centered on the early years of the Institute at Berkeley.

Resources and risk factors the Berkeley families carried into the Great Depression (eg. dependence on relatives, etc.) proved to be very consequential for their hardship experience. Working class families and those who depended on other support before the 30s were most at risk. And loss of employment was clearly the most potent source of the risk of prolonged deprivation for men in the working class. Three chapter length manuscripts were produced on the consequences of Depression losses by the end of the Boys Town affiliation. One investigated the key determinants of the two faces of the 30s, misfortune and prosperity. Not all hard times became “bad times” for families and a manuscript explored this process among economically deprived families. A third manuscript reported findings on how families coped with scarcity across the 30s.

With this understanding of Depression hardship among the Berkeley families, we turned to its consequences for their children and their adult lives. As noted earlier, the children were of preschool age when the economy collapsed and thus they were at greater risk than the older Oakland children. The boys followed this expectation, but not the girls. The boys were more adversely influenced by the resulting family stresses than were the girls. In deprived families, they did not do as well as girls in school and they were less confident and self-directed during adolescence. The Berkeley girls benefited from the emotional support of their mother in hardpressed families, whereas the boys typically lacked a caring, involved father. By contrast, the older Oakland boys in deprived families were resourceful and old enough to play an important

economic role in the community. However the teenage girls were engaged with mother in household duties and frequently felt excluded from social affairs by their lack of attractive clothes. These cohort and gender variations were reported in a new chapter for the 25th anniversary edition of *Children of the Great Depression* that appeared in 1999.

PHASE II – STUDYING LIVES AND THE GENERATIONS (1979-99)

At the end of the 1970s, Elder concluded his Boys Town appointment to become Professor of Human Development at Cornell University. He soon recruited Jeffrey Liker as a postdoctoral fellow to join his project from the Department of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts along with two highly regarded college graduates as research assistants, Bernard Jaworski and Deborah McInnis. Cathy Cross, a recent graduate of the Human Development program at Cornell became a central member of the research staff, and another graduate, Steve Stewart, expertly carried out data analyses.

One of the most distinctive features of this phase of the research project was the exceptional entering cohort of graduate students in 1981. It included Avshalom Caspi from the University of California at Santa Cruz and Geraldine Downey from Trinity College, Dublin. Elizabeth Colerick (Clipp) became a member of this entering cohort from the field of Nursing at Johns Hopkins University. Caspi, Downey, and Colerick all became Elder's collaborators in studies of intergenerational relations and life course development and achieved distinction in their academic careers.

The Cornell research phase focused on the Depression and wartime lives of the Berkeley parents as members of the 1900 generation, with emphasis on their relation to kin during the 1930s. The parents lived in the midst of nearby kin and thus could help relatives and be helped by them. We gave special attention to the process of living in the home of relatives, and accepting relatives as members of their household. The three generation households often brought conflicting cultures together. This research established a context for investigating life trajectories into old age from the 1930s.

As the project turned to the later years, it focused on the emotional health and wellbeing of the Berkeley mothers in old age and then on their husbands' wellbeing circa 1969. The adverse impact of economic deprivation was most pronounced among women in the working class during the 30s, and corresponding results were obtained for them in late life. The Berkeley men were least likely to survive into old age, and among couples in late life, the men

were less efficacious, active, and outgoing than their wives, a gender difference that matches one obtained during the 30s in hard-pressed families.

The project returned to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in the summer of 1984 when Elder was appointed to the Howard W. Odum Professorship. By the fall of 1985, he was awarded an NIMH Senior Scientist award (MH00567), a five-year grant with salary support. This support continued up to 2000 and provided an opportunity to make appropriate revisions in the manuscript drafts and to launch a new data collection on the military service of the sons of the Berkeley and Oakland parent generations. The Institute's data archive did not include detailed information about their service even though four out of five men in the two studies served at some time. A retrospective life history survey was mailed from the Institute of Human Development to all study men and their wives in the two longitudinal studies.

The Berkeley parents were involved in WW II through home-front mobilization. Three out of four of the families had a son who served at the end of WW II or later. War mobilization in the Bay Area drew a significant number of the Berkeley women into the labor force, and especially to the booming shipyards around San Francisco. Most of their husbands who had spells of unemployment across the 30s returned to full-time work and even put in overtime. Mounting labor needs also pulled teenagers into the work force and at pay much higher than their parents experienced during the 30s. The fathers talked about the likely return of hard times, and the lack of work discipline among the teenagers who receive higher pay "than they are worth".

"Working on the Home Front" thus represents an important theme for a chapter length manuscript on the Berkeley generation. We know, for example, which women worked under economic hardship across the 30s, and whether they continued working during the war years. We are also able to identify the women who only worked during the war. The oral histories obtained by Charles Morrissey are especially relevant to this period of history. Published research papers provide accounts of the military service of the sons and of their parents in the later years.

WORKING TOWARD A BOOK

The manuscripts that appear in this project history reflect, hopefully, a phase of the project that will end up as a book manuscript. Elder proposed such an aspiration with book outlines as early as May 1973 on the theme of "Families in Depression and War" with chapter details not far removed from those reviewed in this project history. However other projects at this time assumed center

stage, such as the Oakland-Berkeley cohort comparison and the preparation of papers for publication. Nevertheless, progress was made chapter by chapter across the years and decades.

Several years ago Elder recognized that time had come to wrap-up the project he had nourished along the way and to do so as a book. Nearly four decades had passed since he launched what was initially envisioned as an innovative project with a remarkable data archive. Five research grants over this time span provided support for continuing the project, but the motivation from the project itself assured its continuity. To develop a productive collaboration and establish a way to pass on the longitudinal data archive to the next generation, he decided in 2011 to explore collaboration with two younger colleagues, Richard Settersten of Oregon State University and Lisa Pearce of the University of North Carolina's Department of Sociology at Chapel Hill.

Settersten was well established as a distinguished senior figure in the life course-human development field and he possessed first-hand knowledge of the Berkeley Institute of Human Development. He collaborated with psychologists on the development of a project proposal concerning dimensions of aging that was to draw upon data from the Oakland and Berkeley data archives. Moreover, Elder had known Settersten since his graduate student days at Northwestern University. Lisa Pearce has a strong reputation in the field of mixed methods, the kind of methods that Elder employed with the Oakland and Berkeley.

Joining a project with a history of 40 years is full of challenges, most importantly in terms of achieving a shared understanding of how it evolved with the materials at hand. The collaborators decided to begin this process by reading and discussing each chapter manuscript in sequence within the original framework. This review was done with an openness to chapter modification and the addition of new chapters. After completing a first review, they met for a two day workshop to develop a complete chapter outline of the proposed volume. This occurred during the 2012 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association at Denver. An updated version of the book outline is presented below.

PROPOSED BOOK: LIVING THROUGH DEPRESSION AND WAR: 1900 GENERATION

Research team: Elder, Settersten, & Pearce

Drafted-3/12/15

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1- American Lives in a New Century: the 1900-Generation –framework of book

Chapter 2- Changing Places – life-pathways ending in Berkeley by 1928

PART II: MAKING A LIFE – 1910-1930

Chapter 3- Getting Ahead – men’s education, work, life style

Chapter 4- Becoming Young Women and Wives – education, work, marriage

Chapter 5- Married Lives – work and home place, the companionate ideal

PART III: - THE WORST AND BEST OF TIMES –the 30s

Chapter 6- Misfortune and Prosperity: Two Faces of the Great Depression

Chapter 7- Hard Times, Bad Times –how hardship becomes a bad time

Chapter 8- Having Children in Troubled Times -having a child at the wrong time

Chapter 9- In the Midst of Kin – helping relatives and being helped by them

PART IV- THE COMING OF WAR

Chapter 10- War Comes Home –how daily life changed for mother, fathers, and children–in culture, rhythm, public vs. private.

Chapter 11- Working on the Homefront – the work of women, men

PART V- CONCLUSION

Chapter 12- Reflections on Life’s Journey –life and memories in later life

Chapter 13 –Straddling the Centuries –What was special about the lives of the 1900 generation?