

Biography and Society

BIOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY
RESEARCH COMMITTEE 38 OF THE ISA

NEWSLETTER / JUNE 2012

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
JUNE 2012

Dear colleagues,

In this newsletter we are happy to present the RC program at the ISA Forum Conference in Buenos Aires, together with manifold contributions and information. The organisational demands for the Forum Conference were quite challenging this time, all the more we are glad it is fixed now. The whole program is also available online at

<http://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2012/webprogram/start.html>

Thanks to the session organisers who suggested inspiring and relevant topics, we got many interesting paper proposals, even more we could include. Sadly, some who were accepted to be part of the program could not gather enough funding for the trip to Buenos Aires. We hope it will work out next time! Gladly, many managed to register, and hopefully also will manage to travel to Buenos Aires.

In some of the altogether thirteen sessions time for presentation and discussion might be rather short. However, there will be ample opportunities to meet and talk also informally 'in between' the sessions.

We would like to invite all participants to take part also in the RC Business Meeting which will take place on Friday, August 3, 2:30 – 4:00 pm. That day in the evening there will be a 'come together' in a restaurant. Everybody is welcome to join!

In order to better meet the growing organisational tasks of the RC, Michaela Koettig has taken the responsibility for composing the newsletter with the help of Andreas Kempf, one of our board members – thanks a lot to them! In the following editorial Michaela and Andreas will introduce the content of this newsletter.

Irini Siouti was busy with the revision of our statutes requested by the ISA. We will share and discuss the changes during the business meeting in Buenos Aires. Presumably we have to vote on these changes during the next World Congress in Japan. Additionally, Irini takes care for setting up a new bank account and updating our membership list which also keeps her quite busy. In order to facilitate her work, please keep in mind to renew your membership and let her know about all relevant changes, especially your e-mail addresses.

Well, so far some news from our presidency-team.

I am very much looking forward to meet many of you in Buenos Aires, and wish all of you a peaceful, productive and enjoyable summertime!

Roswitha Breckner
www.soz.univie.ac.at/roswitha-breckner/
President of the RC Biography & Society

EDITORIAL
JUNE 2012

Dear colleagues,

This year's first newsletter is framed by two major conferences taking place in the second half of the year. Highly expected to stimulate lively debate and encourage further research on the relation between Biography and Society they are on the one hand side the Second ISA Forum of Sociology held in August this year in Buenos Aires. At the beginning of our newsletter you will find the detailed program of our Research Committee (RC 38). On the other hand side it is the Mid-term Conference 2012 of the European Sociological Association taking place at the University of Łódź in September. Under the heading Conference and Workshop announcements you will find also to this conference an overview of the sessions of the Research Network on Biographical Perspectives on European Societies (RN 03).

The main focus of the newsletter are three papers for discussion covering a wide range of topics. Priscila Azevedo draws our attention to the phenomenon of foster children in Brazil. Based on ethnographic fieldwork she analyzes the relationship between parents and their foster children and discloses how foster children could find ways to "escape anonymity and enjoy unquestionable distinction". The second paper, instead, has a stronger methodological focus. Again empirically grounded Noga Gilad asks "How many Cases [are enough] for a Secondary Grounded Theoretical Sample?" As an answer to this question she develops in her contribution a so-called "Rainbow Model" to provide a secondary extensive sample of a case. The third paper submitted by Agnieszka Satola deals with various paradoxical processes experienced by elderly Polish women working irregularly in German households. Referring to the concept of "potential space" she concludes that these experiences could lead to processes of biographical learning which might help these migrant women to escape situations of suffering.

As in the previous issue we again present a country report on biographical research. This time Brian Roberts gives an insight into biographical research in the UK.

The final section of the newsletter is dedicated to incoming information on new publications. In this context we again would like to invite you cordially to send us information on your current publications.

As teaser for the next newsletter probably published in November we would already like to announce South America and the Second ISA Forum of Sociology in Buenos Aires as main topic of the forthcoming issue.

Enjoy the newsletter and have a nice summer.

Andreas Kempf (andreas.kempf@gesis.org)
Michaela Köttig (koettig@fb4.fh-frankfurt.de)

Some further important topics:

We ask all of you to inform us about a change in your address, and in particular in your e-mail address.

Membership fees

Please remember to pay your membership fee:

Regular members US\$ 40

Students and members from countries B and C
(see ISA regulations) US\$ 20

Bank account: Michaela Koettig
Sparda-Bank-Hessen, Germany
bank code: 500 905 00
account number: 101 548 312

For bank transfer of members from European countries
IBAN: 13 500 905 000 101 548 312
BIC: GEN ODE F1 S12

The deadline for the next newsletter is the End of October 2012

You can send us

- a short paper (3-7 pages) on a topic you are currently working on
- a presentation of your current project
- some reflection on your experiences of teaching biographical approaches and methods
- reports or some notes about conferences you have attended
- general reports about activities in the field of biographical research in your institution, university, country, continent
- interesting call for papers for conferences, workshops, summer schools
- new publications from you, also in your respective native language
- any other thought or information you like to share.

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- Noga Gilad (Israel): How Many Cases for a Secondary Grounded Theoretical Sample?
The "Rainbow" Model of Involvement Levels
- Agnieszka Satola (Germany): Being exploited versus becoming autonomous: the paradox of transnational migration of elderly Polish women working irregularly in German households

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Research Committee on Biography & Society – RC38

Program (<http://www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/rc/rc.php?n=RC38>)

Joint Session 1829 (with RC05, hosted by RC05): Where are you from? Experiences of exclusion, marginalization and racism, Part I

Wednesday, August 1, 2012: 10:45 AM - 12:15 PM

Session organizers: Helma Lutz and Roswitha Breckner / Chair: Helma Lutz

30186	Karim MURJI	k.murji@open.ac.uk	Unrooted biographies/unexpected reconnections
26176	Alice FELDMAN, Ireland / UK	Alice.feldman@ucd.ie	Lives in green, white and black: Whiteness, national identity and anti-racism in Ireland
16330	Lena INOWLOCKI, Germany	inowlocki@soz.uni-frankfurt.de	Closure and opening in asymmetrical communication about one's belonging
9384	Laura ODASSO, Italy	laura.odasso@misha.fr	Between silent resistance and power of action: "I am ... not I come from"
20478	Anna RANSIEK, Germany	aransie@uni-goettingen.de	Between trivialization and accusation – different patterns of experiencing racism in Germany
28550	Christina SCHRAMM, Costa Rica	christina_schramm@yahoo.de	Afro-indigenous subjectivity as an art of survival: "I am black, Indian and when I get angry I come out of the devil"
17418	Laura MACHAT-FROM, Sweden	laura.machat-from@liu.se	Still another after forty years? Negotiating identifications with migrationship and old age

Session 2147: Biography and ethnography

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Session organizer: Catherine Delcroix / Chair: Andreas Kempf

9396	Laura ODASSO, France	laura.odasso@misha.fr	Giving a three dimensional form to biography
12493	Priscila AZEVEDO, Brazil	pri-sazevedo@gmail.com	La biographie sociologique : le cas des "filhos de criação"
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			tropolis
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23124	Irini SIOUTI, Germany	siouti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de	Doing biographical analysis in a transnational context. reflections on biographical research, transmigration and ethnography
17089	Andreas Oskar KEMPF, Germany	andreas.kempf@gesis.org	Doing "biographical fieldwork". combining ethnographic field research with biographical analysis
19583	Elena ROZHDESTVENSKAYA, Russia	erozhdestvenskaya@hse.ru	Visualisation of identity in context of e-interview
29576	Minna RUOKONEN-ENGLER, Germany	ruokonen-engler@soz.uni-frankfurt.de	"Bodies that matter": Analyzing biographies as embodiments of the discursive
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17295	Vicki Harman, UK	v.harman@rhul.ac.uk	Gender, 'ideals' and body image in ballroom and latin American dancing
3112	Kathy Davis, Netherlands	K.E.Davis@uu.nl	Dance and biography: Or why should a biographical researcher be interested in tango?
4333	Beate Littig, Austria	littig@ihs.ac.at	Materiality and biography
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12051	Hsiao-Mei JUAN, Taiwan	hsiaomei.j@gmail.com	The inclusion/exclusion-process of the foreign brides in Taiwan
2961	Claudia VORHEYER, Switzerland	vorheyer@soziologie.uzh.ch	Same same but different – experience of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion

20032	Stéphanie CASSILDE, France	stephanie.cassilde@ceps.lu	Where are you from? The case of France
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22985	Henning Salling Olesen, DK & Maria Helena B. Abrahao. BR	hso@ruc.dk maria-helena@uol.com.br	The foundation of professional identities in life experience
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27979	Maria DE LIMA COSTA, BR	socorrolimacosta.ufvjm@gmail.com	Los Trabajadores decentes: Experiencias, tensiones, dificultades en la construcción de la profesión decente en las universidades....
22890	H. SALLING OLESEN, DK	hso@ruc.dk	Professional Identity and Gender
23091	Cecilia LITICHEVER, Argentina	cecilialitichever@gmail.com	La construcción social de la exclusión: Un análisis desde la perspectiva de las trayectorias de jóvenes de sectores populares

PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

“Adoption à la Brazilians”: the foster children case

Priscila Azevedo¹

“It is as if a person was a prisoner, and he had not only the intention to escape, which would perhaps be attainable, but also, and indeed simultaneously, the intention to rebuild the prison as a pleasure dome for himself. But if he escapes, he cannot rebuild, and if he rebuilds, he cannot escape”.

(Franz Kafka, Letter to my father)

Introduction

When we arrive at a typical country house in the rural area of the south-east of Minas Gerais, Brazil, we are often welcomed by a helpful person, who lets us in and introduces us to the host family, makes and pours us some coffee but does not sit at the table with us; instead, he/she gets back to his/her chores and only returns when they are finished or any other job is requested. This person is not a maid, he/she is a foster child².

This kind of relationship dates back from a recent past (20th century) being frequently found in the countryside of Minas Gerais and still alive in the social imaginary from these regions. Foster children (“filhos de criação³”) are those at infant or early age (up to 4 years old) given away to other families, either well-off or not, for several reasons, which range from lack of financial support for nurturing to gratitude for a favour.

It is not an adoption case, as nothing is legalized. The families who welcome these children introduce them to society as their “child”, suppressing any distinction between them and their birth children. However, the relationship established between the parents and their foster children is completely different from the relationship between these parents and their birth children. Unlike these, foster children do not go to school or go for a walk or ride; they do not travel, have jobs or get married and never leave their homes. Their everyday life is forever devoted to the household chores and care for their parents until they die. However, such distinction in treating these children is not even mentioned, either by the family or the very foster children. The whole situation is seen as natural by both. The hard work which burdens these children, stealing their youth and studies or any possibility of autonomy and individuation, is never either mentioned or regretted. When asked whether a difference might exist between them and the birth children, all foster children promptly and cheerfully

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² The issues which involve this research are a product of the field research carried out during my Master’s Degree Course, between 2006 and 2007.

³ Native category.

replied: "Not at all! I'm a child of their own, as if I had been born from them!", in spite of their unfair treatment.

Field research took three months, during which I stayed in the two towns mentioned in the study. Ethnographical notes of the cultural aspects of the towns, apart from interviews with the local people bearing some or no relation to the foster children were key to the contextualization and understanding of the particularities of the relationship between these children and their foster families. Due to the in-depth feature of the interviews, the research was focused on the life stories of eight foster children (five women and three men⁴, aged between 20 and 94 years old), although other cases were found.

The triad of recognition

The key role that the fostering family plays in the life of foster children is evident in all cases. Contrary to their later return to their birth parents, as Claudia Fonseca (2006) pointed out in her study on "children's move" in popular neighbourhoods in Brazil, the foster children analysed here never made contact with their birth families again, although they knew how to find them. In the literature, the social category which gets closer to that occupied by a foster child is the one called "share cropper". However, the share cropper is neither educated nor socialized by the family by which he is welcomed, as shown in the work by Maria Sylvania de Carvalho Franco (1997).⁵ This datum makes a huge difference, since the relationship established with the family is inscribed in the habitus of foster children. Without a full parametre for comparison, we may say that the relationship between foster parents and children is in the threshold of the relationship between adopting parents and children, employers and maids, slaveholders and slaves, although the differences are striking. There is no equity in treatment underpinning the adoption cases. There is no pay or recognition of their rights as in the case of a maid; after all, a foster child is a "child" and a child does not get any pay. The category "slave" is closer to that relationship⁶, except for a structural aspect: a slave knows he is a slave.

This research was aimed at accessing the practical and moral horizons which guides the actions of foster children, that is to say, their habitus, their "dispositions" in the sense of understanding what makes this act natural and allows for such submission so as to change a relationship based on exploitation into a relationship based on love. In this pursuit, the "philosophy of action" or "dispositional philosophy" by Pierre Bourdieu was used as theoretical framework, but under the critical and revalidating view of Bernard Lahire on the possibility of flexibilising the habitus and their "doubled" or "incorporated" version of the social aspect in the individual, which does not reduce him/her to his/her

⁴ It is worth noting the disparity among the female cases in contrast with the male cases under the same conditions. This aspect is explained by the female children themselves who were interviewed, as the following extract shows: "my parents preferred a girl because the housework is a woman's job". This aspect was not considered in the research. Now in my doctoral studies, I devote myself to this and other issues then overlooked.

⁵ Two great Brazilian novels, "Dom Casmurro" by Machado de Assis and "São Bernardo" by Graciliano Ramos had already shown the image of the share cropper in the Brazilian rural scenario by the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century respectively.

⁶ In "Sobrados e Mucambos: decadência do patriarcado rural e desenvolvimento do urbano", Gilberto Freyre conveys the paternalist feature of the relationship between slaveholders and slaves.

social class, religion, “cultural stage” or sex. In this view, the innovative methodological device proposed by Lahire⁷ was used as a research tool. The notion of dignity that Charles Taylor developed from the moral ontology “The Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity (1989) and the “Essay on the gift” by Marcel Mauss (1924) were also used.

While he/she lives with the fostering parents, the foster child’s everyday life follows a linear trajectory, as they do not take part in any other context of action apart from that of the family, except for the church; they rarely or never go to school or have friends other than their foster brothers and sisters and they do not have a job, go out or travel. They spend a life devoid of consumption, leisure, vanity, ambition and so on. The fostering family are the only source of socialization, both primary and secondary ones. Due to knowing the poor background of their birth family, foster children ascribe all they are to the fostering family and often conceive them as a privilege. The main dispositions which form the habitus of foster children were made by the relationship with the fostering family in the very childhood and remained unchanged throughout life, namely: gratitude, helpfulness, acceptance, resignation, obedience, abnegation, altruism and submission. In all cases, the fostering family brought them up under the belief that “if it weren’t for them, perhaps they wouldn’t even be alive” and expect compensation in return for the “help” given, while stressing love is the core of the relationship, exactly in the pattern of “symbolic violence”. This reciprocation is given through obedience and unconditional submission to the fostering family, which reveals the recognition by the foster children for the “gift” received. However, nothing is made clear; everything works in accordance with the “gift returned”, which explains the absence of revolt, indignation or even dissatisfaction by foster children. It is, according to Bourdieu, a “doxic” submission of the dominated ones to the social order framework from which their mental structures derive. On the other hand, by recognizing the gift through unconditional submission, the foster child gets recognition from the family. According to Taylor, the recognition from those around us lays the foundation for dignity of the self, and in this case for identity as well, since foster children do not take part in other contexts, from which they could achieve “attitudinal” respect in the sense developed by Taylor⁸.

It is an extremely intricate “game” whose “keystone” is represented by society which helps legitimise the relationship of exploitation and submission established.

The towns where the research was carried out are small and provincial, their main traditions keep the characteristics of a rural life, a significant part of the population live in the country and the relationship between the town and the city is intense. In both towns a religious stoicism is predominant apart from a “magicised” Catholicism: blessing, prayers, superstitions, witchcraft and so on. All these and other beliefs “working” with a cause-effect connection closely related to their everyday lives. The social organization relies on Bourdieu’s notion of “social capital of personal relations” and all the inhabitants know one another directly or indirectly. The surname, for example, plays a key role in the relationships: courtesy and hostility relations are outlined from it.

⁷ See Lahire (2004).

⁸ The principle of dignity, as defined by Taylor, refers to the characteristics by which we think about ourselves as deserving or not the respect from the others around us. It is not only “active” respect, that is to say, respect for our rights, but, above all, “attitudinal” respect, which implies recognition, admiration by the people.

In a first moment, some people interviewed in the society expressed compassion towards the abnegation shown by foster children. However, soon after, they praised them for their submissive behaviour towards their fostering family. "He's treated like a slave, but he never walks out on his fostering family", "It's pitiful to see how much they work...", "Not even the birth children were so loving and caring towards their parents as they were...", "He's a very nice person; always willing to help." Other people justified their relationship with the family by the argument that a child is supposed to help his/her parents, especially the foster child, as "foster care is a choice, which might not have been made", according to a fostering mother. "The parents look after their children so that later the children look after their parents. This is even truer for foster children, because fostering a child is a choice."

The recognition from society under these conditions renews the dispositions acquired by foster children through family relationships. It is exactly because it is a kind of relationship which might not exist in the eyes of the society, in case the foster children did not "want" (as if it was only a matter of wanting) that it gains even more importance. In spite of some changes which have taken place, resulting from increased urbanization which significantly altered practices and customs, the image of the foster child as someone devoted and submissive to the fostering family is preserved in the social imaginary from these towns. Breaking away from the fostering family would imply in a doubled loss of recognition, both at family and social levels.

Conclusion

At first, this relationship of submission and exploitation is explained by the ontological complicity between the subjective and objective structures, that is to say, between habitus and field. However, we cannot overlook the moral issues which legitimise and support this relationship. They are the meaning of identity and especially of dignity resulting from the sense of family membership which inexorably keep foster children in the "game". Dignity, in this case, forms the *illusio* in the family field. It is this moral device which preserves and warrants the continuity of the game. Without it, a change in the objective structure would cause a break in the complicity with the habitus and therefore a break in the *illusio*. The changes and "biographical breaks" in the life of foster children, like the graduation of their foster brothers and sisters as doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc., their marriage and subsequent leaving, the death of a parent, the birth of their "nephews and nieces", their moving out, their contact with the new neighbourhood, their marriage and birth of children after their parents' death and so on were not enough to form new dispositions. Even before new contexts, dispositions were preserved. Why was it so? The strength of dispositions cannot be denied. Apart from that, the moral apparatus which was continuously updating the constituted dispositions and supporting the submissive relationship – not only with the fostering family but also with the family they built after their foster parents died – prevented a break in the game or the formation of new dispositions.

Without violating the internal logic in this field through an excessively exogenous reading, it is possible to change the perspective in viewing foster children in an exclusively passive position and noting how active they are within the family and social relationships, which does not at all mean they are responsible for their very submission. As said before, the towns where the research was performed

are rather small, everybody knows one another directly or indirectly and the social capital plays a structural role in the relationships. The category of “foster child” is filled with a “social mission” (look after their parents until they die), known to everybody and therefore enjoying what we might call “distinction”, exactly in Bourdieu’s use of the term, however paradoxical it may seem. Social recognition results from the shared concept of foster children as “special people, chosen by God”, due to their apparently unconditional submission to the family. In one of the cases analysed, for example, a foster daughter was referred to as a “nice person” who, because of that, had been chosen by God to receive His “messages” and for possessing “the gift of premonition and speech”. This daughter, as well as the other cases studied, had free access to all social classes due to their self-reported and socially shared beneficent status. Very often in the interviews the foster children stressed this status, as well as the privileges resulting from it. In this view, what so inexorably keeps them in the game is not so implicit. Social recognition is noticeable, as well as its causes. Aware of the “symbolic capital” they own (this “capital of reasons for existence” as Louis Pinto, 2000, p. 140, wisely defined), foster children escape anonymity and enjoy unquestionable distinction. Therefore, the issue of submission goes beyond the power of habitus or the complicity between habitus and field, and reaches the domain of morals, of reflexivity, of the “struggle for recognition” as one of its “ultimate concerns”.

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How Many Cases for a Secondary Grounded Theoretical Sample?

The “Rainbow” Model of Involvement Levels

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Recently, a stimulating paper has been distributed among qualitative scholars; asking “how many interviews for a qualitative research is enough” (Baker & Edwards, 2012)? While the supposedly liberal non-committing response was an open “it depends”, the paper’s own structure demonstrated a quite pragmatic interpretation of “it depends” oriented upon formal and instrumental considerations. Thus the meaning behind arguments such as ‘it depends’ is not self evident, but rather a matter of discussion.

Clearly the initial meaning of “it depends” depends upon who you are asking. So what does it mean: “Who?” Ostensibly, the paper showed us who it was asking. And indeed, the paper was based upon a written survey distributed among distinguished experts of the academia and “early career” scholars. Thus already here we could observe the tendency to reproduce authoritative voices: the vast majority of the sample consisted of experts (nearly 3 times as much as the “Early career” stage, 14 as compared to 5 cases). Besides, the fact that most universities mentioned resided in the US and a few in Europe, exemplified orientation on the academic hegemonic order in both professional and in socio-cultural terms. Finally, the results have been quite revealing, too: most of the report consisted of the original notes (the ‘primary data’) while the conclusions’ section had been very short and general. Ostensibly, by providing the original voices the report has been very ethic. But the fact that it neither analyzed the data nor attempted to offer a synthesis produced a report not very analytical.

This short example alludes to a wider question: how do we address the diversity, sources of similarity and difference among our “informants” in the field in contemporary ways and how are they to be reflected in our research reports? How do we acknowledge their singularity? Should we refer to the cases strictly as themselves or as representatives of a-priori existing groups?

Initially, the Grounded Theory’s forefathers Glaser and Strauss have argued “it depends”, too, but they requested attributing the differences to theoretic requirements rather than to concrete instrumental needs alone. In fact, they introduced a new style and principles of sampling, suited for the specific requirements of the qualitative approach better than the conventional statistic sampling procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instead of representing the differences in the field according to

their statistical distribution; (reproducing thus the common factors), they claimed that qualitative analysis is interested in highlighting the internal sources of diversity of the field. In that respect, they suggested to concentrate on comparing the differences among the sub-groups in the field: on maximal or minimal differences, "it depends".

It is established that the initial phase of the research is 'data collecting', i.e. collecting and interviewing cases. How do we proceed from this stage towards analysis? According to the grounded theory, the analysis begins already with the interviewing phase. Thus, after a global evaluation of the preliminary findings particular cases are selected for a second, extensive phase of analysis (Rosenthal, 1993). It is often this secondary set of cases from which we draw our examples and illustrate our thesis in the final manuscript. So these cases have to illuminate our points and demonstrate the new insights we have gained during our analysis. We don't want our reader to get lost inside all the details, at least not without offering a final coherent synthesis connecting all details back together and to the emerging theory. In other words, we need to consider again: "how many interviews are enough".

But if interviews are to be selected according to theoretically relevant reasons then the question is not only "How many" but also "Which?" Of course, every scholar should develop her/his own model according to her/his own (empirically grounded) theoretical considerations and in fact a lot of evidence has already accumulated for this phase. But problems emerge and scholars offer suggestions how to solve them. Yet different scholars acknowledge different problems. I would like to discuss the nature of these different perspectives and offer a Rainbow multidimensional model of sampling that will help taking into account the different aspects of diversity and connect them together.

Let's begin with the Biographic Method's founding category: the hierarchal difference between authority "from above" and "ordinary people" from below (Bertaux, 1981; Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958). We have been told so often about "our society, our culture", they claim. But we should become critical of that unitary voice. Instead of a shared story about 'our culture', it is actually a story constituted by the authorities "from above" and should be contrasted with voices of "ordinary fellows" from "below". That is since different positions in the social hierarchy constitute typical different 'voices', perspectives, or following Bakhtin, discursive "accents" (Bakhtin, 1981).

Society's unitary image should thus be replaced with a dichotomy. While many scholars attempt to reconstruct the discourse only "from below" or only "from above", the idea of maximal comparison is to compare both levels and thus reconstruct a multidimensional structure of society.

But apparently categorization expands in more than one dimension, as another critical voice informs us. Evaluating people only according to their hierarchic position in society represents a particular frame of reference. By emphasizing the institutional dimension, ethnic and other sources of cultural differences are naturalized. Thus Feminist and Post-Colonial approaches challenge the existing social order as constituted "from the (social) center". What we may consider as "better" or "worse" may be merely culturally different. Indeed, they argued, social order should be critically deconstructed from the peripheries (Fox, 1991; Shlasky & Alpert, 2007). In contemporary terms, for example, these differences are attributed to nations ('Americans' vs. 'Hispanic' or 'Afro-Americans' in the US (Rosenthal & Koettig, 2009), or 'Italians' and 'Germans' vs. 'Latvians' and 'Estonians' in Europe (Domecka, 2011; Miller, 2011; Schuetze & Schroeder-Wildhagen, 2011). But this dimension may be misleading

too. What do we mean when we describe someone as “German” or “Latvian”, “White/European American,” “Afro-American” or “Hispano-American”? Is it merely informational (from where the person is) or evaluative (“How” one “is”)? In contrast to the ethos of critical discourses attempting to give voices to silent minorities, the latter case may employ essentialist notions regarding individuals!

Thus, when trying to track down these categories, ostensibly being as familiar as the sunshine, they may produce new sources of confusion as the sun beams. Does the ‘socio-political’ axis reflect the professional institutional or cultural axes? Does the ‘geo-political’ axis reflect the social or geographic attributes? Is it a personal or collective component?

Apparently, each two are linked together; each dimension mirrors the other (Kemp, 1999). Like the misleading sunbeams we see in one moment change into another vision in a second, it depends upon the object the sun beam is breaking against. This, for example, is the case of political leaders (top on the “Role” axis). Often they belong also to privileged groups such as White Males of European descent (in terms of the socio-political “cultural” axis) (Herzog, 2007; Sampson, 1993). While the quantitative approach demands “controlling the variables” it actually ignores the analytic implication of this structure. The qualitative approach instead recognizes the power the case has as actually deriving from the accumulating sources of power available to it from these particular social resources. But reflecting the accumulating sources of privilege may be easier than opposite positionings. How would we represent the different cases situated at different role, cultural and geographic “boundaries”? The qualitative analysis needs models that accumulate rather than segregate, since if we isolate these components we will not be able to provide useful insight into the structural singularity of the case, respectively the type.

Consequently, we realize that a person is positioned in the social universe in a multidimensional model-like structure. Like the rainbow, it is a very fragile image screened against the background of the text. Indeed, when we select and choose our interlocutors, we are influenced by the reflection of this multi-dimensional image of society in the singular case. If we don’t have a consistent way to work with it, we might be overwhelmed by its numerous implications and get caught inside the web; reducing the possible coherent contribution of our analysis.

How Many Stages are detailed enough?

But recognizing that self-positioning in space and society can be illustrated along three dimensions is not enough. Indeed we need also to reconsider each axis for itself. Criticism against social dichotomist images has already emerged in the former century. We can’t talk about “center” and “peripheries” as two distinct spatial points but rather as two imagined ends of a continuum. For example, expanding the spectrum can be by perceiving a middle “third-space” in the geo-political dimension (Soja, 1996). Are three positions enough or still too little? As before, we are reminded of the magical words “it depends”. It depend how many typical points reflecting typical structural differences we can find on the “ladder”.

Yet it is my contention, that if we describe the self-positioning of the case upon these three axes; and when we describe enough such cases as they are positioned upon this discursive network, we can provide a quite parsimonious yet multi-vocal description of our findings, relieving us of the need to try and account for “all sources of variety in society”. Instead we can limit ourselves to a few well-

detailed cases with a clear reference to their theoretical relevance as far as the sampling is concerned, and leave enough space to the analytic consequences in terms of elaborating their 'voices'. In other words, we can justify more easily and coherently which cases are selected for the presentation, and spare some room also for discussing the theoretical consequences of these analyses.

The Rainbow Model for the Secondary Extensive Sample of the Case

Quite often we are fascinated by many of our interviewees, yet simultaneously each one is not only good-enough to be included, but also not-good-enough to be included: i.e. one is not so "typical" according to our initial understanding of the field. It is my contention that this gap precisely is what we in the qualitative approach are seeking for. So what we actually miss is a good functioning multi-dimensional model to help us process all types and sources of similarities and differences between these cases. This will help facilitating a sample small enough to provide us with both: a good contact with the human being 'behind the case' (that means not too typical that it becomes stereotypical), and simultaneously the ability to contain a good collection of these cases. These cases should illustrate the 'entire' spectrum that emerged in the analysis; helping us to generate a new theory, instead of merely repeating the stories of a few quite interesting idiosyncratic cases.

In view of the former categories the questions can now be:

1. How many cases are enough to demonstrate the entire spectrum?
2. How can we select the 'appropriate' particular cases that may demonstrate both typical uniqueness one from the other (limiting repetitions) and typical sources of continuity (which make sense of possible similarities)?

According to the discussion above, each case selected has to be considered in view of its potential location on each of the three axes: 'institutional', geo-political and socio-'cultural'. How would we determine such location of the concrete case on such imagined axis, and how would we describe the accumulated result of the three? I shall discuss it illustrated by the results of my study (Gilad, forthcoming). Five cases were revealed as enough to demonstrate an entire spectrum. Five cases seemed not too little and not too much from an analytical perspective. This number also resulted from the empirical findings. Let's develop it step by step.

The geopolitical axis was dictated by the logic of the Settlement's project (Tzaban, 1983). In order to appropriate the controversial Territories, settlements were established west-east along roads extending from Israel's metropolis towards the border with Jordan. Thus a symbolic axis was constructed extending between the project's periphery (near the 1949 "green line") and its center (the Palestinian "hinterlands"). Thus, I selected five cases located one after the other in the most straightforward way.

However, it turned out that although this dimension is explicitly formulated in the project's literature and reproduced also in scholarly texts, in oral interviews it was not enough to account for possible differences in the voices. Only with regards to the second ('Institutional') axis did each voice and their accumulation make more sense. In a second thought, this axis seemed self-evident too: the more a person is positioned in a higher position the more the voice resembles the formal discourse.

(The crucial role of the third axis evolved only gradually as the analysis proceeded. But without deciphering it the model could not become complete.)

Each axis was thus reconstructed as typical steps between two imagined ends. Following the biographical dimension it became clear that we were dealing with different levels of involvement in the project. When the case demonstrated a similar position on all three axes (for example, “second” on each) the “accent” appeared as coherent and meaningful. Thus each case demonstrated a typical level of involvement in the project on the three axes:

1. “No Involvement in the Project”. The first level of involvement belongs to the so-called “Ordinary Person”, located at the project’s boundaries. Explicitly “it has no story to tell” regarding the settlement project, justifying its living “exactly on the green line”. Indeed, stories about involvement relate mostly to the geopolitical and socio-political hegemonic [Israeli] space than to the controversial space (Feige, 2002).

This claim corresponds with an issue raised by the Euroidentities project’s report in the 2011-1 Newsletter. Fearing from such “muted” encounters with “people with no story to tell” the team decided to begin their sampling already in the voluntary level of involvement, what I considered to be the second stage. It turned out that the first position of the supposedly “not involved” in the project did have although implicit statement. It belonged to descendents of the Israeli left. They emphasized their involvement in the hegemonic Zionist endeavor in order to normalize participating in the controversial project. In the meantime they constituted the project’s sociopolitical boundaries, and by constituting it they connected two parts of the society, within and beyond the green line, normalizing the latter.

2. “Voluntary Involvement”. The second level of involvement was already the first level of explicitly identifying with the project, in terms of explicit attempts to symbolically appropriate the controversial territories into the hegemonic Israeli space. The idea of ‘the next level’ means the case demonstrates both typical sources of difference from the former level and typical sources of its continuation. Thus the voice appeared as before to be of “an ordinary fellow” both in terms of social indexes (“family and friends”) and of (informal) language in general (quite spontaneous and unofficial). It was more involved in the project in one step: voluntary involvement in the project implied temporary, arbitrary forms of involvement unlike the institutionalized next levels. Presenting oneself as involved “in everything” and “in nothing” represented a preliminary voluntary position between ‘no’ and ‘total’ commitment to the project. It was involved more than the first also from the geo-political perspective; living one step further into the Palestinian territories. It thus demonstrated the second level of cultural socio-political involvement: constituting the project’s “new periphery”. Thus, when reconstructing the self-positioning of the case we can define its contribution and locate it within a wider perspective: the voices in the field.

3. “Public Involvement”. The third level of involvement was the first level of public involvement: the Professional institutionalized level. Now the narrative emphasizes goals and plans how to achieve them, organizational cooperation and the subsequent division of labor. Still unlike the next levels that were already openly polemic current discourse appeared as neutral and ‘professional’. The person is already formally employed in the project and thus in the position of formally representing it; reflecting a growing level of commitment. In geopolitical terms this increased level of involvement is

reflected in the meaning of the controversial and hegemonic spaces: the superiority of the former over the latter is manifest. This is implied also in the 'cultural' terms since now the community of settlers is constructed as an elite group against the background of 'hedonist' others.

Because of the typical difference from the fourth Political level (and perhaps of comparing too little levels) biographic researchers tend to consider professionals as "ordinary people", too, and construct a strong distinction between "political personnel from above" and "ordinary people from below". Yet the level of involvement in the project makes this category deserving its own recognition.

The fact that this model is preliminary can be observed by comparing it again with the Euroidentities research project. The scholars decided to explore the identity construction of members of NGO civil society organizations. According to the current model that new category combines the 'professional' with the 'voluntary' levels of involvement, emerging from political changes in the field it thus demonstrates elaboration and modification of this model. The image of Rainbow is useful for this point too: it is not clear how many "colors and hues" actually compose the entire rainbow in advance. Instead it depends upon the resolution conducted by the scholars and developments in the field.

4. "Political Involvement." The fourth position on this model implies the first level of involvement in the project's formal political institutions. In terms of the discourse it means taking the role of the advocate and also of contesting more explicitly with the project's political opponents. In terms of the project's internal institutions it means becoming involved in the struggles around forging the ideological and political ways. In this sense one also has to show "personal example" and to illustrate the own example to support one's claims. In some of the current cases the personal involvement in extreme geopolitical isolation from Israeli hegemonic space had been demonstrated too.

5. "Total commitment". This is the last level of involvement in the project. It means the involvement is beyond 'political' and it becomes "complete". In one case there was an attempt to enlist every practice to an over-arching ideological description. The fifth position of the geo-political axis implied at the time of interview settling a settlement that became a militarized enclave; penetrated not only by terror attacks on the ground but also by rockets from above and tunnels dug from below. Yet from the socio-political 'cultural' perspective the discourse conformed to the idea that the hard core of the settlers actually constitutes the country's new hegemony, and consequently the person is committed to settle "in the most difficult spot at the moment".

To conclude: I tried to describe a model in which cases are systematically described according to their gradual position on three biographic dimensions: socio-politic level of institutionalization, 'cultural' and geopolitical. I suggested that we can find five distinct levels of self-positionings, and they can shed new light on the on-going debate between representing society "from below" and "from above". It seems that if we come to the field with conceptual categories we can refine, we are equipped with a model that will help to illustrate a qualitative sample of the field from which new theories can evolve. Since this is only a preliminary suggestion it certainly needs review and elaboration. I hope to learn more about it with you in the future.

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Being exploited versus becoming autonomous: the paradox of transnational migration of elderly Polish women working irregularly in German households

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The following paper is based on the results of my PhD project. In my research I placed particular focus on elderly women, who come briefly before or after their retirement in Poland to Germany for domestic and care work. This means, they begin 'a new career' at retirement age when they would normally receive a pension, enjoy well-deserved rest or even take care of grandchildren. In Germany, Polish women are needed as 'unqualified', cheap helpers to carry out household work, but, in reality, they perform very demanding and complex work in caring for elderly people. They are so-called 'live-in' workers, meaning that they do not only work, but also often reside at their place of work on a daily basis; available to their patient 24 hours a day. They commute between Poland and Germany in irregular intervals and in rotation with other Polish women. Moreover, domestic work appears to be most suitable for migrant women since the chances of being detected are quite low. The specifics of this work which is practiced for months (and often years), consist of difficult physical tasks with low pay. The majority of studies, especially by feminists about female migration, care and domestic work, describe migrant women as victims of gender, migration and welfare regimes and concomitant phenomena, e.g. their marginal position because of migration and the lack of rights, which make the exploitation possible. These aspects are relevant for the consideration of this topic, but they show only one side of the phenomenon. Till now, not enough attention has been paid to the aspects of sovereignty, new options of action and the gaining of autonomy.

As derived from the interviews, the lives and work situation of migrant women have two sides: on the one hand, it is clear that dependency, expropriation of identity, humiliation and exploitation in the work place cause unbearable suffering. Within time their suffering increases due to their marginal position, exposure to exploitation, loneliness, isolation, inability to communicate, longing for their family and the feeling of having lost time to develop their own identity. Together with these restrictions and impositions, there arise feelings of "being suppressed", emotional narrowness, frustration, psychical instability, depression, and feelings of senselessness, fury or outburst of fury directed towards the employer.

On the other hand, it is evident how, in spite of restrictions, the self-organised forms of work brings out the ability to act and become sovereign. Accordingly, we can assume that mainly two dominant biographical processes of the women's lives coincide: the process of exploitation and the process of being autonomous. I will focus on these two aspects in this paper. In this context some of the central questions are: What influenced the state of being autonomous? In which areas did the sovereignty increase? The data collection was based on autobiographical-narrative interviews (SCHÜTZE 1983, 1987) with elderly Polish women, who work irregularly in Germany.

Initial circumstances in Poland and Germany

The emigration of elderly Polish women to Germany is a consequence of social and economic changes, which took place in both countries during the last decades.

The economic misery, the lack of governmental security in terms of low wages and low (early-) retirement, insufficient social benefits, continuous unemployment and widespread absence of perspectives in Poland intensify many women's attempts to migrate. There are a lot of barriers which make it difficult especially for the group of elderly people, at the so called age of "50+", to pursue a vocational occupation: lacking offers of training, which take account of necessities and expectations of people in this age group; appearance of stereotypes and prejudices with regard to vocational activity of elderly people, which result in discriminated practises of this group; the lack of consciousness of employers regarding advantages of the employment of people being "50+" years old. Still there are also sociocultural stereotypes about women at an elderly age in the society, which lead to forms of multiple discrimination.

In Germany the increasing demand for the labour of migrant women for domestic and care work for the elderly derives from demographic changes and the increase of life expectancy, transformation of gender ratio, and connected to it, the increased amount of employed women, increased geographical mobility of family members and the labour force, and intergenerational changes. Traditionally, it was presumed, that care was a private responsibility and that female family members took care of other family members. The transformation of the traditional female role leads to a redistribution of care work to cheap female migrant workers. Caring as a "natural", "female" and "reproductive" activity has a low reputation in the society and is therefore badly paid.

In my paper I will describe and analyse this paradox of processes, which develop in relation to the work and biography at this age. By processes of being autonomous I understand such processes, in which the women are more or less able to interact with their environment and existing relationships by coping with crisis situations and processes of deep self-reflection. If we treat the life story as a learning history or biography as a learning process (SCHLABS 2007: 272) we can say that new ways of looking at things constitute biographically productive paths of development for the women. The results prove particularly three areas, in which the biographical learning can be observed and which help the women to escape the situation of suffering that they were and still are in.

Being autonomous because of a productive development of identity at work

One important factor is, as the results show clearly, the fact that labour migration gives the women an opportunity to display their domestic and familiar competencies, which they acquired in the frames of their socialisation and the education of their children, but henceforward get paid for carrying out similar tasks. The necessity to connect family duties and domestic work with vocational work in Poland, something they perceived as negligible acquires new value in Germany and becomes a resource, which gives them a feeling of power and perceived self-efficacy (BANDURA, 1997). Even though the self-professionalisation of these competences takes place in very restricted frames, it gives them the feeling of fulfilment.

If the women can keep the sphere of action processes of being autonomous in the work occur at least basically.

An important aspect of being autonomous in the work relationship is the competence to negotiate this unclear work situation and relationship. They mobilise biographical capital (DELCROIX 2001) in form of competences of negotiation; the negotiation process with clients, employers and colleagues

constitute an essential part of this work and life situation. Fruitless negotiations can e.g. lead to a continuation of exploitation. In case of successful negotiations they learn to gain self-confidence in their own competences; this is a surplus value of this work, which makes it possible for them to recognise their own capacities for e.g. the next employment.

Increase of autonomy because of self-reflection on their gender and family roles

Another important cause for the increase of autonomy, connected to the first one, is that the independence arises from the deep-going self-reflection on their gender and family roles. Because of gender-specific socialisation, they did not have the chance of reflecting or modifying their social role in Poland. They treated the double burden, i.e. doing the family and household work in connection with vocational work, as a matter of course. Furthermore, their action schemes were geared toward external expectations: firstly to their parents, and subsequently to their partners. They developed their identity following up institutionally shaped and normatively defined courses of life – the family life cycle. The process by which they display their ‘female’ skills leads to a greater distance from their own normative roles, being more confident and autonomous. As the long-term consequence of this metamorphosis changes of perception of their gender and family roles can be observed, e.g. a lot of women split up with their partners and emotionally and economically emancipate themselves from unequal relationships.

Being autonomous because of the encounter in a strange cultural context

The last relevant reason for becoming autonomous is the process of learning, due to intercultural contacts in the workplace (SCHRÖDER, 2010:p. 280), which may exert influence towards the development of European-wide perspectives by the women and attempt to promote a European consciousness. Because of this the women can reflect the normative order and imaginations from their home country and understand that the norms presented in their country of origin have no validity in the country of their destination. These experiences, at the beginning, made intuitively and their feeling of being a cultural foreigner in their everyday life systematically evokes irritations. Because of their attentive observation and permanent recognition of different cultural perspectives, they try to integrate the new transcultural solutions in their own lives, such as mentioned changes of family rules. They also became self-critical and distanced to their own cultural practises of action and national identity. In this way they also learn to differentiate and to realise different and complex reasons for the social behaviour of people. That means, they are very careful in looking at different phenomena from their own national perspective and in finding the explanation of ‘strange’ reactions within national categories, stereotypes and prejudices.

Summary

The results present three different kinds of biographical learning, which help the women to escape the situation of suffering that they were and are in. These processes lead to an increase in the level of confidence, emancipation and autonomy. The process of sovereignty is the opposite of the process of exploitation. They biographically experience their stay and work in Germany as a “potential

space” (INOWLOCKI/RIEMANN, 2011), in which their anew recovered and this time paid competences of action are regarded as an orientation for the development of outlines of their life.

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BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IN THE UK⁹

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It is quite difficult to summarise the range of biographical research in the UK. There are a number of problems in such an exercise – well-known proponents of one type collaborate with others with another orientation, or appear as key speakers at conference bodies with a rather different approach and origin. Also, commonly, research centres have various forms of association with each other. In part, this complexity indicates a cross-fertilisation of ideas and methodological approaches, a desire to cooperate and engage in shared work on the collection and analysis of ‘lives’ on substantive research issues. The survey below, therefore, can be seen as uncovering a ‘lattice’ of interconnection and, perhaps, show well the strength of ‘biographical research’ in the UK. I have taken a rather ‘liberal’ or ‘eclectic’ view of the ‘field’ in the UK – and necessarily so, since it is a ‘moving target’, developing rapidly and drawing on influences across the social sciences and on a range of artistic, literary, visual, etc. areas.

We can say that:

“Biographical research is an exciting, stimulating and fast-moving field which seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future” (Roberts, 2002: p. 2)

We must keep in mind that biographical research can include: life history, oral history, narrative, life course/life cohort, discourse-biography, biography, autobiography, auto/biography, auto-ethnography, testimonio and so on! (see, Roberts 2002). It is also the case that “‘personal documents’ or ‘documents of life’ (Plummer, 1983; Plummer, 2001) may include diaries, letters, autobiographies, biographies, memoranda and other materials... documents may be written for different purposes, for different audiences (including the self) and immediately or much later after the events described” (Roberts, 2002: p. 2). Recently, visual and performative ‘materials’ have come to the fore in biographical work, adding further complex dimensions of biographical expression.

Biographical research in the UK (and elsewhere) can, perhaps, be simply described as covering four main approaches or concerns: narrative (in various forms), life writing (autobiography and biography), oral history, and auto/biography

1 Origins of Biographical Research in the UK

The ‘longer’ origins of biographical research in the UK can be traced back to 18th literature, with the rise of ‘autobiography’ and ‘biography’ (c.f. Boswell and Johnson, see Sisman, 2000) and the beginnings of the modern novel. In the 19c, the lives of street workers and the labouring poor in London were collected by Henry Mayhew (whom Chicago sociologists took as an influence) (see,

⁹ This article is published in the newsletter No 59 (December 2010) of the German Section of Biographical Research.

Thompson and Yeo, eds. 2009); working-class autobiographies appeared in periodicals (see, Burnett, ed.1974); and 'exemplary' lives (e.g. Samuel Smiles or the lives of missionaries, explorers and colonialists, c.f. Livingstone) were published as 'moral life templates', especially, for children. Strachey, writing later, is often cited as a key influence in the development of biographical writing (Strachey, 1948). In the first half of the 20c we could also point to the 'origins' the beginnings of 'social documentary' (another broad term) in film, photography and social research (particularly in the 1930s-40s, c.f. Mass-Observation) concerned with showing the daily lives of working class people and giving them a 'voice'.

In 1950s and early 1960s radical and Marxist historians explored a 'history from below' and the formation of 'working class consciousness', a leading example being Edward Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Thompson,1963). This work was furthered later by the formation of a range of journals, such as *Oral History*, *Llafur* and *History Workshop* and the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (see:http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/oral_history.html). Meanwhile, Richard Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* (Hoggart, 1958), described working class culture and change and formed the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964, at the University of Birmingham. His work raised the idea of taking contemporary working class culture as a 'serious' subject for study. Stuart Hall, its second Director of the Centre, expanded its work and concerns and its publications became central in the formation of the field of 'cultural studies' (see: Hall et al. 1980). By the late 1960s and early 1970s the influence of feminist writers (in theorisation and methodology) was apparent and the rise of women's history was underway. Finally, in novels, film, theatre and television, from the late 1950s, there was the emergence of 'realistic' depictions of working class (and lower middle class) lives, at a time of rapid post war social change.

Biographical research in the UK can be placed first, against this backdrop of the growth of social/labour/radical and feminist history – which fed into the formation of oral history (and forms of 'community history'). Secondly, there was the influence (from American sociology) of Interactionism and the Sociology of Deviance from the mid 1960s. This work included a renewed interest in 'career theory', 'life history' and participant observation methods (deriving from Chicagoan sociology of the 1930s). In particular, Howard Becker's *Outsiders*, 1963 and David Matza's *Delinquency and Drift*, 1964 and *Becoming Deviant*, 1969, were influential and, of course, the broader theorisation of G. H. Mead and Herbert Blumer and varieties of 'micro-social theory' (Roberts, 2006). At the same time, the wider emergence of qualitative research methodology was taking place. Interactionism and, more specifically, deviancy theory, were furthered and applied in the UK context by writers associated with the National Deviancy Conference (NDC) in the 1970s – Laurie Taylor, Ian Taylor, Stanley Cohen, Jock Young, Stuart Hall, and others. [I still find Cohen and Taylor 1972 and Cohen and Taylor, 1978 very insightful on the nature of daily experience. Stuart Hall's later work on 'identity' is very relevant for biographical researchers, for example, see Hall and du Gay, eds. 1996; see also, the earlier, Hall et al. 1978: 327-97].

These currents in the formation of biographical research in the UK can be neatly seen in the careers of two very prominent researchers at the University of Essex, Paul Thompson and Ken Plummer, who have played leading roles in establishing 'biographical research' within the social sciences.

Paul Thompson graduated with a history doctorate on 'working class politics at the turn of 20c', and joined the new University of Essex in the mid 60s to teach sociology and social history. He became a pioneer of oral history as a research method, the founding editor of Oral History journal, and the founder of the National Life Story Collection at the British Library National Sound Archive (see: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/staff/profile.aspx?ID=146>). Thompson was Director of Qualidata at the University of Essex – a centre for the preservation of qualitative research materials. His research record is very extensive. He wrote the well known early textbook on oral history, *The voice of the past* (Thompson, 1978, 3rd edit. 2000) and has studied old age, fishing, families, community and work life and car workers. He co-edited, *The Myths we live by* (Samuel and Thompson, eds.1990) and *Pathways to Social Class* (Bertaux and Thompson, eds. 1997). Thompson also edited (with others) the *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories* (OUP) series and co-edited (with Mary Chamberlain) *Narrative and Genre* (Thompson and Chamberlain, ed. 1997) for the *Routledge Studies in Memory and Narrative* (see: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/1237295910-87009~content=t729336600> and <http://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/staff/profile.aspx?id=137>).

Ken Plummer arrived at the University of Essex in the mid 1970s to teach the Sociology of Deviance and Social Psychology (and took part in NDC conferences around that time) (see: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/staff/profile.aspx?id=137>). He has methodological and theoretical interests in the life story and Symbolic Interactionism/Interactionism – and, particularly, how we form 'small social worlds'. He takes a 'critical humanist' perspective, with concerns around suffering, well being and illness. Plummer has written very extensively on Symbolic Interactionism, Chicago Sociology, and sexualities - and wrote the influential *Documents of Life* (Plummer, 1983; see Plummer 2001; Plummer ed. 1991; Plummer, 1995). *Documents of Life*, it is worth noting, came at almost the same time as Bertaux's *Biography and Society* (Bertaux, ed. 1981) in the early 1980s – both gave an important impetus to the renewal of the study and method of the 'life history'. Plummer was the founding editor of the journal, *Sexualities*.

Of course, apart from the main influences above, biographical research has been part of, and responded to, the continued growth of feminist scholarship and postmodern currents, and the various (so-called) 'turns' in the social sciences (body, time, spatial, etc.) and, of course, it has been associated with the general expansion qualitative methods from the 1960s onwards.

2 Auto/Biography Study Group – British Sociological Association (BSA)

The Auto/Biography Study Group was founded as part of the British Sociological Association (BSA) in the early 1990s (see: <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/specialisms/autobiography.htm>). Prominent members have included: Liz Stanley, David Morgan, Michael Erben, Bogusia Temple; Andrew Sparkes and Gill Clarke. The Study Group holds two conferences a year (July and December – the latter in London) and publishes an annual auto/biography yearbook (and for many years had a journal) (see, Sparkes, ed. 2008). The Auto/Biography Study Group has drawn on a number of sources: literary biography and autobiography; feminist methodology; life history; the arts; and debates on intertextuality and representation – and has sought to widen interest in various forms of 'life-writing' (e.g. letters, personal artefacts, visual materials) (see, Erben ed. 1998; Stanley and Morgan, 1993; Stanley, 1992; Roberts, 2002, pp. 73-92). Group members have made important contributions to a

variety of substantive areas, including health, gender, sport and education and the researcher's life/self in the research process. For Stanley:

"Auto/biography... displaces the referential and foundational claims of writers and researchers by focusing on the writing/speaking of lives and the complexities of reading/hearing them. It also thereby unsettles notions of 'science', problematises the referential claims of social research, questions the power issues most researchers either silence or disclaim" (Stanley, quoted in Roberts, 2002: 74).

David Morgan and Liz Stanley are major figures in sociology in Britain and have made very substantial contributions to the establishment of biographical research. They have both been very prominent in the BSA and co-edited a special issue of its journal, *Sociology*, on 'Autobiography and Biography' (Stanley and Morgan, 1993; see also:

<http://www.britsoc.co.uk/WhatIsSociology/BiographicalJourneys.htm>). Through these figures biographical research has had a strong voice within the BSA.

David Morgan (Manchester University) (former President of the BSA) has a research centre named after him at Manchester University, where he taught and researched for many years (see: <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/morgancentre/people/morgan/>). He is known for his extensive contribution to the sociology of families and relationships (especially theory), gender (particularly men and masculinities) and auto/biographical studies. His latest book is on the idea of 'acquaintanceship' (Morgan, 2009).

Liz Stanley is Director of the Centre for Narrative and Auto/Biographical Studies (NABS) (at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland) which is described as a 'research-oriented virtual Centre' (see: <http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/NABS/>). It organises a series of seminars, workshops and conferences. It has received funding from the national Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for seminars on Narrative Studies resulting in contributions to *Qualitative Research* (2009), *Sociological Research Online* (2009) and *Life Writing* (2010) journals. A major part of Liz Stanley's current research is the transcription of the letters of Olive Schreiner, feminist writer and social theorist. Liz Stanley has had a major influence on biographical research, and sociology more generally, in the UK through her central role in the development of the Auto/Biography Study Group and major contributions to feminist theory and sociological theory, and methodological and epistemological issues.

Bogusia Temple (UCLAN) has carried out research (much of it evaluative) across numerous areas, including social work, health, social care and housing and was involved in the development of the Auto/Biography Group

(see: http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/school_of_social_work/bogusia_temple_tab_profile.php).

She has undertaken research on Polish people in Manchester and how they use Polish and English in their daily lives. She has published extensively on the issues of 'translation' (c.f. interviews) and is a leading authority in the area (see, for example, Temple, 2006). Bogusia Temple's substantive research has included the investigation of the economic and social networks that migrants use (URL: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/sociology/stanley_liz).

Michael Erben has been Director of The Centre on Biography and Education (founded in 1995) at the University of Southampton. He is another founder member of the Auto/Biography Study Group and

as its convenor for many years ensured that it continued and thrived through its conferences and network. He was editor of an influential book, *Biography and Education* (Erben, ed. 1998) - a series of theoretical and research articles that considered the relation between biography and the structuring of education processes. More recently he has been interested in the connections between 'nostalgia' and auto/biography.

Gill Clarke, until very recently, was the Convenor of the Auto/Biography Study Group and leader of the Biography and Education Special Interest Group (formerly Centre), at the University of Southampton (<http://www.education.soton.ac.uk/staff/GillClarke>). She has publications and interests on: life stories of women war artists; the Women's Land Army; visual and arts based research methods and associated issues; structural and interactional injustices; and inclusion in relation to sexuality and gender. The Special Interest Group at Southampton is concerned with the 'educative' as wider than institutional practices and formal institutions and seeks to examine the relation between biography and education in terms of 'engagement with development of reflective dispositions and moral reasoning'. It has links with other Groups and Centres on biographical research at British Universities, particularly the Centre for Life History (University of Sussex) and Centre for Narrative Research (University of East London).

Andrew C. Sparkes (Liverpool John Moores University) is a prominent member of the Auto/Biography group and is the editor of its Yearbook (see: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/ECL/114615.htm>). His interests are in 'performing bodies and identity formation' in different ways and contexts, particularly 'interrupted body projects' such as after sport injury, and marginalised groups. He has published widely in these areas (in *Qualitative Research* and health and sports journals) and also on topics related to methodological issues and innovations in qualitative research, for example the researcher's own self in research processes and different forms of representation i.e. use of the arts) (see, Sparkes 2002; Sparkes, 2009). His frequent collaborator has been Brett Smith (Loughborough University) (see: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ssehs/staff/academic/brett-smith.html>). (Also at Liverpool John Moores is Timonthy Ashplant, see: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/MCA/93898.htm>), whose interests include working-class autobiography and life-writings, political identities, masculinity, and autobiographical theory).

Brian Roberts. I am associated with the Psychosocial Research Unit at University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) which is concerned with the arts in health, well-being and local area regeneration (see: <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/iscr/pru/index.php>). The Group's recent projects – often evaluative - include the impact of the arts in hospitals, community story-telling and poetry, dance and mental health, and young offenders' life stories. I am a Committee Member of the European Sociological Association (ESA), Research Network (RN) 3 Biographical Perspectives on European Societies, and a former Board Member and former Vice-President of the International Sociological Association (ISA), Research Committee 38, 'Biography and Society' group. [For a number of years I was Director of the Narrative and Memory Research Group (University of Huddersfield). Speakers at the Group's annual conference included, Michael Bamberg, Gabriele Rosenthal, Kip Jones, Maggie O'Neill, Catherine Riessman, Liz Stanley, and Andrew Sparkes. Its 2005 annual conference was jointly held with ISA RC 38]. In 2002 I wrote *Biographical Research* (Roberts, 2002) which overviewed the field and I have co-edited journal special issues of *Qualitative Sociology* Review on 'Biographical Sociology' (Roberts and Kyllonen, eds. 2006) and *FQS* on 'Performative

Social Science' (Jones et al. eds., 2008). In my early career I was closely associated with the Stuart Hall and Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and its work on youth which is still influential and relevant for biographical research (see, Clarke et al. 1976/Clarke u. a. 1979; Hall et al., 1978) and wrote postgraduate theses on the work of David Matza and the Chicago School of Sociology. My areas of interest include: narrative, memory and time; biography and arts; ethnic and national identity; micro-social theory; and the researcher's role in research

(see: <http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/volume3.php>; <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/issue/view/10>; Roberts, 2006; Roberts, 2007; Roberts, 2008; Roberts, 2009). The Director of the Psychosocial Research Unit at UCLan, is Lynn Froggett, whose work draws on clinical practice, psychoanalytic ideas and trans-disciplinary perspectives, Her research (including collaboration with Prue Chamberlayne and Tom Wengraf) has covered biography and art in community work; biographical and arts-based evaluation; narrative approaches; and the interrelations between policy and practice (see, Froggett, 2002; see also http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/iscr/lynn_froggett.php). The Psychosocial Research Unit has extensive national (e.g. CNR and UEL/Tavistock Centre for Social Work Research) and international links, including the European Society for the Education of Adults (ESREA) – Network on Life History and Biography, and, also connections with a number of German researchers in the field of biographical research.

3 Biographical Perspectives on European Societies RN3 - European Sociological Association (ESA) (see: http://www.europeansociology.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=29).

Researchers from the UK have played a major role in the Research Network 3 of the ESA. Currently, Maggie O'Neill, Durham University, is Vice-Chair, and Robert Miller (former chair) (Queens Belfast); Robin Humphrey (former chair); (Newcastle University); Brian Roberts (UCLan); and John Given (formerly University of Northumbria), are on the Committee of the Network.

Robin Humphrey (Newcastle University) has made a major contribution to the Research Network (see: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/gps/staff/profile/robin.humphrey>). He is the co-editor of *Biographical Research in Eastern Europe: Altered Lives and Broken Biographies* (Humphrey, Miller and Zdravomyslova, eds. 2003) which brought together international researchers exploring the shifts in Eastern Europe at a time of profound transition. Writers in the volume included: J.P. Roos; Daniel Bertaux; Valery Golofast; Aili Aarelaid-Tart; Roswitha Breckner; Viktor Voronkov and Elena Chikadze; and others Maggie O'Neill (Durham University) is concerned with innovations in biographical, arts based, visual, performative, and participatory methodologies and knowledge which connect with public policy (<http://www.dur.ac.uk/sass/staff/profile/?id=8314>). Her research has included: prostitution and the commercial sex industry; and forced migration and asylum. She was co-editor of BSA's journal *Sociology* between 1999 and 2002. Her recent book draws on her work on migration and asylum (O'Neill, 2010).

Robert L. Miller (Queens University, Belfast, NI) has researched on the areas of gender, political participation, mobility and social stratification. He has been particularly interested in using qualitative methods in terms of family history and auto-biographical research. He has published: *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories* (2000), co-edited *Biographical Research in*

Eastern Europe (Humphrey, Miller and Zdravomyslova, eds. 2003), and edited, *Biographical Research Methods*, (4 vols.) (2005). He is currently coordinator of a project, Euro Identities, which uses biographical methods to study the development of European Identity within 7 countries (see: <http://www.euroidentities.org/Partners/QueensUniversityBelfast/ed-recent-publications>).

All of the above and myself) took part in the very successful joint Interim Conference of the Research Network and the Annual Conference of the Section "Biographieforschung" of the German Sociological Association (GSA) on "Applied Biographical Research", held in Nuremberg in September 2010.

4 Oral History Society

(see: <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/>).

The Society has made a very important contribution to the study (in terms of collection, methodology, presentation, archiving, methodology and theorisation) of 'lives' in the UK in a wide range of fields (e.g. migration, health, welfare, family, industry, etc.) and at academic, public and community levels. The Secretary of the Society is Rob Perks while the current Editor of its long established journal is Joanna Bornat (see: <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/journals/index.php>). Steve Humphries (Testimony Films), is an Honorary Vice President of the Society, and has produced numerous oral history documentaries for television and associated books (e.g. Humphries and Gordon, 1993; Humphries and Hopwood, 2000). The next conference of the Society (2011) is entitled: 'Creation, Destruction, Memory: Oral History and Regeneration'. Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson co-edited an influential reader on oral history in 1997 (2006, 2nd edit). Thomson, who has now returned to Australia, was Director of the Centre for Life History Research at University of Sussex, co-editor of *Oral History*. He has co-edited a book on oral history and photography (Thomson and Freund, forthcoming). Oral historians in Britain (such as Paul Thompson, Alistair Thomson, Joanna Bornat and Rob Perks) have played a leading international role in oral history (for instance, Alistair Thomson is a past President of the International Oral History Association, IOHA).

5 Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research – University of Sussex

The Centre (originally formed in 1999) is widely known for its contribution to oral history, life history and life writing research (see: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/>). Margaretta Jolly is joint Director of the Centre for Life History and Life Writing (see: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/profiles/16251>). She has written particularly on the art and history of letter writing (and emails) and feminist theory, and also edited *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing of Life Writing* (Jolly, ed. 2001). She is a key member of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) (founded, 1999). The Centre is linked with other groupings: Biography and Education (Southampton University); Centre for International Studies in Diversity and Participation (Canterbury Christ Church University); and Centre for Narrative Research (University of East London) - and co-organised a joint conference with these groups in 2006 on 'Researching Lives'. The Centre at Sussex also hosted The 7th Biennial International Conference 'Life Writing and Intimate Publics' of the IABA in 2010. It is closely connected with the internationally known Mass-Observation Archive, also at the University of Sussex. Mass-Observation, during the late 1930s and 1940s, sought to enable ordinary people 'Speak for themselves' through daily diaries,

regular 'directive replies' from a panel of respondents and a range of other methods; today (from 1980s). The Archive undertakes contemporary research (e.g. current requested 'directive replies' are on 'Going to Funerals' and 'Childhood and Illness') (see: Calder and Sheridan, eds. 1984; Sheridan, 2000; and Sheridan, Street, Bloome, 2000; see: http://www.massobs.org.uk/accessing_material_online.htm). There is a very extensive list of publications on a wide range of topics connected to the Archive (from 1937-50 and post 1981) (see http://www.massobs.org.uk/publications_1974_onwards.htm). [I have published several articles based on a study of a Welsh mining community in 1942-3 in the Archive, which led me to undertake my own study in 1990-1 of 'local lives' in the town (see, Roberts, 2000; Roberts, 2009)].

6 European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) | - Life History and Biographical Research Network

Linden West is the Convenor of the above Research Network (see: http://www.esrea.org/life_history_network?l=en) as well as being Co-Director of The Centre for International Studies of Diversity and Participation (CISDP) at Canterbury Christ Church University (<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/education/educational-research/staff/linden-west/>). The ESREA Biography and Life History Network held a conference in 2008 in Canterbury, on the 'emotional dimensions of learning and researching lives'. West recently co-wrote, *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research* (Merrill and West, 2009) - a practical guide to using biographical methods but also containing theory and reflections on the personal experience of undertaking research. The Research Network was founded in the early 1990s to link researchers across Europe, from various disciplines and theoretical standpoints, interested in using life history or biographical methods in the study of lifelong learning. (<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/education/cisdp>). The Centre for International Studies of Diversity and Participation at Canterbury | has a focus on inclusion/exclusion and lifelong learning. It has close relations with the Centre for Biography and Education (Southampton University), the Centre for German-Jewish Studies (University of Sussex), the Centre for Life History Research (University of Sussex), and the Centre for Narrative Research (University of East London).

7 The Centre for Ageing and Biographical Studies (CABS) – Open University

(see: <http://www.open.ac.uk/hsc/research/ageing-and-later-life/centre-for-ageing-and-biographical-studies.php>).

The Centre has existed since 1995 and includes Joanna Bornat, Bill Bytheway and Julia Johnson, to research within gerontology using biographical research, and connect theory, research, policy and practice. Joanna Bornat is the Director of the Centre and has written extensively on ageing, biographical/oral history methodology and has a long involvement in community oral history projects. She is particularly known for her work linking reminiscence and oral history. She co-edited the influential *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science* (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf, eds. 2000) and *Biographical Methods in Professional Practice* (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Apatzsch, eds. 2004).

A number of other researchers (not at the Centre) at the Open University, in psychology and sociology, should be mentioned in relation to biographical research. First, in psychology, the work of

Wendy Hollway, Margaret Wetherell, and Stephanie Taylor and, secondly, Ruth Finnegan in Sociology.

Wendy Hollway has researched on issues concerning identity, gender relations, parenting and caring, alongside qualitative methodology. She has developed a 'psycho-social' approach to study relationships and identity, informed by a 'psychoanalytic ontology and epistemology'. Her work has included the study of identity transition in first time motherhood (part of ESRC-funded Identities and Social Action programme) and the well known text (with Tony Jefferson) *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free Association, Narrative and the Interview Method* (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

Margaret Wetherell has a 'discursive psychology' approach and interest in the study of 'affective practices', including patterns of individual's narratives (see:

http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/people-profile.php?name=Margaret_Wetherell). Her investigations cover: self and identity, emotion and memory and the study of 'collective sense-making' and ideology – topics covered include: racism, ethnicity, masculinity and men's identities. She was the Director of the ESRC Programme on 'Social Identities and Social Action' (2003-9) (see: <http://www.identities.org.uk/>) overseeing £4m of funding across 25 research projects, which drew on a wide range of disciplines, at universities spanning the UK. These projects contain a great deal that is relevant for biographical researchers, in terms of methodology, theory and substantive topics (e.g. identity/identification, emotion, friendships, family and work life, ethnicity, and cohesion).

Stephanie Taylor has written on identity and place and 'biographies in talk' within a 'narrative discursive' approach (see: Taylor, 2010; Taylor and Littlejohn, 2006; see:

http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/people-profile.php?name=Stephanie_Taylor). Secondly, Ruth Finnegan is worth a special mention (see: (http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/people-profile.php?name=Ruth_Finnegan)). She has been concerned with the "comparative sociology/anthropology of artistic activity (especially 'oral literature' and music), communication, and performance'; 'debates relating to literacy, 'orality' and multimodality; and amateur and other 'hidden' activities, including knowledge production". Her book, *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Interconnection* (2002), I regard as a 'classic' work - an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural account of the multimodality of human communicating drawing together recent developments in sensory and linguistic anthropology, material culture, studies of 'the body' and of emotions, and comparative work on animal communication. Earlier she investigated narrative and place in *Tales of the City: A Study of Narrative and Urban Life*, (Finnegan, 1998) (based on Milton Keynes) and wrote a guide to research practices related to 'oral traditions' and verbal arts' (Finnegan, 1992).

8 Centre for Narrative Research - University of East London (UEL)

The Centre for Narrative Research (CNR) is very well known for its research and publications: its Co-directors are Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou (see: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/>). The Centre's work has an interdisciplinary outlook and considers 'written, spoken and visual narratives'. It describes its research as allowing for 'narrative complexity', encompassing the 'omissions', 'contradictions' and 'incoherence' in narratives, while concerned with narrative 'sensemaking' and how personal narratives interconnect with the social world. The Centre's members have published a number of influential books (see: Andrews, Sclater, Squire and Treacher,

eds. 2000; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, eds. 2008). Apart from connections with other centres in the field of biographical research in the UK, it has strong international links with prominent international researchers being invited visitors, such as Jens Brockmeier (Can.), Matti Hyvarinen (Fin.) and Catherine Riessman (US).

Prue Chamberlayne, who is well-known to a number of German colleagues, was for many years at UEL (and she was later associated with the Open University). She was central to the seven countries SOSRIS Project (1996-9). Using biographical-interpretive methods, the first stage of the Project focussed on six social groups: unemployed graduates, early retired people, unqualified youth, single parents, ex-traditional workers and ethnic minorities – and examined agencies who were combating social exclusion and policy. Chamberlayne co-edited a number of books (and reports) which drew upon her biographical research in the field of welfare (Chamberlayne, Cooper, and Freeman, eds. 1999; Chamberlayne and King, eds. 2001; Chamberlayne, Rustin and Wengraf, 2002; and Chamberlayne, Bornat and Apitzsch, eds. 2004). Much of this work involved contributions from scholars in Germany and elsewhere. Her key co-edited book on biographical research, *The Turn to Biographical in Social Sciences* (2000) with Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf, marked an important moment in the establishment of the field and had contributions from Apitzsch, Inowlocki, Bertaux, Delcroix, Fischer, Hollway, Jefferson, Andrews, Squire, Schiebel and others. Tom Wengraf has written an influential text on the 'biographic narrative interview method' (Wengraf, 2001).

Susannah Radstone, also at UEL (teaching in Film and Cultural Studies), has research interests and written extensively in the area of 'cultural memory' – particularly in relation to literature and film; historical imagination; and psychoanalysis and culture (see: Radstone, ed. 2000; Radstone and Hodgkin eds. 2003; Radstone, 2007; see: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/hss/staff/susannah-radstone/>).

9 Centre for Life-Writing Research – King's College, London

Max Saunders is Co-Director of the interdisciplinary Centre (created in 2006) which aims to connect researchers and life-practitioners (see: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/ip/maxsaunders/>). Saunders is mainly a literary critic and has recently published a book on the ways in which life-writing was a growing resource for late 19c and early 20c literature (Saunders, 2010). He is on the Steering Committee of IABA Europe (founded in 2009) (see: <http://www.iaba-europe.eu/home/>). The Centre hosted a major international conference in 2009 on 'The Work of Life-Writing', in part to strengthen connections with others in the IABA. International researchers featured at the conference included Sidonie Smith (US), Craig Howes (US) G. Thomas Couser (US) Julia Watson (US) and Philippe Lejeune (Fr) with leading figures on life-writing from the UK including Hermione Lee (Oxford); Margareta Jolly (Sussex); and Kathryn Hughes (East Anglia).

Elsewhere at King's College is Alexandra Georgakopoulou - a 'narrative discourse analyst'- who considers 'conversational stories' or 'small stories' in interaction and identity formation (Georgakopoulou, 2007) (see: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/humanities/depts/bmgs/staff/georgakopoulou.html>).

10 The Brunel Centre for Contemporary Writing (BCCW) – Brunel University

The Centre attempts to bring together techniques of literary analysis and qualitative research methods to explore 'socio-cultural narratives' and the varieties of life writing and auto/biography

(see: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sa/artresearch/bccw>). In doing so, it attempts to broaden the range of conventional literary study and, thereby, reunite intellectual enquiry with everyday life. The Fiction and the Cultural Mediations of Ageing Project (FCMAP) is based in the Centre. The Project is part of the seven year multidisciplinary research initiative, 'New Dynamics of Ageing' programme funded by the national Research Councils of the UK – the largest ever research programme in the country aiming to enhance the quality of life of older people (see: <http://newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/>). A conference is being hosted soon: 'New Cultures of Ageing: Narratives, Fictions, Methods & Researching the Future - in April 2011' (see: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sa/artsub/english/engresearch/fcmap/conference>).

11 Centre for Narratives and Transformative Learning (CeNTraL) University of Bristol
(see: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/research/centres/central>)

The coordinator of the Centre is Jane Speedy. Her research interests include the 'blurred edges' between narrative therapy and research practices; the relation between arts and social sciences; the generation of creative and critical research methodologies, particularly within the 'new ethnographies'; the formation of narrative identities; and the representation of storied lives/lives at the margins. Included here is the use of poetic writing, and digital and visual images within therapeutic work

(<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/people/person.html?personKey=XmUB03MvRUQVx9H2iRfRr5IsZPDpDp>). Catherine Riessman (US) was recently a visiting researcher at the Centre. Kim Etherington is associated with the Centre and has research concerns and publications in trauma, abuse, health, and narrative and reflexive research methodologies (and the use of the researcher's self in research) (see: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/people/person.html?personKey=FX1vjzoDnkV9r50ujUqDsL9eibKVfM>; see: Etherington, 2000, Etherington, ed. 2003; Etherington, 2004).

12 Education Research Centre – University of Brighton

The Centre investigates areas of narrative, learning and pedagogy, aiming 'to foster critical understanding of learning in diverse cultures and complex worlds' (see: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/education/research/>). Its research applies mainly qualitative research, including life history and narrative approaches. Apart from professional lives; pedagogy and the curriculum; and educational development, its focus is on 'narrative learning, life worlds, voice, identity, creativity and life history'. Within the Centre is Ivor Goodson, who was part of the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme: 'Learning Lives – Learning, Identity and Agency in the Life Course' (2003-8) (with colleagues at other universities) and has used life history/narrative extensively in educational research (see, Goodson et al. 2009; Goodson and Sikes, eds. 2001; see: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/education/contact/details.php?uid=ig5>).

13 George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling - University of Glamorgan, Wales

The centre is named after the pioneering oral historian/folklorist of the East Anglian countryside, George Ewart Evans, who wrote books (mainly in the 1950s-70s) based on interviews and

observations (His work can be contrasted with Tony Parker's books, written between the early 1960s-mid 1990s, using interviews with the 'marginalised': prisoners, members of deprived communities, etc., for example, see: Parker, 1971; Parker, 1985). The Centre collaborates with artists and storytellers, and people in the creative and cultural industries and supports those who apply storytelling in community and education settings (see: <http://storytelling.research.glam.ac.uk/>). Hamish Fyfe, Director of the Centre (and co-founder), has interests in creative community building through collaboration across the arts; ritual, theatre and identity; and questions concerning the nature of creativity - how it 'works' and can be encouraged. Michael Wilson (co-founder) has interests in popular and 'vernacular' performance and storytelling - researching the relationship between storytelling and digital technology. The Centre is a partner with the Storyworks Project (see: <http://www.storyworksglam.co.uk/>) at the University. The Project Leader of Storyworks is Karen Lewis who was founder and Producer of the BBC's Digital Storytelling Project - 'Capture Wales' (see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/queries/capturewales.shtml>). [The BBC's project 'Video Nation' can be noted here, in which the public can submit a short video for online access (see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/network/>). Rather different is the fascinating (and continuing). "Up" TV Series (Michael APTED, Granada/BBC) in the UK, which interviewed a varied group of seven year olds in 1964, and re-interviews them every seven years about their lives].

14 Working Lives Research Institute – London Metropolitan University

The Institute (Steve Jefferys, Director) carries out 'socially committed academic and applied research into all aspects of working lives' with a concern for and social justice and equality. It sees partnerships with trade unions, voluntary and community organisations as important for its research activities (see: <http://www.workinglives.org/>). It considers how work changes are experienced by workers and their organisations, placing a key emphasis on gender, sexuality, race and disability – and the 'dynamic' between work, household, family, community and wider society.

15 Literary Biography and Autobiography

The practices of biography and autobiography, in the UK, have undergone some important shifts, coupled with an intense scrutiny by cultural critics, biographers and novelists, in the last twenty years. Discussions have included the characteristics of narration or story-telling, and the interplay of fact and fiction, and other issues (see Roberts, 2002: 52-72). These developments have been considered by prominent biographers, by examining their own lives and origins, and an appraisal of their own practices. For examples of recent biography and autobiography and their assessment, see Ackroyd, on Dickens (1991); Anderson (Newcastle University) (2001); Byatt (2000); Bostridge (2005); Evans (LSE) (1999); France and St Clair (ed.) (2004); Hamilton (2007); Holmes (2000); Holroyd (2000); Lee (Oxford University) (2005) and Lee (2009); Marcus (Oxford University) (1994); Sisman, on Boswell (2000); and Swindells (Anglia Ruskin University) (ed.) (1995).

16 Understanding British Portraits

This is a 'specialist network' aimed at increasing knowledge, understanding and debates on portraits (across all media) in British collections (galleries, museums). It is attempting to map expertise

(research, interpretation and presentation) and portrait collections throughout the UK, both private and public (see: <http://www.portraits.specialistnetwork.org.uk/ixbin/indexplus?record=ART74194>) (see also, more generally on museum collections, <http://www.culture24.org.uk/home>). There is a growing interest in the portrait/self-portrait in art and photography (and video) in the UK (and elsewhere) as reflected in recent exhibitions and numerous publications, see for example, West (Birmingham University), 2004; Jones (Manchester University), 2006; Rideal (Slade School of Fine Art) 2005. [Portraiture is a research interest of mine and I have recently written two unpublished articles in the area which review the field of photographic portraiture and interpret two photographs from my childhood (Roberts, unpublished, a. and b.)].

17 Ethnography, Culture and Interpretive Analysis Research Group, Cardiff University, Wales (see: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchgroups/ethnographyculture/index.html>).

The Research Group is especially known for its work on ethnography (see Lofland et al. eds. 2001) but has related interests in – mobile methods; hypermedia; participatory methods; narrative and discourse; and visual methods. Among its key members are: Paul Atkinson, Sara Delamont and Amanda Coffey (see, Coffey, 1999). It plays a leading role in Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences in Europe (EUROQUAL) and in the journal, Qualitative Research.

18 Centre for Qualitative Research – University of Bournemouth

The Centre has a research emphasis on the improvement of the 'everyday lives' of social care and health users and citizens (<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/cqr/>). Its work is concerned with 'humanising health and social care'; 'novel and innovative research methodologies'; and 'performative social science' – including evidence for 'unique life histories and social contexts'. The Centre organises a yearly conference on Qualitative Research – the 2010 conference was 'Worlds Connected: Perform, Involve and Participate', which generated quite an amount of media publicity for its 'innovative' approaches to conducting and presenting research using the 'arts'. Kip Jones is one of the key figures attached to the Centre

(see: <http://onlineservices.bournemouth.ac.uk/academicstaff/Profile.aspx?staff=jonesk>). He is a leader of a Performative Social Science (PSS) group at Bournemouth (and coordinates a web discussion group in the field, 'PerformSocSci'). Performative social science employs 'tools' from across the humanities and arts in research practices and/or communicating findings. Kip Jones is at the forefront of performative social science discussion. He was the lead editor of the recent (2008) FQS (Forum: Qualitative Social Research) Thematic Issue on 'Performative Social Science' (see: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/issue/view/10>).

19 Timescapes – Leeds University

This is a very large longitudinal group of studies funded by the national Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) – the Director is Bren Neale at Leeds University (see: <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/>). Bren Neale specialises in research on childhood, family life, personal relationships, life course transitions and intergenerational dynamics (see: <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/about/staff/neale.php>). The 'Timescapes' study (begun 2007 and

lasting five years) is the first significant qualitative longitudinal study in the UK. It investigates how personal and family relationships and associated identities emerge in time over the life course. Timescapes has a major emphasis on archiving materials for sharing, re-use and analysis. There are seven research projects at various universities - covering young lives, mid life, and older people. The research methods employed across these projects are varied and innovative – including the collection of in-depth interviews, memory books; narrative/case studies; participant observation and visual materials .

20 The National Sound Archive – British Library, London

The British Library Sound Archive has very important deposited recordings spanning areas such as medicine, industry, politics, colonialism and the arts. It carries out its own recording and offers advice on oral history (see: <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/sound/ohist/oralhistory.html>). Rob Perks is the Oral History Curator / Director of National Life Stories. In the last year of 20th century the Sound Archive and the BBC's local radio stations recorded 6000 interviews for the 'Millennium Memory Bank' - 'The Century Speaks: Millennium Oral History Project'. Memories were arranged under sixteen headings (including, 'Where we live', 'Growing up', 'Getting older', 'Eating and drinking', 'Beliefs and Fears' and other topics) and a number of radio programmes were produced. It was the largest history project that has featured on British radio. The Archive has the George Ewart Evans Collection of recordings.

21 The ESRC National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)

The NCRM is the national Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) initiative to enhance the standard of research methods in the social sciences in the UK, through training, capacity building and disseminating innovation and excellence in methodology. The 'coordinating Hub' is at the University of Southampton (see: <http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/about/organisation/Hub/>) and there are seven 'Nodes' or centres (funded for 2008-11) at collaborating universities 'Realities' Node – Manchester University.

This Node - 'Realities – Real life methods for researching relationalities' is based in the 'Morgan Centre for the Study of Relationships and Personal Life' and its work has relevance for biographical research (see: <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/realities/>).

The Node is under the Directorship of Jennifer Mason, who specialises in 'relatedness' or 'lived realities relatedness' and the connections people make with others in their everyday personal lives (see: <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/morgancentre/people/mason>). The objective of the Node is to develop methods of research that bring together 'vital', 'tangible and intangible dynamics' in the way that personal relationships are experienced. In doing so, it attempts to draw on mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) alongside the development of new qualitative approaches. Thus, it explores visual, sensual and perceptual aspects of interaction and 'novel' types of interview and arts based approaches. Jennifer Mason is also co-Director, with Carol Smart, of the Morgan Centre (c.f. David Morgan, above). Carol Smart's main recent interests have been family life and intimacy and the ways in which people conduct their personal lives. She has carried out research on divorce and/or separation and how this affects couples, children and wider kin; transnational families; and intergenerational family life

(see: <http://staffprofiles.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/Profile.aspx?Id=Carol.Smart&curTab=1>). Her latest book is *Personal Life: New Directions in Sociological Thinking* (Smart, 2007).

Two further researchers (not in the Realities Node) at Manchester University should be mentioned. Also in Social Sciences is Sheila Rowbotham, who has made an outstanding contribution to the women's history, feminism and political action – and debates on women's working lives both in the UK and internationally. She has also written an autobiography of her life in the 1960s, which received much publicity in the UK press (see: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/sheila.rowbotham/>; see also, Rowbotham, 1973; Rowbotham and McCrindle, eds. 1977; Rowbotham, 2000). (The work of Jill Liddington on women's history, at Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Leeds is of interest here, see: Liddington, 2006; see: <http://www.gender-studies.leeds.ac.uk/about/staff/liddington.php>). Penny Summerfield, in the Centre for the Cultural History at Manchester University, has written extensively on women's wartime lives in Britain (using the Mass-Observation archive) and researches on autobiography, feminism and narrative; questions around testimony (and issues in oral history practice); and subjectivity, identity and memory (see. Cosslett, Lury and Summerfield (eds.) 2000; Summerfield 1998).

22 Centre for Transcultural Writing and Research – Lancaster University

This Centre focuses on 'creative writing and its impact on society' with a variety of 'transcultural' and 'intercultural research' projects. It uses an interdisciplinary approach which encourages the production and comparative study of 'creative writing across cultures' and an investigation of the creative process from textual production to transmission (including re-writing and translation) (see: <http://www.transculturalwriting.com/>). One project of interest to biographical researchers is 'Moving Manchester: Mediating Marginalities' which focuses on how the experience of migration has influenced the work of writers in Greater Manchester from the 1960s up to today (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/movingmanchester/>). Director of the project is Lynne Pearce whose research concerns include: feminist literary theory and the 'politics of reading' and regional literature(s) and identities.

23 Sociology of the Arts Group - Exeter University

Biographical researchers exploring the place of music in everyday experience will be interested in the work of this Group (see: <http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/socarts/>). Its research considers the 'commitment to the dynamic role played by the arts in social life and social experience'. It examines 'artistic media' as 'these enter into and can be seen to structure social relations, situations, environments and action'. Tia Denora, the Director, has written *Music in everyday life* (Denora, 2000) which places music as an important active part of social activities. [I have recently written on rock and pop music and identity formation, see: Roberts, 2010a].

24 Centre for Studies of Surrealism and its Legacies – University of Manchester

Biographical researchers using or wishing to explore visual representation in life expression should find this Centre's work stimulating - as Surrealism drew from across the arts and 'mixed' artistic forms in life expression (e.g. text and the 'visual') in its work (see:

<http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/about/>). Surrealism has been the focus of recent renewed and detailed attention with a reassessment of its contribution to cultural anthropology; experimental film and documentary; photography; painting/sculpture; and the nature of artistic practice. The Centre's new project is on 'surrealism and non-normative sexualities'. [I find the work of photographers Claude Cahun (Fr.); Lee Miller (US) and Francesca Woodman (US), often associated with Surrealism, particularly fascinating for the study of biography i.e. in relation to the connections between: body/portraiture-identity/context-performance. An exhibition featuring their work was recently held at the Manchester Art Gallery, Allmer, 2010].

25 Study Group on Visual Sociology – British Sociological Association

In addition to the Auto/Biography Study Group, The British Sociological Association also has a Study Group on Visual Sociology (see: <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/specialisms/Visual+Sociology.htm>). In the field of social and visual anthropology in the UK, one of the most interesting (and prolific) investigators for biographical researchers, is Sarah Pink (Loughborough University) who has been exploring the 'senses', 'experience' and 'sensory fieldwork' to understand 'everyday sensory lives' (for example, using 'video tours' of homes with the resident 'informants') (Pink, 2006) (see: http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/staff/staff_biog/pink.html). Also at Loughborough University is Alan Radley, who has researched extensively in the health field. His current work focuses on 'the aesthetics of illness representation, both visual and narrative,' and 'dramatic performance' as means of 'shaping' illness 'experience', and communicating to others so as to inform means of reducing (see Radley, 2009; Radley ed. 1993; see: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/staff/radley.html>).

26 1st International Visual Methods Conference – University of Leeds 2009

This conference took place in 2009 and indicates the growth of visual methods in the UK (see: <http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/research/visual-methods-conference/>). One of the conference themes was 'participatory visual methods' or collaborative means of research including - 'Photovoice', 'photo-elicitation', 'graphic-elicitation', 'mindmapping', 'concept mapping', and all forms of 'arts-based research methods'. A second theme was 'researcher created data' - the 'awareness of 'documentary photographers', 'video-based researchers' and other 'visual researchers' of 'personal reflexivity' in how they practice i.e. record, view, analyse the materials they create. A third theme was Visual Methods and Design, for instance the use of visual methods in longitudinal qualitative research.

27 Portrait and 'Social Documentary' Photography

My own interests, in terms of biographical research in the 'visual field', lie in portrait and 'social documentary' photography. In both these areas (see: 15 Understanding British Portraits, above) there has been a rapid expansion of work (and (re)-publication of previous studies) in recent years in the UK (Roberts, unpublished a. and b.). I find the work by the long established (from 1968) Amber film and photography collective (based in Newcastle) particularly rewarding (see: <http://www.amber-online.com/sections/about-us/pages/introduction>). Its work is based in social documentary and

established on long term 'engagements' with 'working class and marginalised communities' in northern England, showing their 'everyday lives' in context (see, for example, the work of Amber photographer and film maker, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen). There are a number of relevant journals in the UK for those concerned with portrait/social documentary work, including: the British Journal of Photography; Source: The Photographic Review; and Portfolio: Contemporary Photography in Britain. Routledge now publishes a number of journals on visual studies, including Photographies and History of Photography). [As an aside – in Leeds, UK, where I live, Louis Le Prince took what may be the oldest surviving pieces of film, called 'Leeds Bridge' and 'Roundhay Garden Scene' (the latter close to my house) in 1888. Some film historians regard him as the originator of 'motion pictures'. It is also claimed that the Leeds Photographic Society is the oldest such group still in existence in the world].

28 The Centre for Urban and Community Research - Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths (University of London)

This Centre is interesting due to the involvement of photographers in its research work (the Centre also teaches an MA in Photography and Urban Culture) (see: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/cucr/>). One of its aims is to understand urban and economic landscapes and forms of urban culture. Its Head of Centre is Caroline Knowles, who has research interests and publications in race, ethnicity, urban space, globalisation, migration and visual, spatial and biographical methods (and has been a speaker at BSA Auto/Biography Study Group conferences) (see: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/sociology/staff/knowles/>). A member of CURS is Les Back, who is taking part in EUMARGINS (2008-11) project on the inclusion and exclusion of young adult migrants in 7 countries. The project includes the use 'illustrative cases' - migrants' stories with their photographs/illustrations. He recently published *The Art of Listening* (Back, 2007; see also: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/sociology/staff/back/>).

Comment

This review has been very much an introductory 'sketch' of the depth and range of biographical research in the UK. Compiling the list of centres has been quite difficult and I would hope that it retains a good degree of accuracy – given that people move between institutions and research centres change and also, that some leading researchers, substantial projects, and centres may have been overlooked. But, hopefully, the article gives a good indication of the strength of the field (its methodology and substantive areas) in the UK and allows the opportunity for readers to explore further.

From this overview it appears that biographical research in the UK is firmly established – it has become part of the 'mainstream' in research practice, with a good number of specialist centres and a wide range of research programmes. What is apparent from the review is the cross-connection between individual and research centres (even if they have a focus on different types of biographical research); the extension of interest in forms of 'personal documents' (diaries, personal artefacts, etc.); the varied types of 'interview' and interview analysis being used (e.g. some projects use 'walking tours' with participants); and the wide use of biographical research (and evaluation) in professional areas of health and welfare. Finally, it shows that UK based biographical researchers

have taken leading roles within international research organisations (ESA, ISA, ESREA, IABA, IABA Europe, and IOHA) and in attending and organising international workshops and forming major collaborations, while research Centres have hosted international conferences and invited international leaders in the field to visit.

I would say that 'biographical research' in the UK will increasingly explore a number of areas: in terms of substantive interests (e.g. welfare, migration, education, sport and exercises, illness, family relations, and longitudinal research); 'biographical dimensions' and experience (e.g. sensual-emotional and visual aspects of life); and innovative forms of practice (e.g. the Web as a vehicle for the carrying out, dissemination and object of research). It will also continue to develop connections with and very actively investigate the fields of photography, video, digital and 'traditional arts' and the 'performative' - as the 'object', 'means' and communicating research. These various explorations are already having various consequences, including a renewed focus in research methodology on 'participant' and 'audience' involvement (as in 'participatory research') – thus, raising the question of what is the nature of 'researcher', 'participant' and 'audience' and their interrelation. The questioning of assumptions regarding research procedures will increase, for instance, given the nature of the Web, the research 'stages' – formulation, carrying-out, dissemination, response, etc.- are now being considered as much more 'conterminous', as developed and linked together at the same time, and (all possibly) involving, to some degree, not only the 'participants' but also 'audience(s)'.

What is certainly apparent from the review above, are the quite extensive interconnections between researchers involved in biographical research across the social sciences. Perhaps, similar collaborations and interdisciplinarity will increase and extend within the social sciences - with 'biographical research 'meeting with' areas of psychology, philosophy, or literature, etc. which have not yet been – or have been relatively little – examined as relevant to the field as so far defined within sociology. So, areas within the social sciences, previously seen as 'out of bounds' or 'peripheral' to biographical research, will be subject to some consideration, e.g. the 'harder', 'scientific' areas of psychology. It is also clear that social scientists are increasingly collaborating with artists (across the 'traditional' arts and recent media) – and (to some extent) adding to their own skills and/or knowledge and understanding of artistic practices. My own 'feeling' is that not only will this 'interplay' with the arts continue and strengthen, on the 'one side', but also connections with quantitative methodologies (n.b. recent discussions on 'mixed methodologies') will be grow, on the other. In addition, apart from a closer connection with/drawing from the 'arts', there may well be more attention to the 'traditional (natural) sciences', as we discover more about the basis and operation of areas such as memory and consciousness, perception and time. While broadly these areas are not new for consideration by researchers in the biographical field, they are increasingly becoming central to the understanding of 'lives' or 'lived experience'. It is the degree and complexity of new scientific knowledge about how we experience everyday life that is now becoming more attainable. Thus, there is the exciting prospect of understanding how (say) forms of memory operate in a more 'holistic' manner – drawing across a wide range of disciplines (science-social science-arts). Despite these fascinating developments, as a sociologist, I still return to C. W. Mills' injunction to link biography-structure-history in our research. It still seems that at times we do not 'contextualise' within a given situation or 'social process' or sufficiently account for the individual's/group's

interrelation with wider culture and social forces. Like many other biographical researchers I continue to regard William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-20) as a major reference point in interconnecting 'the life' with its immediate and wider socio-cultural and historical context – the study is never far from my desk (see. Roberts, 2010b)!

Note: I have not included in this review various community organisations who publish 'lives'/'oral histories' (such as QueenSpark, in Brighton). For information on these groups see Oral History journal's regular news section. Similarly, I have not described commercial organisations that use biographical and biographical-digital materials and engage in training, etc. for public and private bodies. Also, I have not mentioned several prominent research centres noted for discursive and conversational analysis, etc. I should probably have said more on biography/autobiography in the fields of anthropology and history. [In these areas, my own work has been influenced, for instance, by Judith Okely - Okely and Callaway (eds.) 1992; Ruth Finnegan 2002; Elizabeth Tonkin 1995; and *Mass-Observation*; the approach of *Rethinking History* journal, co-editor, Alun Munslow; and *Llafur: Journal of Welsh People's History*]. A 'survey' of the 'biographical' or 'biographical research' within performance studies and traditional art/new media in academia and wider arts world in contemporary UK would be useful for social science biographical researchers seeking new methodologies/practice (c.f. Jones, Manchester University, 2006). Finally, I have not addressed the growth of 'biographical research' in academia within the wider socio/cultural development of interest and influence of the 'biographical' in the UK (as elsewhere) (e.g. in the media – TV, radio, books, film and rise of 'celebrity culture' and 'victim'/'survivor' accounts of abuse, illness, injury, drugs, etc.; in the shaping of working life/self e.g. by 'personal development reviews', the CV etc.; the popularity of individual/family history - n.b. the growth of family genealogy, the interest in BBC's 'Who do you think you are?' series, etc.; and on the Web, e.g. the rise of social network sites, blogs, etc.

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CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENTS

5-Day Intensive Training 2012
Biographic-Narrative-Interpretive Method (BNIM)
Narrative Interview and Interpretation

June 15th and 16th, Monday June 18th to Wednesday 20th 2012, London, United Kingdom

October 4th and 5th, Monday 8th to Wednesday 10th

The value of open-narrative interviewing and insightful interpretation is widely recognised, but rather than having to invent the wheel for themselves, many people welcome a systematic textbook-backed immersion into principles and procedures that have been shown over two decades and many countries to generate constantly high-quality work.

Designed for PhD students and professional researchers, the course provides a thorough training in doing BNIM biographic narrative interviews, together with 'hands-on experience' of following BNIM interpretation procedures. Students develop a sense of how their own research projects might use such aspects and components.

With two tutors (Tom Wengraf and Mariya Stoilova), we ensure close coaching and support for the intensive work that is needed for you to fully acquire both the understanding of principles and also the practical capacity for proceeding with the systematic procedures involved in BNIM – usable both for BNIM but also for other types of narrative interviewing and interpretation.

CONTACT: To apply for a place, please contact tom@tomwengraf.com. Places are secured by a £300 deposit, refundable given sufficient notice.

Mid-term Conference 2012
European Sociological Association

RN03 BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

University of Lodz, 14th and 15th September 2012

Biographical Research: emotion, ethics & performative praxis

Theoretical and methodological discussions in RN03 over recent years have focused upon: theoretical and applied biographical approaches; creative and innovative methodologies in biographical research such as sensory and visual approaches; memory and methodologies; and applying biographical research too. The mid-term conference at the University of Lodz on the 14th and 15th September 2012 will focus upon emotion, ethics and practice/performativity in biographical research.

Biographical research is concerned most centrally with emotion and a number of members are currently concerned with issues of ethics and the application of biographical research to social policy as well as interventions in practice. The mid-term conference in Lodz is planned in a format where participants can engage in depth discussions on the theme of emotion, ethics and performative praxis in biographical research and for the papers and the performance by Jane Arnfield to stimulate discussion and reflection.

Conference Fee: Includes conference registration, lunches, refreshments and conference dinner: 50 Euros. 30 Euros for ESA members and PhD students.

Conference Venue: Institute of Sociology, Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz, Rewolucji 1905 Roku 37/39, Poland. See the website: <http://eksoc.uni.lodz.pl/eng/>.

If you have any queries about the conference please contact: Asia Wygnanska j.wygnanska@gmail.com or Prof. Kaja Kaźmierska (Vice-Chair of ESA RN03) or Prof. Maggie O'Neill [Chair of ESA RN03]

PROGRAMME

The conference is located at the Institute of Sociology, Faculty of
Economics and Sociology, Rewolucji 1905 Roku 37/39

Friday 14th September 2012,

9.00-9.30 Opening – Maggie O’Neill and Kaja Kaźmierska (Room E-119)

9.30-10.30 Keynote

Wolfram Fischer: Acts of feeling and meaning – their transformation in narrating [Chair: Maggie O’Neill]

10.30-11.00 Break for coffee

11.00-13.00 Session A

Theorizing biographical research at the intersections of emotion and ethics – methodological issues [Chair: Wolfram Fischer]

1. Victoria Semenova: Taking the 'other's' side: interviewee versus interviewer.
2. Edmunds Supulis: To fit into discourse: the voice and the analysis in oral history practice.
3. Wojciech Połec: Ethical problems with the distributing of the personal information from the narrative interview.
4. Ina Alber: Internet Presence, Web 2.0 and Biographical Research Ethics.

13.00-13.45 Lunch

13.45-16.00 Session B

Biography and Emotion - different approaches in dealing with the life story of Natalia [Chair: Kaja Kaźmierska]

1. Agnieszka Golczyńska–Grondas: Natatalia’s case – a short characteristic.
2. Gerhrad Riemann: Losing and regaining control - An analysis of argumentation and narration in an interview with a former inhabitant of a Polish children's home.
3. Katarzyna Waniek: Reversed “betrayal funnel”. The case of Natalia: an orphanage inmate who was disloyal to her alcoholic family.
4. David Divine: Using one’s conscious use of self in listening to someone’s narrative and making sense of it, without doing violence to the narrator’s meaning.
5. Johanna Bjorkenheim: Analysis of the biographical interview with Natalia – a social work perspective.

16.00-16.15 Short break & coffee

16.15-18.15 Session C

Visual and Performative methodologies: ethics, emotion and praxis [Chair: Brian Roberts]

1. Maggie O'Neill: Arts based biographical methods: ethics, relationships and praxis.
2. John Given: Participative Arts and the Narrative Performance of Identity.
3. Elisabeth Donat: Photo elicited narrations on collective identities as an outlet for biographical tensions.
4. Elena Rozhdestvenskaya: Xavier Le Roy's biographical performance "Product of circumstances".

18.15–19.00 Performance by Jane Arnfield

19.00 Network Business Meeting & Book Launch

20.00 Conference Dinner [taxi's to restaurant]

Saturday 15th September

9.30–10.30 Keynote

Bob Miller: Living Up to the Altruism of the Public: A Different Take on the Ethics of Archiving Qualitative Data [Chair: Kaja Kaźmierska]

10.30 -10.45 Coffee break

10.45-12.45 Parallel Sessions D and E

Session D (Room E-324)

Biography and emotion when dealing with difficult life experiences [Chair: Gerhard Riemann]

1. David Divine: Oral History and Reminiscences and the uses and limits of emotional involvement as an 'insider', in searching for recall and remembrance.
2. Ieva Garda-Rozenberga, Maija Krūmina: Biographical interviews with people orphaned during young adulthood: a researcher's personal and emotional involvement.
3. Renata Szczepanik: Emotional reactions to imprisonment: inmates' narratives.
4. Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas, Marek Grondas: Biographical research and treatment. Some remarks on therapeutic aspects of sociological biographical interviews.

Session E (Room E-305)

Applying biographical research: interventions in policy and practice [Chair: John Given]

1. Agata Zysiak: Biography as a Tool of Identity Revitalization. Between Scientific Research and Social Action. Case of Lodz (Poland).
2. Markieta Domecka: "I invested in solar panels": pro-environmental practices and performative practices in life history interview.
3. Jacek Burski: Biographical approach in exploring social world of football supporters.

12.45-13.30 Lunch

13.30-15.30 Parallel sessions F and G

Session F (Room E-305)

The intersections of emotion and ethics when doing research about "The Other" [Chair: Bob Miller]

1. Lyudmila Nurse: Revelations of Identities: how much is too much? [seems appropriate here given focus on analysis of cultural memories and identities as well as ethics]
2. Eva Koening-Werner: A Colonial Fate: A Java-Chinese Boy's Experiences with Dutch Colonialism.
3. Karin E. Sauer: Examining Performative Praxes of Tibetan Buddhism in European Societies. Biographical narratives on incorporating Buddhist ethics into a German lifestyle.
4. Olga Nowaczyk: Emotional work during biographical research: a researcher's experience.

Session G (Room E-342)

The intersections of emotion and ethics in Polish research based on biographical perspective [Chair: Wojciech Połec]

1. Wiktor Marzec: Feeling and Affect in Early Proletarian Public Sphere – The Revolution 1905 in Poland in Biographical Perspective.
2. Adam Mrozowicki: The biographical paradoxes of union activism in Eastern Europe: applying biographical research to intervene in the trade union renewal practices.
3. Karol Haratyk: The role of emotions in biographical analysis. Polish transformation in narrations of the participants of tenant movement.
4. Justyna Kajta: Ethical problems in the biographical research on the Polish nationalistic milieus.

Session H (Room E-305)

Biography and Ethics [Chair: Victoria Semenova]

1. Agata Młynarska: Emotional energy as a key factor in biography shaping.
2. Agnieszka Trąbka: Ambiguity as a main characteristic of global nomads emotional life.
3. Kamila Biały: Biographical Career Shaping Processes in Poland – A New Type of Professional Identities in Late Capitalism.
4. Anja Schröder Wildhagen: Emotional stability of managers who undertake demoralized work tasks.

Session I (Room E-342)

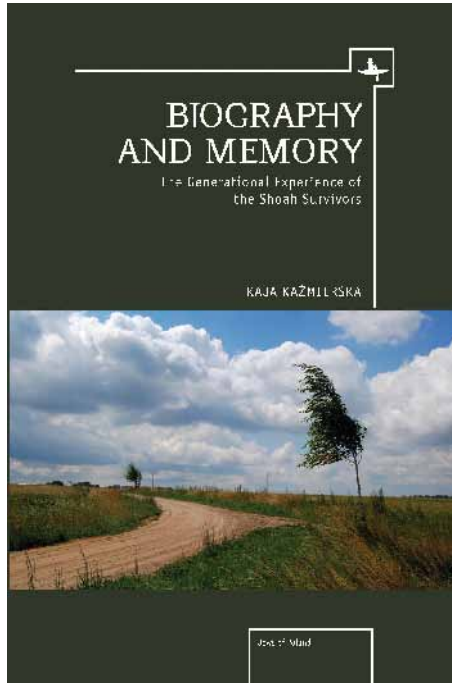
Biography, emotion and gender [Chair: Lyudmila Nurse]

1. Feiwei Kupferberg: Bodily Fear, Desire and Tranquility. The Poetic Language and Emotional Life of Sylvia Plath.
2. Maria Chaya Schupp: Female sex workers in Mumbai.
3. Liga Rasnaca: Women's Stories: Life after Violence.
4. Anna Kordasiewicz: Domestic emotions in women's narratives – care & household workers and their employers.

17.45-18.15 Close of Conference – Closing Remarks (Room E-119)

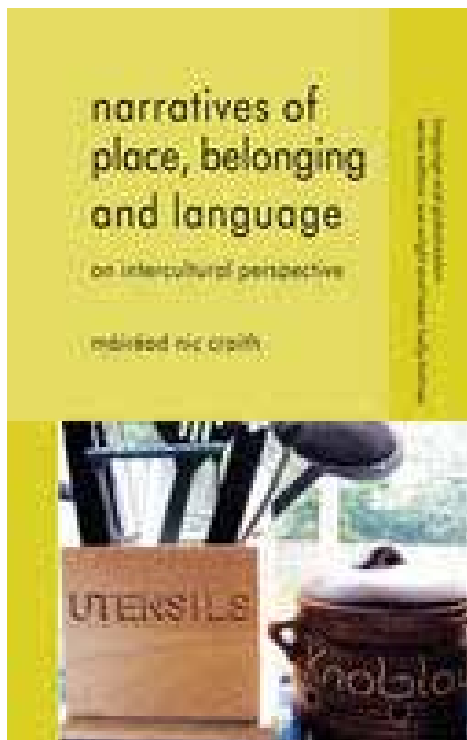
NEW PUBLICATIONS

Books



Kazmierska, Kaja (2012): *Biography and Memory: The Generational Experience of the Shoah Survivors*, Academic Studies Press, Boston.

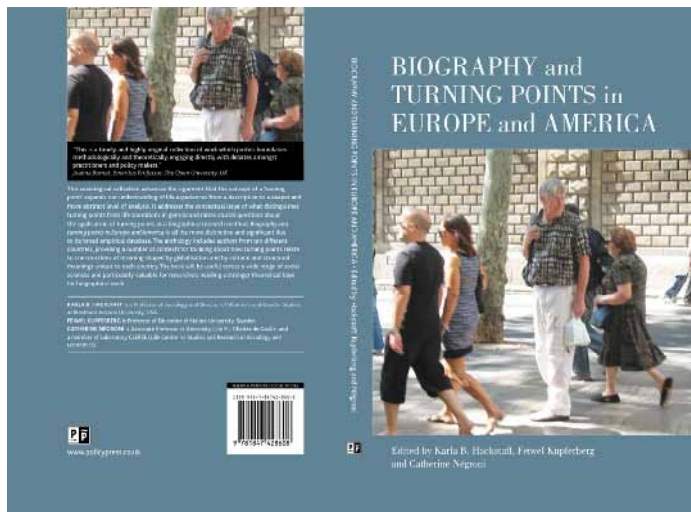
Biography and Memory discusses the return of Jews to their places of birth in Poland. A biographical urge to come full circle often leads to symbolic journeys to one's roots, but in the case of Shoah survivors, such journeys are unexpected, defying the generational definition of their biography, which mostly draws a demarcation line between wartime trauma and a new post-Holocaust life. Analyzed biographical stories collected from Israeli survivors indicate that such returns may be considered the last chapters of their wartime experiences. Survivors' biographies are examined in the context of both Jewish and Polish memory. This book will be of interest to sociologists, historians, and to general readers.



Craith, Máiréad Nic (2012): *Narratives of Place, Belonging and Language: An Intercultural Perspective*. Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan, Hardcover: 216 pages

Whether myth, novel or fairy-story, part of the human condition is to tell stories about ourselves and our society. This book focuses on stories of contemporary, European-born authors who have lived 'in-between' two or more languages and experienced different cultural and linguistic environments. Drawing on a strong theoretical framework, the book explores the human desire to find one's 'own place' in new cultural contexts and the role of language in shaping a sense of belonging in society. The research draws substantially on original life narrative interviews with writers who write at the 'cutting edge' of languages. These oral narratives are supplemented with published memoirs in English, French, German and Irish. Throughout the author reflects on her own fieldwork as a temporary migrant in Germany.

Upcoming Book:



Hackstaff, Karla B./ Kupferberg, Feiwei/ Négroni, Catherine (eds): *Turning-Points, Biography and Narrative: Advances in Europe and the Americas*. Bristol: Policy Press (to be published in June 2012)

From the introduction by Karla Hackstaff: The edited collection first took shape when Feiwei Kupferberg organized two panels on turning points for the International Sociological Association meetings of September 2008, which met in Barcelona, Spain. This context brought to-

gether international scholars from Britain, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, France, Hungary, Russia, Canada, the United States and Venezuela. While these distinct countries share a Western orientation, they nevertheless provide an array of structural, cultural and historically infused conditions for understanding how turning points relate to constructions of meaning by a nation's members. This text addresses increasingly globalized concerns regarding the identities and simultaneously structuring forces of gender, age, race-ethnicity, class, sexuality and religion – which are, nevertheless, grounded in the unique nations and communities that we include here. This enables sensitivity to variable constructs of significance that are associated with turning points.

Theoretically, the collection addresses the manifold ways that we might refine the concept of turning points, not only descriptively but also via theoretical analysis. Strauss (1959) provided a descriptive typology of turning points that captures how one's life course comes to be understood through frames such as "reaching milestones," "meeting a challenge", or being "deceived by events in general." This typology has been enormously useful for recognizing patterns of change in our lives. Yet, as Kupferberg (Chapter 10) indicates, Strauss' theory was more descriptive than analytical. Further, Strauss, among other sociologists like Mills (1959), and Mead (1934), understood how history and the specificities of social context inform and structure individual experience. Nevertheless, this theoretical insight deserves further critical inquiry, particularly given the "narrative turn" in the social sciences that compel sociologists to apprehend the post-structural insights concerning the relation between society and individual, the arts and sciences, as well as a new appreciation for the political and moral implications of research (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The authors here differentially address how we should understand turning points in relation to competing and complementary concepts that have emerged to understand how the social constitutes life stories. Among these recent developments, epistemological questions are crucial if we want to reevaluate the role of turning points.

It is timely to unpack and reassess the potential theoretical pliability of this sociological concept given a postmodern world that threatens to liquefy notions of identity and hasten social change. Under these conditions and in a new century, we must ask anew: what really constitutes a turning point? Clearly, turning points remain related to the life course (Elder 1974) and are still regularly seen as closely associated with life transitions (Hareven 1978; Hareven and Masaoka 1988). Increasingly, however, more analytical questions have arisen that complicate the notion and are addressed here. Is

every notable life-course transition necessarily a turning point? How do multiple events come to constitute turning points? Can multiple turning points occur simultaneously? To what degree are turning points planned or unplanned, controlled or uncontrolled, or finally, variable in their centrality from one person to another? If a turning point can be chosen, how is it related to bifurcation, which is marked by the characteristics of unpredictability and irreversibility? How does one turning point inform a subsequent one? Are turning points anticipated, recognized retrospectively, and/or do they have phases related to interpretation? Indeed, what are the temporal dimensions to turning points; what is their duration, frequency or order? Who has the authority to define turning points? Should scholars define turning point or is this a domain that is justly the prerogative of subjects? How should we understand the subjective and objective dimensions of turning points? These last three questions insist that research methodologists who elicit narratives, oral histories or biographies should problematize relationships between the researcher and the researched.

Methodological questions concerning research on life stories and experiences have burgeoned with narrative, discursive, feminist and critical theory. The authors here implicitly and explicitly address the methodological questions and relate these to their particular, substantive area of empirical research (i.e., artists, workers, single mothers, those experiencing early parental loss, lesbians, immigrants, youth gang members or religious converts). Most authors consider: How does the analysis of turning points relate to the method we use to collect empirical data? How is the meaning of turning point revealed by the case study, the oral history, the life story, the interview, or ethnography? Can a late modern era that frames our lives as increasingly mobile and disconnected, and thus reflexively self-constructed via narrative be better represented and/or understood by employing a concept like turning points (Giddens 1991)?

To ask who should define turning points is to recognize the crisis of representation in the previous fifty years or so. Politically astute epistemologists question just who gets to define what is real, true or noteworthy and as such have challenged traditional positivist approaches to research where objectivity is assumed rather than interrogated, for example). Other authors address how to incorporate the subjective element and retain an element of realism and materialism that acknowledges social constructions that might inform turning points. How might we use narrative theory to integrate subjective and objective elements in research? Surely the subjective dimension is a crucial corrective to historic imputations of meanings paraded as objective, yet a material dimension of history remains critical, paradoxically, if we are to recognize the hegemonic forces that can structure social and personal trajectories. In short, subjectivity seems necessary if insufficient for comprehending change that qualifies as a turning point once we realize the extent to which self-identities are also socially constituted.

The Chapters:

- Introduction: Advancing the Dialogue on Turning Points Karla Hackstaff (United States)
- Unpacking Biographical Narratives. Investigating Stories of Artistic Careers in Northern Jutland, Denmark Feiwel Kupferberg (Denmark/Sweden)
- Turning Points in the Life Course: A Narrative Concept in Professional Conversions Catherine Négroni (France)
- Conjugal Separation and Immigration in the Life Course of Immigrant Single Mothers in Quebec (Ana Gherghel and Marie-Christine Saint-Jacques (Canada)
- Migration Biography and Ethnic Identity: About Discontinuity of Biographical Experience and How

- Turning Points affect Ethnicization of Biography Thea Boldt (Germany)
- Biographical Structuring through a Critical Life Event: Parental Loss during Childhood Gerhard Jost (Austria)
 - Decisive Turning Points in Life-Trajectories of Violence among Young Men in the Barrios of Caracas: The Initiation and Biographical Reconversion to Non-violent Lifestyles Verónica Zubillaga (Venezuela)
 - Turning Points in the Life Course Events of Young Hungarians: Deciding to be Single Ágnes Sántha (Hungary)
 - Complicating Actions and Complicated Lives: Raising Questions about Narrative Theory through an Exploration of Lesbian Lives Nikki Ward (Britain)
 - Religious Conversion as a Biographical Turn/ing. The Case of Orthodox Believers in Contemporary Russia Liana Ipatova (Russia)
 - Conclusion: Theorizing Turning Points and Decoding Narratives Feiwel Kupferberg (Sweden/Denmark)

Books and Articles

- Delcroix, Catherine/Pape, Elise (2010): Conducting field research abroad – A socioanthropological approach. *Zeitschrift für qualitative Forschung*, 11. Jg., Heft 2
(see: <http://www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/zqf/article/view/5778>)
- Inowlocki, Lena/Mangione, Cosimo/Satola, Agnieszka (2010): Social work students doing autobiographical narrative interviews with people who experience(d) discrimination. *Zeitschrift für qualitative Forschung*, 11. Jg., Heft 2
(see: <http://www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/zqf/article/view/5779>)
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- Rozhdestvenskaya, Elena (forthcoming): Biographic Work for the Return of the Meaning: Stories of Ostarbeiters' Lives", it will be published in Canada in the Book Reclaiming the Personal: Oral History in Post-Socialist Scholarship University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 102-127
- Semenova, Victoria (2010): Teaching and learning: Students' perspective on their socialization practice in the field of biography. Zeitschrift für qualitative Forschung, 11. Jg., Heft 2 (see: <http://www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/zqf/article/view/5776>)
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- Waniek, Katarzyna (forthcoming): Immigrant's Experience in Germany. An autobiographical narrative study of young Poles who left for Germany between 1989-2001. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, September 2012

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