

Biographies of foster children

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1. Sample
2. Theoretical sampling
3. Analysis
4. Findings
5. First results

- About 100 biographical interviews with young adult former foster children
- Conducted in different projects (2007-2010; practical projects)
- we use these interviews now for theory generating research projects

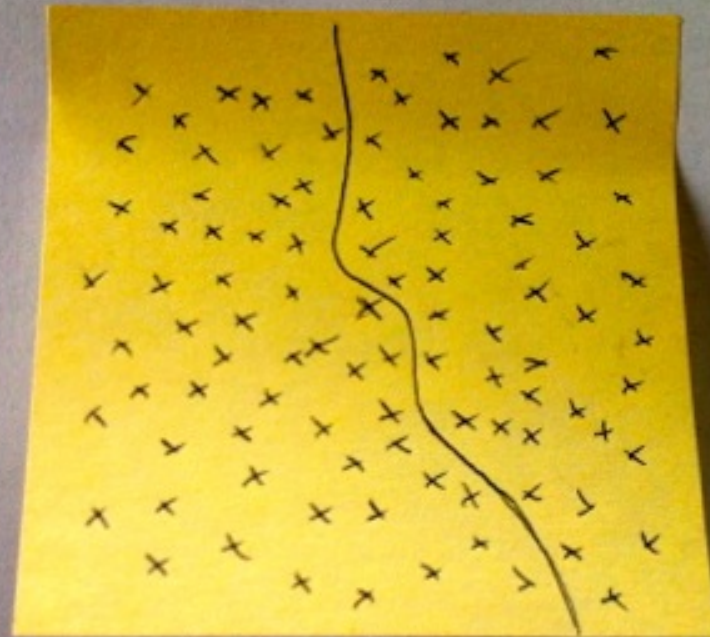
- Our question:
What makes the difference between biographies of women and men who feature very positive vs. very negative trajectories
EVEN THOUGH they shared the two characteristics:
a) they had a difficult start in life and
b) they have spent at least part of their life in a foster family

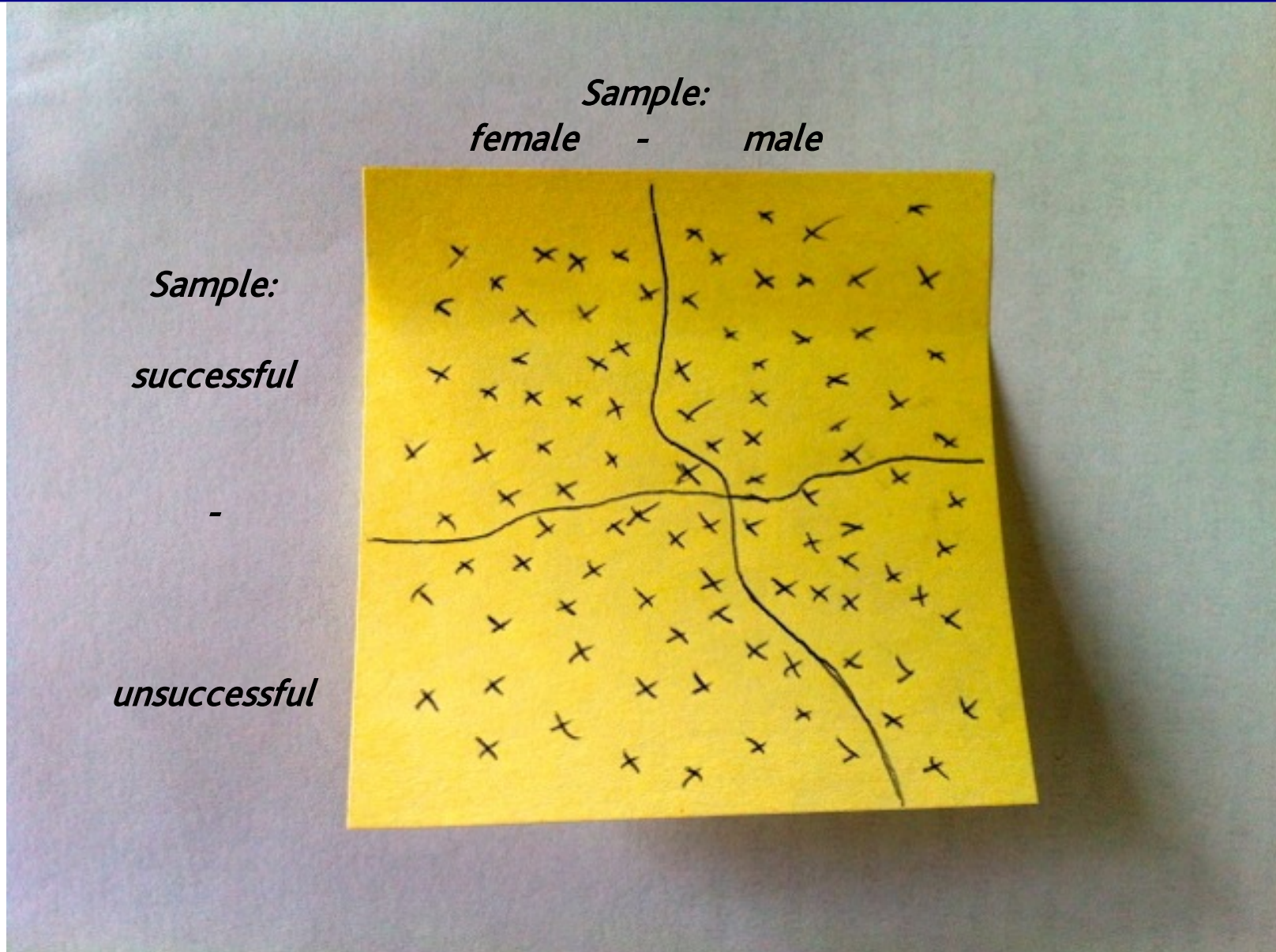
- Now we would like to present our approach...

*Sample:
„All in“*



Sample:
female - male

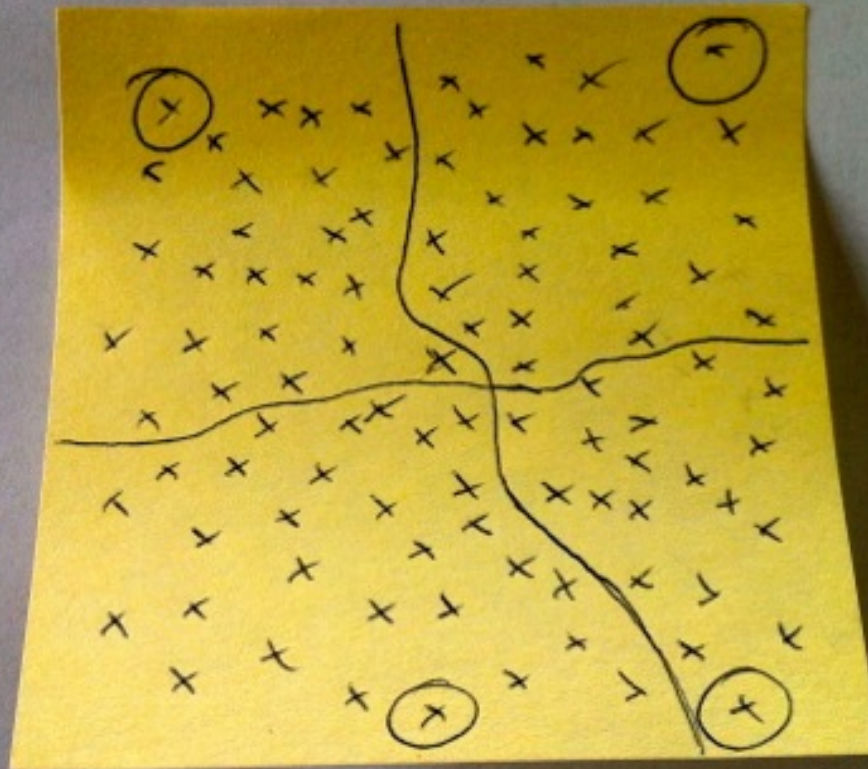


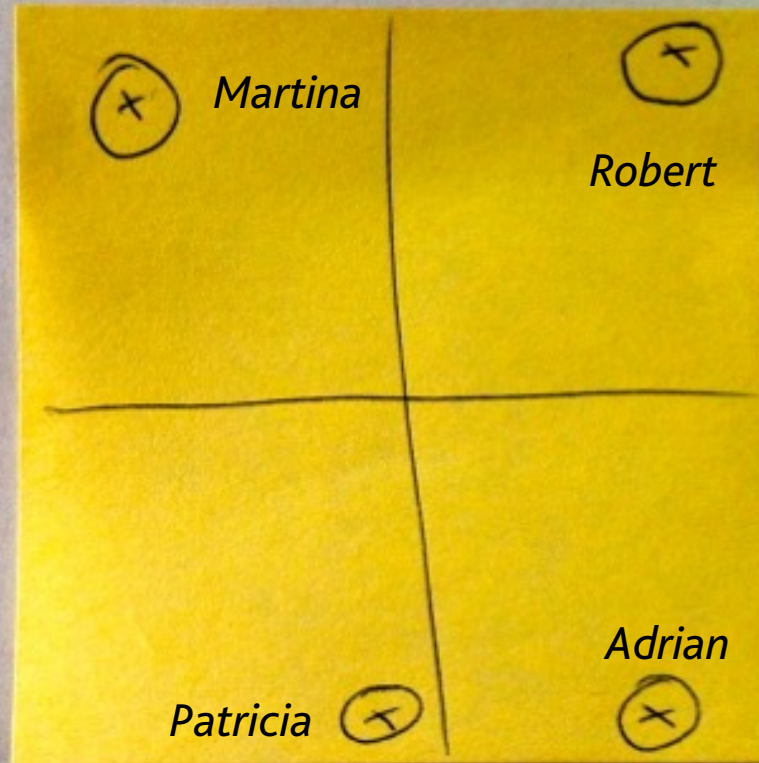


Sample:
female - male

Sample:
successful

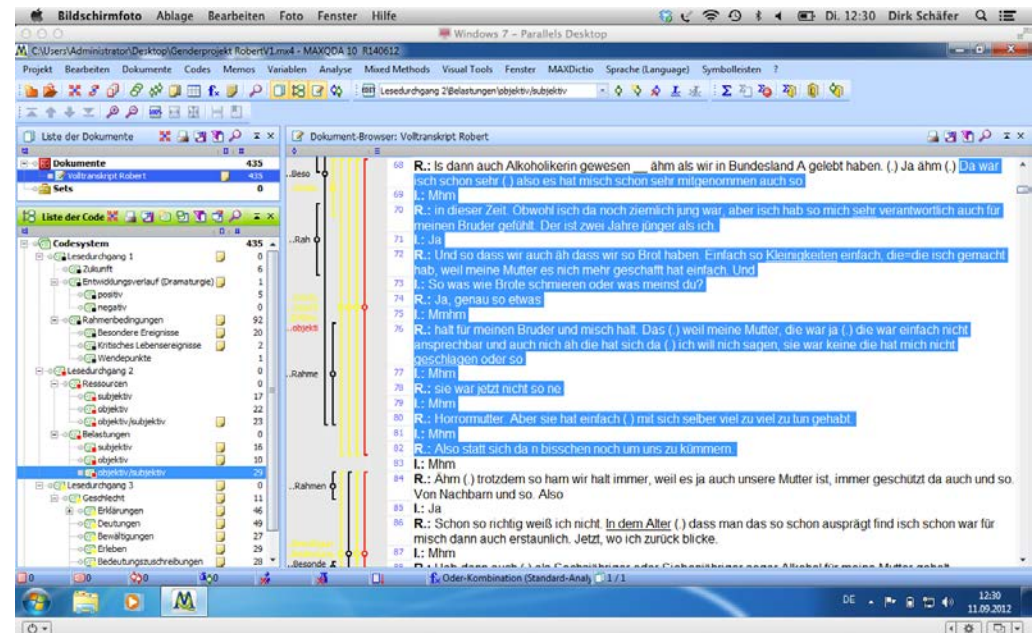
unsuccessful





Searching for these categories...

- liabilities and resources,
- Conditions and context of socialisation,
- critical life events and turning points,
- gender specific development tasks,
- gender specific perceptions,
- patterns of interpretation



The screenshot displays the MAXQDA 10 software interface. On the left, a 'Liste der Code' (Code List) is visible, showing a hierarchical structure of codes. The main window shows a transcript with highlighted text segments corresponding to these codes. The transcript includes dialogue between 'R.' (Robert) and 'L.' (Interviewer) about alcoholism, family, and socialization.

Code List (Liste der Code):

- CodeSystem (435)
 - Lesedurchgang 1 (0)
 - Zukunft (0)
 - Entwicklungsverlauf (Dramaturgie) (1)
 - positiv (5)
 - negativ (0)
 - Rahmenbedingungen (92)
 - Besondere Ereignisse (20)
 - Kritisches Lebensereignisse (2)
 - Wendepunkte (1)
 - Lesedurchgang 2 (0)
 - subektiv (17)
 - objektiv (22)
 - objektiv/subjektiv (23)
 - Belastungen (0)
 - subjektiv (18)
 - objektiv (10)
 - objektiv/subjektiv (23)
 - Lesedurchgang 3 (0)
 - Geschlecht (11)
 - Erfahrungen (46)
 - Deutungen (49)
 - Bewältigungen (27)
 - Erleben (29)
 - Bedeutungszuschreibungen (28)

Transcript Excerpt:

68 R.: Is dann auch Alkoholikerin gewesen... ähm als wir in Bundesland A gelebt haben. () Ja ähm () Da war
 ich schon sehr () also es hat mich schon sehr mitgenommen auch so
 69 L.: Mhm
 70 R.: in dieser Zeit. Obwohl ich da noch ziemlich jung war, aber ich hab so mich sehr verantwortlich auch für
 meinen Bruder gestellt. Der ist zwei Jahre älter als ich.
 71 L.: Ja
 72 R.: Und so dass wir auch äh dass wir so Brot haben. Einfach so Kleinkosten einfach, die die ich gemacht
 hab, weil meine Mutter es nich mehr geschafft hat einfach. Und
 73 L.: So was wie Brote schmerzen oder was meinst du?
 74 R.: Ja, genau so etwas
 75 L.: Mhmhm
 76 R.: halt für meinen Bruder und mich halt. Das () weil meine Mutter, die war ja () die war einfach nicht
 ansprechbar und auch nich äh die hat sich da () ich will nich sagen, sie war keine die hat mich nicht
 geschlagen oder so
 77 L.: Mhm
 78 R.: sie war jztz recht so ne
 79 L.: Mhm
 80 R.: Hornmutter. Aber sie hat einfach () mit sich selber viel zu viel zu tun gehabt
 81 L.: Mhm
 82 R.: Also statt sich da n bisschen noch um uns zu kümmern.
 83 L.: Mhm
 84 R.: Ähm () trotzdem so ham wir halt immer, weil es ja auch unsere Mutter ist, immer geschützt da auch und so.
 Von Nachbarn und so. Also
 85 L.: Ja
 86 R.: Schon so richtig weiß ich nicht. In dem Alter () dass man das so schon ausprägt find ich schon war für
 mich dann auch erstaunlich. Jetzt, wo ich zurück blicke.
 87 L.: Mhm
 88 R.: ...

Example for...

- Conditions and context of socialisation
- critical life events

„She [the mother] always took the door handles, closed the door of our room. And I remember when I was about 4 years old, yes, of course we were little children. And we started playing with the pocket lighters and suddenly the room started burning (.) My mother was drugged up to the eyeballs, lying in her bed, and my brother and me we were trapped in the flames (..). Yes, and then I had the idea to jump out of the window. We were pretty lucky to live on the first floor. Yes and after that I was taken into custody by the youth welfare for the first time, I was taken away from my mother and they brought me to a psychiatric hospital.“

Example for...

- conditions and context of socialisation,
- turning points,
- pattern of interpretation

„Yes and at the age of eleven, twelve, I really got lost (.) This is to say I was regularly in contact with drugs (.) later on heroin and ecstasy and things like that. And at that point everything went downhill. School didn't work, being a first offender. (..) At home nothing but stress (..) so, everything took its course.“

Our categories

- conditions of socialisation,
- liabilities,
- gender specific development tasks,
- gender specific perceptions,
- pattern of interpretation

„Back then I was very (.) well lets say I was distressed. Even though I was still pretty young, I felt very responsible for my younger brother. He is two years younger than I am. For example that we have bread. Little things like that, I was occupied by them, because my mother didn't succeed to do that anymore. My mother, she, yes (.) she was simply not responsive, also not (...) well she didn't beat me, that's not the way she was. She wasn't a horror - mother. But she had simply (.) much to much to do with herself. Instead of taking care for us.“

Definition of successful and unsuccessful biographical trajectories

- objective perspective vs. subjective perspective

Limits of the approach

- Variety of the life situations and conditions of socialization (obj)

Ambivalence towards own life experiences

There a always two sides: back then it was very severe - but it could have been worse. Actually I had good luck

Dependence on individual relations *With who do I compare?*

and in some cases „irrationale“ ideas for the future (subj)

When I come out of prison I will have the job of my dreams, I will be a wonderful father and reconcile my birth family

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The situations use to be much more multidimensional and complex then the criterias with which we chose the cases suggest

Strengths of the approach

- We clearly find factors that influence biographical trajectories in positive and negative ways

Factor that influence the biographical trajectory

- Continuity and discontinuity
(also the way unpreventable transitions are shaped)
- Quality of conditions of socialization
(e.g. availability of important attachment figures/ agents of socialization and important systems of support/ institutions)
- Particular vulnerable life stages and and fragile developmental conditions
- Coping strategies and strategies for handling difficult situation which the person has acquired and which are available (also for development tasks which are particular for foster children)
- Individual validity and use of gender - stereotypic behaviour and coping-strategies (flexible vs. restrictive)

Thank you!

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National: <http://www.uni-siegen.de/pflegekinder-forschung>