

Using Family Histories to Understand
the Intergenerational Transmission of
Chronic Poverty

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Abstract

The Chronic Poverty Research Centre over the period 2007-2011 is undertaking a research programme on the theme of the Intergenerational Transmission (IGT) of Poverty that will centre upon the use of quantitative panel studies triangulated with qualitative life history interviews. This paper proposes a method of collecting family histories that would act as a means of linking households from the panel studies with individual life histories.

The family histories would augment information on the IGT of poverty in a number of ways:

- by placing quantitative findings into a context of expressed meaning;
- by providing a holistic view of the family, useful for investigating issues such as whether there is a 'family strategy' for mobility;
- by extending the space dimension provided by household panel data to households and individuals within the same family but located separately;
- by extending the time dimension provided by panel data, through the retrospective recall of events and the prospective anticipation of the future;
- by allowing for the direct examination of generational change in the family and the persistence of poverty across generations of the same family.

The paper describes the procedure used to construct a three-generation 'social genealogical' chart of the family and a strategy for interviewing individual family members sited across the generations of the family. A mode of 'contrastive comparison' analysis between the factual family history and the accounts of the family given by differently-sited family members is explained that would allow a holistic extra-individual view of the family to be constructed.

Keywords: intergenerational transmission of poverty; family histories; social genealogy; contrastive comparison

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1. Background

The Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) over the next four years will undertake and commission research under the theme 'Empirical Approaches to the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty'. The intergenerational transmission (IGT) of poverty is seen by the CPRC as being closely linked to chronic poverty – 'severe, multidimensional poverty experienced for a long period, perhaps . . . over a whole lifecourse'. Poverty, and chronic poverty, can cross generations, extending within families over more than a lifetime; that is, it can be intergenerational. 'Research by the CPRC will attempt to identify the range of factors that increase the likelihood that poverty is passed from one generation to another' (CPRC, 2007). That said, it is by no means clear at present whether the factors that drive the intergenerational transmission of poverty are the same as those linked to persistent and chronic poverty. The CPRC intends to employ a variety of methods drawn from a range of disciplines to investigate this issue. A multi-method philosophy underlies the research theme, which is based upon the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The dominant quantitative and qualitative approaches are envisioned to be panel studies and life histories respectively, which in the optimum circumstances would be combined into a common, triangulated, research design.

A problem with the use of panel studies is that there is a dearth of good, long-term panel studies in the developing world that can be used to investigate the IGT of poverty. Since previous waves of a panel study would have been carried out years ago and designed for the research issues considered relevant at the time, there is almost always a secondary component to any time-based analysis of panel data as researchers may have to adapt variables that were created from an altered perspective or for a different purpose altogether. Also, to study intergenerational phenomena directly, a panel study will need to have been in existence for some decades. Available panel studies may not have been going for long enough or might not have asked the ideal questions in previous waves. Both of these considerations mean that quantitative CPRC researchers interested in the intergenerational transmission of poverty may have to settle for 'quasi'-longitudinal data where the time span of a panel study is brief, much less than a generation, or where information on some key factual items may have to be collected through retrospective recall. In the extreme, CPRC researchers may have to rely upon data that is solely cross-sectional with the time aspect being answered by retrospective questioning. Another means of widening the scope of quantitative household data that is gaining momentum in developed nations is the linking of household data with administration records from other sources and this may provide scope for CPRC users of panel data as well. In sum, while panel data will be the core of the CPRC's 'quantitative' thrust under the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty theme, the CPRC is likely to need to augment this with other means of procuring quantitative information.

Similarly, the intention to use life histories as the premier method for the collection of qualitative information for studying the IGT of poverty also leads to an extension, in this case to the family. As the CPRC's own life history pilots have found (Lawson, Hulme and Muwonge, 2006; Hulme, 2004; 2006), individuals do not live their lives in a vacuum and the reporting of a life history interview only makes sense within when placed within contexts, such as the individual's family, the community or further afield. Moreover, the CPRC does not intend to identify individuals for life history interviews in an ad hoc manner but instead to employ triangulated research designs that will link the life histories to households located in panel data in which the qualitative information from the life histories place the empirical findings derived from the statistical analyses of the panel data into a context of meaning. There needs to be a means of carrying out this linkage that employs a research-relevant rationale rather than just a chance join. The collection of family histories using the method described below would provide a method for effecting this linkage.

2. The strengths of family histories

The collection of information on family histories can augment the data on the intergenerational transmission of poverty coming from quantitative cross-sectional surveys and panel studies in a number of ways:

- by placing quantitative findings into a context of expressed meaning;
- by providing a holistic view of the family, useful for investigating issues such as whether there is a 'family strategy' for mobility;
- by extending the space dimension provided by the panel data. Families encompass households, but also extend across multiple households, so questions relating both to intra-household and inter-household issues can be examined with family history data;
- by extending the time dimension provided by panel data, both into the past through retrospective recall of events prior to the time of collection of panel data and prospectively into the future through anticipated events;
- by allowing for the direct examination of generational change in the family and the persistence of poverty across generations of the same family.

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

a. Context of expressed meaning

The empirical findings produced by quantitative cross-sectional surveys and panel studies provide valuable insights into the associations and linkages that amount to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. However, what they cannot provide is direct information about the thought processes of the actors who generated and experienced these phenomena. In marked contrast to the rigour of statistical testing and tabular analysis that generate the findings of a quantitative analysis, the discussion of these quantitative results tends to attribute 'logics' or motivations to the actors carrying them in a remarkably ad hoc manner. Commonsensical notions that arise in no particularly systematic way from the analyst's own experiences and world view are assigned casually in order to generate inferences or rationales for observed behaviour (Miller, 1998). This would especially be a problem when the analyst's life experiences vary greatly from those of the analysed – as is the case when the subjects of study are poor people from developing nations and the analyst is from 'the North'.

In contrast, a great strength of qualitative analysis is that the attribution of motivation is problematised. For instance, standard techniques of qualitative in-depth interviewing discriminate between interviews arising from general non-directive eliciting questions designed to generate narratives on a topic of interest and semi-structured modes of questioning in which the interviewee responds to a 'schedule' of queries designed to cover a conceptually pre-determined set of topics.¹ This distinction extends to the analysis of qualitative interviews where material that arose spontaneously in the interview and topics introduced by the respondent would tend to be given more credence than that which results solely from a line of direct questioning by the researcher. Interviewer effects can be subtle, where even an apparently innocuous interjection by an interviewer sometimes can cause the respondent to change the tangent of their narration. In more general terms, the qualitative

¹ Since family histories are elicited through semi-structured interviews, this discussion has been framed around qualitative interviewing. The same general discrimination between behaviour that arises 'spontaneously' or behaviour that is the result of an intervention by a researcher – between 'unobtrusive' or 'obtrusive' research -- would apply to other types of qualitative research such as observation studies where one would differentiate between behaviour observed when the subjects are unaware of the researcher and behaviour taking place when those observed are aware of a researcher's presence or where the researcher is even an active participant.

analyst needs to recognise that interviews are social situations. This will help him/her to be aware that interviewees will have tailored their responses at least partially in regard to *their* anticipated takes on the researcher's reaction or opinion. The style of expression – for example, whether interviewees are providing a straight narrative account, arguing for or justifying their actions, condensing part of an account to move their narration on or, in contrast, elaborating an account to explain something to the listener etc. – can provide insights into the interviewees' thought processes.

A central point to recognise about qualitative interviewing is that the primary goal of even a semi-structured qualitative interview is not to elicit a collection of factual information – this can be obtained more reliably through a structured interview schedule, a questionnaire or through linking to administrative and other data available from secondary sources. Instead, the primary goal of a qualitative interview is to obtain insights into the subjective construction of meanings that respondents have built up for themselves. These relations of meanings may be factually correct but are not necessarily so. Even if the interviewee is consciously or unconsciously tailoring their relation of the reasoning behind their actions, this is not a crucial flaw. What is crucial is that the analyst can reach an understanding of how the interviewee has come to give the responses that he or she does give; both at the surface level of tailoring their responses within the context of the interview and at the more deep level of the actual interpretations of their present and past situations that they have themselves.

That said, 'truth' is not ignored. The analyst can build a structure of externally-verified or at least coherent and plausible facts and contrast this with the respondent's own subjective account. The points at which the two diverge are entry points for an analysis that moves into the meaning-worlds constructed by interviewees. Techniques such as the intensive group 'micro-analysis' of key points of text (Breckner, 1998) can be useful for reaching an understanding of the origins of tensions or inconsistencies. Within the collection of family histories, the construction of 'family grids' described below can help provide a fact-based framework against which to contrast an interviewee's subjective relation.

The method of family histories proposed in this paper is a method of qualitative interviewing anchored in family history grids and hence the above considerations general to all qualitative interviewing will apply.

b. A holistic view of the family

The IGT theme of research proposes extending the analysis of panel studies by augmenting them with qualitative life histories. Individual lives are not lived in a vacuum, but take place within a context of networked social relations, of which the family is central. Hence, the collection of an individual's life history (or, in qualitative terms, more precisely an individual's life *story*) inevitably will produce an account that is based in a family.² A research strategy that centres upon the collection of multiple life histories/stories from within several generations of the same family will generate multiple perspectives on the social relationships within that family. Each individual interview provide a unique perspective on a common family experience – taken together, the body of interviews enables the construction of a holistic view of the family's 'history' that encompasses the perspectives of individuals of different genders at different stages in their life courses who are located in different positions within the family. Questions that relate to the family as a functioning entity can be answered, such as: whether there is a family strategy for securing upward mobility; the basis for deciding the allocation of resources of all types including nutrition, support in education and financial resources between siblings or other family members; decisions about inheritance; the allocation of responsibilities, such as providing care for other family members. Crucially, a multiple interview approach allows the identification of disputes or competing strategies or

² And, for most, at least two families, those of origin and procreation.

interests within the same family and the investigation of the unity, or its lack, among members' support for these competing parameters.

The holistic approach allows the family history to range across the dimensions of space and time and across generations within the family.

c. The space dimension

Households are the units upon which panel study data collection centres. However, families extend across multiple households and the distance of separation between households in the same family can be thousands of kilometres.³ Residential propinquity is not necessarily the defining characteristic of a family and in the beginning decade of the twenty-first century thanks to patterns of global migration, the 'transnational family' (Liu, 1992) of extended kinship relations is not uncommon even among the poor. And, on the other hand, an individual household can contain members of two or more families that share the same dwelling unit.⁴ 'Throwing a wide net' of kinship relations allows the research team to operationalise a definition of family in which the boundaries of the family are based upon found social relations rather than an externally-imposed standpoint. As well as intra-household issues, the interaction between households that make up the same family can be studied with regard to issues such as joint economic activities or financial support, including the remittance of earnings from abroad. A 'history' of the formation of new households within a family can be constructed that takes account of positive and negative factors that promote or retard the formation of new households such as: limitations and opportunities available in housing markets; the desire to maintain networks of emotional and practical support (and the countervailing desires for privacy and independence); joint economic activities (contrasted to the need to follow employment opportunities elsewhere); and ease or difficulty in travelling or maintaining communication over distances. All these can alter over time.

d. The time dimension

Household-based panel studies provide true longitudinal data across time for units that can be seen as making up (albeit partially) families. However, the panel studies that are available for the study of the intergenerational transmission of poverty in developing nations are limited in their number, in the number of time points on which they have collected data, and in their duration (Jenkins and Siedler, 2007). Qualitative family history interviews taking place within a 'genealogical grid'⁵ provide a framework that aids the reliable recall of events and the past situation of the family, including events that took place long before the first data collection point of the panel study.⁶

Furthermore, as well as encouraging the recollection of the past, the mode of biographical life history interviewing also promotes an anticipation of the future. The biographical processes that go into a person's construction of their identity are anchored in past experiences, but also are informed by the person's anticipation of their likely future (Fischer-Rosenthal, 1995; Miller, 2000; Rosenthal, 2004). The anticipation of the future colours the

³ And, of course, individual members of families also can be physically far from their family.

⁴ As well as two or more families sharing the same dwelling, a single family quite commonly can have members of other families living with it; for instance, when a family takes in non-related boarders or has child, adolescent or adult servants who 'live in'.

⁵ A 'social genealogical' (Bertaux, 1995) chart of family members across several generations that contains key sociological information for each person. The construction of a genealogical grid is explained in depth below.

⁶ Sixty year-old interview respondents are capable of giving reliable information about their grandparents. This means that the time span covered by a series of interviews within a single family easily can cover a century.

person's assessment of their present and also their evaluation of their remembered past. Just as the family is centrally bound up in the past that forms an interviewee's perception of their self, so will the family form a central part of the person's anticipated future. The telling by an interviewee of her/his family's history will contain an element of assessment of the family's prospects and actions in the future.

e. An examination of inter-generational change

There is a phenomenon in the timing of generations within a given family that can be termed a 'generational heartbeat' of a duration that in industrialised nations typically falls just under thirty years. The grandparents' generation produced a generation of parents and aunt/uncles that in turn cycled to the generation of the interviewee, his/her siblings and cousins, which in turn will cycle to a generation of the interviewee's children and nieces/nephews.⁷ A family history study can exploit this by interviewing across at least two generations (young and middle-aged adults) with the possibility of extending into a third 'grandparents' generation if there are survivors. And, as noted above, it is possible to obtain reliable information about one, perhaps two, generations before the oldest interviewees. This makes the study of inter-generational influences, transfers of wealth etc. feasible. Cross-generational influences may span more than one generation, such as when grandparents care for children and the direction of influence may be from the younger generation to the older, such as when younger family members support (or fail to support or even drain the resources of) older relatives. Intergenerational influences are not limited solely to parent/child or grandparent/grandchild effects. Uncles or aunts can play a significant role in the life chances of their nephews and nieces.⁸

A crucial point to remember is that a research design that incorporates multiple qualitative interviews across several generations within the same family opens up the opportunity to discover how the perspectives on the same cross-generational influence or link may differ between generations or between family members located in the same generation. For example, the elder generation in control of wealth that will be passed on may have quite a different view of the power this gives them from the younger generation that must wait for their inheritance.

3. A proposed method of collecting family histories

This section will introduce a means of collecting family histories that will produce focussed qualitative information on the intergenerational transmission of poverty within families that can augment and extend the findings from panel studies and other sources of quantitative material. The proposed method has four main features:

- the use of theoretical sampling to anchor the qualitative family histories within the context of quantitative empirical results that will have come from panel studies;
- the collection of 'social genealogies' (Bertaux, 1995) as a means of linking the quantitative findings with the qualitative material arising from in-depth interviews within families and as means of focussing and structuring the interviews around the intergenerational transmission of poverty within families;

⁷ In nations where the typical age at first birth is low, the 'generational heartbeat' may be quicker. Also, among families that have a large number of children over two generations it is possible to end up with nieces/nephews in one generation who are older than the younger aunts/uncles of the previous generation. This will be more likely where fertility is high and age at first birth is low, but these would be exceptions to a general regularity.

⁸ While the current research initiative is focused upon the intergenerational transmission of poverty, it would be remiss to exclude intra-generational dynamics, such as the influence or help of siblings or cousins from any research design that uses family histories.

- multiple in-depth qualitative interviews across several generations within the same family in order to construct a holistic view of the intergenerational transmission of poverty and other dynamics within the family;
- an analysis that employs a broad conception of 'capitals' in order to follow the transmission and conversion of resources between and within generations in a family.

a. Sampling

The cases for the collection of family histories would be chosen by a process of theoretical or purposive sampling in which the elements are chosen on conceptual criteria. The sample in each country would be based on the transition matrices ideally derived from long-term household panel data. In order to compare mobility patterns across a wide range of contexts, the main categories of households from which elements are chosen will be those that have: moved into chronic poverty; remained in poverty, or found exit routes from chronic poverty over time.

Ideally, in order to contain the information needed to identify the three categories of households -- those that have: 1) become chronically impoverished; 2) remained impoverished; 3) exited from chronic poverty -- a household panel survey will need to have collected information from a number of data points over a sufficient span of time to allow the investigators to establish whether impoverishment is chronic or long-standing and, for the former and latter categories, whether the household has moved into or out of poverty. Furthermore, operationalising when a household actually has moved into or out of chronic poverty or even remains constantly in chronic poverty is problematic (for instance, see the discussion in Hulme and Shepherd (2003)).

Additionally, in order to investigate the intergenerational transmission of poverty, the panel survey data needs to have information about both the 'parents' and the 'children's' generations. The number of household panel surveys in developing nations that meet these criteria is limited (Jenkins and Siedler, 2007). One could fall back on the less than ideal alternative of selecting cases from household panel surveys with fewer points of data collection over a shorter period of time. This would allow the identification of groups of households that had moved in or out or remained in poverty, but not for a long enough period that one could be sure that the poverty phase was chronic. Another less than ideal alternative would be to use data from a cross-sectional survey that had asked its respondents to recall retrospectively information that would allow the analysts to deduce their previous poverty status and consequently infer into which of the three categories the respondents' households fall.

Theoretical or purposive sampling in qualitative research is not carried out to produce samples that are representative of a general population in a probabilistic sense but instead '(t)he aim of theoretical sampling is to maximise opportunities to compare events, incidents, or happenings to determine how a category varies in terms of its properties and dimensions' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 202). Rather than generating sample estimates than can be generalised reliably to population parameters within a known range of error, the goal of theoretical sampling is to provide a valid means of studying the contextualised 'rich detail' (Geertz, 1973) of the nuanced construction of meaning that goes with observable actions and reported events which will be lost in the generalisation that must take place in a quantitative analysis. In practical terms, the time and expense required to collect valid in-depth qualitative interview material, transcribe and prepare it for analysis and then to analyse in an intense focussed manner rules out numbers of cases more than some dozens. Seen in this way, the qualitative approach to family history analysis proposed here should be seen,

rather than as incompatible or a competitor, as an augmentation to the estimates of parameters that will come from the study of panel data.^{9,10}

One should note that qualitative information arising from the cases chosen for family history interviews will be anchored in the quantitative studies from whence they came. The panel data as a whole will provide a reliable means for inferring the proportionate sizes of the conceptual groups that the family history cases represent. In addition, the data from the panel survey interviews can be linked on a case-by-case basis to the information gained from the qualitative family history interviews.¹¹

b. 'Social genealogies'

The construction of a family history grid using the techniques of 'Social Genealogies Collected and Compared' provides a means of collecting information about a family in order to gain insight into the processes of transmission between generations and also a framework for linking a family history with, on the one hand, the household panel survey from which the family 'case' was chosen and, on the other hand, with in-depth interviews with individuals within the family. The grid provides a means of arriving at a holistic view of the family that is more than a summative collection of data from individuals.

In the method of Social Genealogies Commented On and Compared, the unit of observation is not an individual, but a set of life trajectories of individuals (and nuclear families) connected by kinship relations. The basic idea is to define the unit of observation so as to include several generations (at least three) (Bertaux, 1995: 75).

Procedure:

Following the theoretical sampling logic described above, a household is chosen from the panel dataset that clearly falls into one of the three groups: moved into chronic poverty; remained in chronic poverty; moved out of chronic poverty during the duration of the survey. A person within the household, the 'Target Individual', is chosen for the initial construction of

⁹ The melding of quantitative and qualitative approaches discussed here would take place at the end or towards the latter stages of the analysis of quantitative panel data. Another, contrasting, use of the collection of qualitative material is to provide information at the pre-testing stage of a quantitative study in order to help with refining hypotheses and the design of quantitative data collection instruments (i.e. questionnaires and structured interview schedules). One should note that that use of qualitative material fulfils a quite different purpose to that which is discussed here.

¹⁰ I have placed this discussion of theoretical sampling at the level of selection of individual cases for interview. Theoretical sampling as an idea is employed more generally by qualitative analysts, particularly those working within the grounded theory approach. In the same way that particular cases are chosen because they represent especially pronounced or clear-cut examples of groups of interest, qualitative analysts may choose to concentrate upon particular sections of their data (say, separate passages drawn from interviews with a number of respondents where each interviewee is talking frankly about a topic of core interest to the research). The data chosen for concentrated attention is selected on conceptual grounds.

¹¹ This strategy, in which qualitative information is collected to augment and add meaning and detail to the findings of quantitative analyses is a commonly-applied means of linking quantitative and qualitative perspectives in the same research. The author has applied this approach previously in a study that sought to develop and employ the widest possible definitions of political participation in studying the backgrounds of the politically active in Northern Ireland. A large survey questioned a probability-based sample of respondents about a wide variety of activities that could be broadly conceived as 'political' and also asked whether they would be willing to be re-contacted for a follow-up in-depth interview. Analysis of the survey responses established a number of modes of activity in the public arena. Individuals who 'scored' as highly active on a mode were then re-contacted for a 'political life history' interview (Miller, Wilford and Donaghue, 1996).

the 'social genealogy' – a chart or diagram of at least three generations of the family that takes the form of a grid of kinship relations.

The generations of the family can be thought of as corresponding in a roughly analogous manner to stages in an individual's life course and it is important to choose a 'Target Individual' that will give the maximum chances of producing three clear generations within the eventual genealogical grid for the family. The hoped-for generations will be optimally:

- 1) young adults who have been potentially in the labour market long enough to have reached a stability in their working situation;
- 2) middle-aged adults who are old enough that some of their children can be the 'young adults' of the first group;
- 3) older adults whose fertility is complete and who are entering a phase of decline, both physically and in terms of economic activity.

Picking a 'Target Individual' who falls centrally within either of the two younger categories should maximise the chances of producing a complete grid across all three generations. Hence an optimum 'Target Individual 1 (T1)', would be either a 'young adult' aged about 20 to 30 or a middle-aged person, preferably aged about 45 who has a spouse or partner.

If we assume that a young adult has been chosen, the construction of the chart would proceed as follows. Information is collected on the following individuals within the family:

- a) the 'Target individual (T1)';
- b) T1 spouse (if she/he has a partner);
- c) T1's siblings (all their brothers and sisters)¹²;
- d) T1's parents;
- e) each parents' siblings and their spouses (husbands and wives);
- f) all of their children;
- g) the maternal and paternal grandparents.

All individuals who survived to adolescence are included in the chart, including any deceased family members.¹³

So, the chart would include:

- a) T1, a young adult aged 20-30;
- b) T1's spouse (if T1 has a partner), probably another young adult;
- c) T1's siblings, most likely other young adults, but possibly middle-aged adults, adolescents or even children;
- d) T1's mother and father, middle-aged adults;
- e) T1's aunts and uncles *and* their husbands and wives, again most likely middle-aged adults;
- f) T1's cousins, most likely young adults;
- g) all four of T1's grandparents, who if still living have a median age around 70.

¹² If either of T1's parents had been married more than once, the interviewee should attempt to include the children from all marriages; i.e. the half-brothers and half-sisters of T1.

¹³ Note that this strategy means that children, including deceased children in any generation, do not appear in the chart. This has been rightly questioned by a referee, who points out that children may play a significant role in the household economy and are central for 'understanding intrahousehold resource distribution, both retrospective and prospective strategies around education and work'. My inclination would be not to include children in the grid since the proposed information collected about them for their 'boxes' would by necessity be mostly incomplete/unresolved or missing. However, I accept the points raised. Perhaps the issues could be addressed by recording the number of children linked to each person on the grid and then following up in direct interviews.

The chart would have T1's 'generation' across the bottom, T1's parents'/aunts and uncles' generation a level above and T1's grandparents' generation at the top.¹⁴ Order each set of siblings with the oldest on the left and the youngest on the right. For each person on the chart, the following information could be recorded:¹⁵

Name
Year of birth, Place of birth
Years of schooling / Highest educational attainment
1 st 'real' job
Most typical job during lifetime ¹⁶
Present/Last location (if deceased)
<i>Any other points of note</i>

Appendix 1 shows a simplified version of the layout of a family history chart with the Target Individual (T1) being a young adult. Note that essentially the same procedure for constructing the grid would be followed if T1 is a middle-aged person, only in this case T1 would be located in the middle level of the chart with the grid being filled in for him/her, his/her children, parents, siblings and nieces/nephews and the children, parents, siblings and nieces/nephews of his/her spouse.

The construction of the chart/grid serves two purposes. As discussed in the next section, its main purpose is to provide a framework for the family history interviews but the chart itself is a valuable source of information.

After the initial interview is complete and the first draft of the family grid has been compiled, the interviewee selects up to five other family members for additional interviews. In sum, a complete set of interviews for a family should correspond as closely as possible to this mix:

- two 'young adults', one male, one female; these should be cousins, not siblings;
- two 'middle-aged' persons, one male, one female; only one of these persons should be a parent of one of the young adults;
- two 'grandparents', one male, one female.¹⁷

¹⁴ Some respondents may want to give information about relations beyond those requested; for example, about great-aunts or great-uncles, or about the parents of the grandparents; or, at the other extreme, their own children. In some cases where T1 is a young adult but has siblings or cousins who are older than him/her, the children of the siblings or cousins may be adults in their own right. If the respondent wishes to tell about these relations and knows enough to provide the information for these people, it should be collected.

¹⁵ This is my suggestion for the information that could be collected for inclusion on the chart. The items given here are based upon the collections of grids in industrialized societies. The actual items chosen for inclusion could be adapted in the light of discussion or considerations specific to the context of the country in which the family histories are being taken. I am aware that the recall of information that may seem routine, even basic facts such as age, could prove problematic or require special techniques to elicit (da Corta 2007).

¹⁶ For women, this may be 'housewife'. For either sex, it may be necessary to add a note that the 'most typical job' was in fact being out of work.

¹⁷ It may not be possible to reach a full quota of six interviews for a family if cooperating individuals available for interview cannot be found or if the grandparents are no longer living. If individuals cannot be found who match the quota, it could be permissible to substitute; for example great-aunts or great-uncles instead of grandparents. As well as theoretical sampling considerations, practical considerations also will affect which persons are actually picked – some people on the grid may be located thousands of kilometers away and, of course, not everyone will agree to an interview.

The selection of individuals after T1 is driven by theoretical sampling considerations, with the goal being to choose persons for interview who differ from those already picked; for example, if T1 was a young rural male with minimal education and no regular employment, the second young adult could be a young urban female in work who possessed more schooling if such a person was available and willing to be interviewed. It is important to have multiple interviews with people of different genders and differing positions, especially with a generational split in order to capture the potentially differing world views within the same family.^{18,19}

Subsequent interviews follow the same basic format as the interview with T1, with the chart being used as a framework upon which to 'hang' the interview discussion. The difference would be that later respondents are shown the current version of the chart and asked to verify its accuracy or add to it if details are lacking or incorrect. If different members of the family disagree about parts of the chart, these disagreements themselves may provide clues for the analysis of the family's history. Reasonable attempts should be made to procure accurate information and respondents are allowed to consult records or ask other family members. However, the core purpose of compiling the chart is as a device for structuring an interview. Lengthy searches for small bits of information or returning at a later date to fill in bits of the chart are not required unless the respondent insists. It may be that information for substantial parts of the chart will remain incomplete or questionable even after all interviews have been completed. This lack of information does not necessarily have to be seen as a failure but instead as important data in itself. Deciding what constitutes a true family is not a question with an obvious answer and the danger is that a definition of the family imposed externally by a researcher – 'nuclear', 'household', 'extended' or 'modified extended' – may not match the reality on the ground. In this case, where a maximal potential family is collected on the chart, missing information could be an indication that the true barriers to the family as an interacting entity have been encountered, probably with some specific reason for the break. An instance where this is likely to be the case is when parts of the family have moved away or migrated.²⁰

As well as providing a framework for the interviews, the 'social genealogy' charts themselves can provide a visual depiction of family structures across three or four generations. The information collected for the chart can be managed by logging it into any of a variety of 'genealogy' computer programmes available for people who wish to record their 'family trees'. While designed for the management of personal family information, these programmes contain facilities for recording and displaying specific facts such as the geographic, educational and employment information that would be collected for the chart. While the programmes may not be able to display a complete chart²¹, they can produce either a 'family group' of a Target individual, their spouse, the parents of both and their children or 'descendant' and 'ancestry' 'family trees' that, combined, would produce a complete chart that would display all the information recorded on the grids. The significant

¹⁸ Although the vexed question of whether these differing outlooks result from being born into different age cohorts or arise due to progression through the life course cannot be resolved completely without a true longitudinal design.

¹⁹ The referee who questioned my exclusion of children from the grid argues that 'interviewing young people significantly under 15 is possible, interesting, valuable, and, I would argue, crucial for understanding much of IGT poverty dynamics'. I note that the purposive sampling logic I apply also leads to child interviews. If this working paper eventually leads to fieldwork, the potential for interviews with children in the Target Individuals' families will need to be addressed – in terms of feasibility, strategy, training and ethics.

²⁰ Another example of this phenomenon occurs regularly in Northern Ireland where respondents who have a Protestant/Catholic mixed marriage in their family grids often know very little about relations located on 'the other side' of the sectarian divide.

²¹ It may be possible to locate a commercial programme that could display a complete chart or adapt a programme to do so.

point is that the intricate information collected for the grid can be managed easily and reliably through a 'genealogy' computer programme, even if there have been complications such as multiple spouses. The information could be logged in at the point of interview or, if that was not feasible, brought back to an office computer and recorded there.

In societies where high fertility is the norm, the total number of individuals appearing on a chart easily can run to a hundred or more. Even a small number of family history charts can generate thousands of 'cases' equivalent in number to a large-scale survey. Coding the geographic, educational and employment history information for the individuals in the charts and then putting it into transition grids will provide 'quasi-quantitative' depictions of processes of geographic and inter-and intra-generational mobility that remarkably mirror those found through the analysis of probability social mobility surveys of the general population. For instance, the author came to Northern Ireland at the beginning of his career to carry out a national survey of social mobility that employed quantitative retrospective life histories as its core method.²² The main parameters established by this quantitative study as setting the context of social mobility in Northern Ireland (for example, the movement from agriculture to urban manual labour and a generation later from manual to non-manual occupations or the greater tendency for Catholics to use education as a route to upward mobility) clearly appear in transition matrices derived from Northern Irish family history charts. (Miller, 2001) Similar correspondences have been observed by the author for Estonia, where the traumas of the Second World War and the effects of the Soviet occupation dominate²³, and for Malaysia, where the contrast between a Malay pattern of rural to urban movement from agriculture to industry and subsequently public services and a Chinese three-generation pattern of immigration from mainland China as labourers and then into dominance of 'late modern' financial and professional institutions via entrepreneurial business in the 'middle' generation is clear. (Andorka has reported similar parallels between family grid information and more traditional statistical material on Hungarian social mobility during the early and mid-twentieth century (Andorka, 1997).)

I am not pointing out these correspondences to argue that qualitative family history chart data can or should replace the information collected by probability sample-based surveys but rather to reiterate the basic validity of the theoretical sampling procedures used to select households for family history interviews. While not statistical representations of the general population, the patterns found in family history charts are a case of 'the macro revealed in the micro' which do provide valid representations of the general society.

c. Interviews within the family

As explained above, multiple interviews are carried out across several generations within the same family, with the construction of the family history chart being used to provide a framework for the interview. The items collected for each person's 'box' and the need to construct the chart across three generations provides a natural lead-in to the interview. In the interview the topics of geographic mobility, fertility, education, work and jobs and how these have changed over time for the family are likely to arise in the first instance. This initial chart-based discussion would then move into a more standard semi-structured interview format in which the interviewer would work to a list of pre-determined topics for which

²² The problems and issues that arose when carrying out quantitative analyses of these data led naturally to a crossover to biographical research and the collection of family histories where many of the same issues apply.

²³ The Estonian family histories were collected as part of a course taught in 1995. I expect repeating the same exercise today would find evidence in the chart-derived data of effects of the economic transformation and the restitution of property at the end of the Soviet period.

avenues of questioning and probes had been established beforehand.²⁴ If this method was adopted, the topics covered and the potential avenues of questioning about them would need to be determined in consultation with the CPRC and the local research team but it is envisioned that relating to the intergenerational transmission of poverty they probably would cover issues such as:

- inheritance of land or other resources;
- 'windfalls' or disasters that have affected the family;
- the allocation of resources within and between nuclear or household units;
- parent/child patterns of support, also patterns of support between grandparents and children and other pairing of relations, such as uncle/nephew-niece, cousins;
- positive and negative feelings about these patterns of support;
- the interaction between points in the life course and the allocation of resources (especially for children);
- the role of gender in the allocation of resources;
- special obligations for women arising from their domestic and motherhood roles.

If the individuals targeted for interview have been chosen on the basis of coming from households that have either moved into or out of chronic poverty or remained in poverty, this panel-based quantitative information could be used to focus the qualitative questioning. For instance, an individual who appears from the quantitative information to be in a household that has moved into poverty could be questioned first to confirm whether this categorisation is correct and, if so, then about the events or mechanisms that led to the drop (e.g. did the fall into poverty come about due to an abrupt turn of fate or misfortune or did it come about more gradually due to an overall 'ratcheting' or 'sawtooth' decline?²⁵ (Davis, 2006)).

While conducting multiple interviews within the same family does raise some special ethical issues (see below), an upper-secondary or tertiary-educated interviewer with a social science background who has been chosen for his/her reliability and given a brief background course in qualitative interviewing that includes an element of practical interviewing experience, followed by a thorough briefing should be able to carry out the fieldwork.²⁶ It would be essential that the briefing makes clear to the interviewers that the collection of the family history chart is more a means to facilitate the conduct of a discursive interview around the issues of the study than an end in itself. The interview team and the material they produce would need to be monitored, especially at the stage of the initial interviews, to ensure that these strictures are being observed.

The interviews should be recorded if possible and transcribed. Given that the analysis would be likely to include the participation of researchers located outside the country in which the fieldwork is taking place, consideration needs to be given to translating the text into English

²⁴ Note that, since the households which form the starting points for the family history interviews have come from a panel study, the research team will be able to access the information collected on the household by the quantitative study prior to beginning the qualitative interviews and would be able to use that information to inform the potential lines of questioning.

²⁵ That is, a series of drops or losses relieved by periods of recovery, but for which overall the trend is downward into poverty.

²⁶ The author has used the collection of 'social genealogy' charts followed by in-depth interviews as a teaching device with undergraduate students in Northern Ireland and Malaysia and with taught Master's students in Estonia. In all instances, the student interviewers by and large were able to carry out both the construction of the charts and the conduct of the qualitative interviews to a good standard after a briefing session.

Most students (but not all) chose to interview their own families. This gave them an advantage in obtaining access and cooperation but also a disadvantage in that students often reported that older family members would consider them still to be children and want to gloss over or hide family 'skeletons'.

with regard to its practicality, the cost and the effect that translation has upon the meanings in the interview material. If family histories are collected from several countries all under a single umbrella project, in order to facilitate comparative analysis between the research teams the transcripts should be entered into a standard CAQDAS package (a computer programme for the analysis and management of qualitative data) with, at a minimum, a basic coding into subject categories.

d. Ethical issues

Carrying out a series of linked interviews within a single extended family raises ethical issues to do with informed consent and confidentiality beyond those normally faced in qualitative interview research. It is standard ethical procedure to obtain informed consent from all qualitative interviewees. 'Informed' means that interviewees are made aware of their rights and the uses to which their material may be put, including issues such as: who will have access to the interviews; whether it is possible that they can be identified; whether the interviewees will be able to see or comment upon the interview transcripts or the analysis of them; stating that interviewees have the right to refuse to participate; whether they will be able to withdraw their cooperation at a later date. While informed consent must be obtained from each person interviewed during the collection of a family history, one should be aware that is unlikely to be possible (or, arguably, advisable) to obtain informed consent from all members of all three generations of the family. This could particularly become a dilemma if several potential interviewees in turn decide they do not wish to be interviewed so that in effect a portion of the family has refused to participate.

Interviewees also have a right to confidentiality – that, unless express consent is obtained beforehand and it is vital for the research, their identities and personal information will not be made public. It should be possible to 'anonymise' any public presentation of research results so that the identification of families or individuals is not possible.²⁷ However, maintaining confidentiality during the interviews within a family could pose confidentiality issues. While absolute confidentiality may be an ideal, a blanket assertion that nothing can be revealed about previous interviews might not be realistic. The people being interviewed latterly in a family will know of the previous interviews (if for no other reason than they will be shown the family chart that has been compiled in these previous interviews) and are quite likely to ask what their relations have said before (and about!) them or to have talked with those already interviewed about what was asked. There may be ongoing disputes or disagreements within the family that the interviewer could fall foul of²⁸ and it is entirely possible that a later interview may contradict directly something said earlier. Tact and care would be required to ensure that, if a line of questioning means that it is not possible to guarantee absolute confidentiality, the latter interviews do not incite or exacerbate tensions within the family. Playing one family member's account off against another's or embarking on a line of questioning that implicitly shows that another family member has revealed sensitive or embarrassing information cannot be done. Even if the interviewer is aware that a respondent is lying or holding back on a key issue, there may be no choice but to refrain from a line of questioning.

²⁷ Though, due to the large amount of specific detail, if research is being carried out in small villages it may be necessary to restrict the presentation of any family charts to a 'generic' chart that is a compendium of several actual families.

²⁸ In fact, these differences, about matters such as the allocation of resources, may be key points that an interviewer would want to follow up.

4. Analysis

The family history interviews will generate a 'social genealogy' chart for the family, but the core of the research would be the analysis of the multiple in-depth qualitative interviews that have been carried out with family members occupying different social statuses scattered across the generations of the family. The data would have been generated by semi-structured interviews where the central framework initially was the construction of the family history chart. Instead of a non-directed style of qualitative interviewing, the basic lines of questioning would have been set by the research team prior to fieldwork. Rather than an inductive 'grounded theory' approach, the rationale behind the analysis would be the critical evaluation of concepts and ideas. Serendipity and spontaneous new tangents always are possible in qualitative research but this research design would be anchored in concept-testing.

While individual interviews take place, a holistic approach would be followed in analysis in which the 'case' and the true unit of analysis would be the family. The likely structure of the analysis of a family would be a 'contrastive comparison' between a factual 'family history' and 'family stories' – the accounts given by the respondents during their interviews. In this mode of qualitative analysis, the 'family history' would be the factual accounts of events, positions and resources as constructed by the researchers.²⁹ This family history would be contrasted with the 'family stories' -- the ways the interviewees construct their personal tellings of these events, their relative positions and feelings about the allocation of resources and other family issues. That is, the basic analytical approach would be a comparison between established 'facts' and each family members' constructions of meaning. The contrastive comparison mode of qualitative interview analysis has been evolved by biographical researchers to deal with the problems of reflexivity and selective recall, memory loss, suppression (and outright falsehood) that affect in-depth qualitative interviews in general and life history interviews in particular. The 'history' is a construction of the facts related in the interview that comes as close as possible to the empirical 'truth'; this truth being arrived at by whatever means are possible, including close analysis of the interview account(s) and verification by external material if available. This truth is contrasted with the accounts given by the interviewees. It is essential to realise that the goals of this qualitative analysis would not be solely to arrive at a verified factual family history. The 'factual' family history would act as a point of contrast with the versions of reality related by the family members in their interviews. The ways in which the 'stories' told by the different members of the family differ or coincide would provide a more holistic insight into the multi-faceted reality of the family than the version coming from of the single account given by any single family member. Family disputes, differing perceptions or feeling about the allocation of resources, generational splits and the like could be highlighted by this approach. (For accounts of the 'contrastive comparison' mode of analysis applied to individual biographical interviews, albeit with a strong family component, see Wengraf (2001) and Rosenthal (2004).)

The analysis would have a strong time dimension. The selection of households for interview would be based upon whether or not they have moved in or out of chronic poverty over the time span of the quantitative panel study and the basic research interest, the intergenerational transmission of poverty, is by definition time-based. For instance, a striking feature of multi-generational family history charts is how, over periods of modernisation when the level of educational provision in a society is rising, a small amount of formal educational 'capital' in an early generation (such as a basic educational qualification) often has a 'multiplier effect' in latter generations of the same family, where the later generations show higher levels of educational attainment than that which is typical. One should note that the

²⁹ This 'factual' material would come from the final form of the 'social genealogy' chart, the research team's summative assessment of the veracity of the interview accounts and, if available, the original quantitative panel study data.

accounts of time given by the interviewees would in the main be retrospective but also can be expected to be prospective when they talk about their anticipations or hopes for the future. The construction of the charts and the contrasting interview accounts should also allow the analysts to establish the actual borders of the family, which may be tighter than the scope of the genealogical chart. Relatedly, the same information should help the research team establish whether there are certain members of the family who play key roles; e.g. 'matriarchs' or 'patriarchs', and whether there are signs that these roles are passed down across the generations.

It is anticipated that the theorisation of 'capitals' in a broadly conceived sense (already strong in the CPRC perspective, see Moore (2001) and (2005); Hulme and Shepherd (2003); Shepherd (2007)) will inform the analysis of the allocation and distribution of resources across the family and between generations. In this case, the research team may choose to apply Bourdieu's formal conceptualisation of 'capitals' – economic, cultural and social – and the mechanisms for the transmission and conversion of 'capital' from one type to another within the 'field' of the family and its intersection with other 'fields' such as the economy or the 'field' of power relations within a village (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) as a way of dealing with the idea of accumulation, loss, and transmission of family resources that is more flexible and nuanced than that of human capital theory. This perspective could be applied fruitfully to the family history interview material. (For its application to a western European nation, see Bourdieu *et al*, 1999.) The family history approach described above could act as a means of unifying the triangulated combination of quantitative household panel studies and qualitative life histories that the CPRC is planning to use as its core methods of investigating the IGT of poverty over the next four years.

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Appendix 1: The Basic Structure of a Family History Chart

