

Biography and Society

BIOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY
RESEARCH COMMITTEE 38 OF THE ISA

NEWSLETTER / OCTOBER 2005

**Letter from the President
October 2005**

Dear Members,

I am very glad to send you our newsletter for this year. As you will see, there are many activities going on in the field of biographical research. Thanks to Brian Roberts we had a very interesting Interim Conference, in April 2005, on the topic "Narrative, Memory and Knowledge" at the University of Huddersfield, UK (see the report by Brian Roberts). Especially thought-provoking were several papers on biographical research that combined narratives from biographical interviews with other forms of material. I am particularly delighted that we are able to publish one of these contributions in this Newsletter. It is the paper by Kip Jones on "The Art of Collaborative Storytelling: arts-based representations of narrative contexts" which greatly stimulated the methodological discussion on forms of synthesis between the arts and the social sciences in biographical research. In this paper Kip Jones describes various examples of an intensive collaboration between researcher and interviewee using heterogeneous media in terms of representation and communication in creating (auto-) biographical 'accounts'. For example, as in a biographical-narrative interview with Mary Gergen that was largely conducted via audio-taped and e-mail messages, or, as in another case by way of a collaboration between researcher and professional photographer. Furthermore we are glad to include a paper by Maria Helena Menna Barreto Abrahao about life histories of outstanding educators. On the basis of her analysis of life stories she discusses hypotheses about universal characteristics in outstanding teachers.

We are also very much in the process of preparing the program for the sessions of our Research Committee at the forthcoming XVI World Congress of Sociology, scheduled for July 23rd–29th, 2006 in Durban, South Africa. The deadline for the submission of the programs of the sessions to the ISA Congress Secretariat is 31st January 2006. As soon as the session organizers and myself have settled our program we shall send you all the details.

We hope you will enjoy this newsletter which is, as we hope, informative and stimulating. As you may see in the section '*New Publications*' Robert Miller has recently published four volumes on "Biographical Research Methods" containing a rich collection of articles that have been published by members of our RC.

This newsletter still includes *Conference Announcements and Calls for Papers*. But in order not to miss deadlines, Michaela Koettig and I have decided to send, in future, this information as soon as possible by e-mail, i.e. separately from the Newsletter. We would prefer

to use the Newsletter more than previously as a forum for discussion and to extend the section - *Viewpoints*. We also invite you to send us summaries of ongoing research. Unfortunately, for this issue we did not receive submissions for the section *Project Announcements*. Therefore we encourage you to submit contributions and also to react to the published papers.

Submissions for the next newsletter should be sent to us via e-mail Biography-and-Society@gmx.de before **30th May 2006**.

We are much looking forward to hearing from you. Best wishes

Gabriele Rosenthal
President, Biography and Society, RC38

Futher information:

➤ **Membership fees**

Please remember to pay your membership fee for 2006:

Two years: € 35

Four years: € 70

➤ **bank account**

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PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

Kip Jones (UK)

The Art of Collaborative Storytelling: arts-based representations of narrative contexts

'Art and science have a common thread – both are fuelled by creativity. Whether writing a paper based on my data or filling a canvas with paint, both processes tell a story' (Taylor 2001).

–Richard Taylor, associate professor of physics at the University of Oregon

'Science and art are complementary expressions of the same collective subconscious of society' (Morton 1997: 1).

–UC Davis physics professor, Gergely Zimanyi

Background

Physicist Gergely Zimanyi predicts a new convergence of science and art with the latest technological changes made possible by computers. "When a modern scientist's program spews out a million data, in what sense is the problem solved?" he says. "Only visualization can possibly help in comprehending such a massive output. This is why many scientists are using computers to better visualize their work" (Morton 1997: 1). Denzin and Lincoln (1994; 2002) find that qualitative theoretical development is – increasingly–taking place at the intersection of science and the humanities. Since Mishler noted a surge of growth in the variety of narrative inquiries in 1995 (Mishler 1995: 87), the excitement and possibilities for diversity in representations have continued to blossom exponentially; leading researchers are now frequently recommending designs of enquiry and dissemination which rest on processes of art rather than science (Clough 2004). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) have asked researchers to represent the subjects of narrative research with the complexity we associate with literature and works of art more generally.

Sandelowski (1991:165) has made a case for the temporal and liminal nature and vital meaning-making functions of storytelling being located in a hermeneutic circle of (re)interpretation. At the same time, Rorty (in Hiley et al 1991), posited that the objects of hermeneutic inquiry include recontextualising what is at hand – the desire to know essence – characteristically a human concern. Rorty continues that the desire to dream up as many new contexts as possible '... is manifested in art and literature more than in the natural sciences, and I find it tempting to think of our culture as an increasingly poeticized one, and to say that we are gradually emerging from scientism ...into something else, something better' (1991: 80). Nonetheless, text is often only linear and, therefore, temporal; in text the meaning must be precise or risk disbelief. Narrated stories and the constructed memories that are their building blocks, like dreams, are simultaneous layers of past and present – the visual *and* the spatial – and these added dimensions, beyond the purely temporal, demand our attention.

This emerging synthesis of the arts and social sciences presents challenges to the methodological-philosophical foundations of knowledge. At the very heart of this matter is knowledge transfer. The need for innovation in dissemination of detailed descriptive information has, until recently, been neglected in the social sciences. As collage-makers, narrators of narrations, dream weavers – narrative researchers are natural allies of the arts and humanities. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, performance, film, video, audio, graphic arts, new media (CD ROM, web-based production), poetry and so forth.

Huddersfield Conference Presentation

The format of my presentation at the *Narrative & Memory Research Group 5th Annual Conference* at the University of Huddersfield (April 2005) was performative, collaborative and conversational. Through the use of three audio-visual PowerPoint presentations, an attempt was made to revisit the arts and humanities in search of lenses through which the intricacies of social science data might be represented. As a description of a dream in words never quite captures the essence of the dream itself –its feeling/picture/space – so too narratives of lives need to be fleshed out through additional devices. I am now convinced that these are not mere matters of a kind of subtext, but rather represent, in many cases, a portal to deeper communication and interpretation. At the conference, I explored examples of (re)presentation from my own biographic narrative work and discussed the potential of use of various media (studio recording, audio/visuals, etc.); I then shared several examples of visual/arts-based production through the three short narrative sequences described below.

1. "Fall River Boys" Narrative Photography by Richard Renaldi (re-narrated by Kip Jones)

Since the spring of 2001 I have paid numerous visits to the small community of Fall River, Massachusetts. The town is situated on the Taunton River about 15 miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean and is home to a Portuguese community of considerable size. Fall River enjoyed prosperity as a manufacturing center for cotton textiles until the 1920s but has seen its economic lifeblood leach away in the intervening decades. As an impoverished working class New England community, I am drawn to this town for its bleakness and its beauty. My photographic focus here is on the teenage boys who are engaged fitfully, awkwardly in the search for manhood in this harsh and sometimes hopeless place. – Richard Renaldi

I discovered the photographs of Richard Renaldi on the Internet while creating a CD-ROM on lifelong learning for the *Department for Education and Skills* (UK). I invited Richard to include his photographs in our project because his pictures of individuals have a powerful ability to reach the viewer by visually representing the personality in front of the lens. Later, I discovered his Fall River Boys series on his website (<http://www.renaldi.com/portfolio/index.html>) and was struck by the capacity of this body of black and white photographs to tell a story. I decided to create a short PowerPoint presentation of his photographs for the Huddersfield conference because I believe that they demonstrate how a story can be narrated visually – minimising the use of words. Because Renaldi's photographs convincingly tell a story of

teenage youth in a particular place, I decided to use a backing track to represent time, place and interpretation and chose the song, "*Everything Must Change*"¹.

I particularly noticed that Richard's photographs of the younger boys depicted happy, carefree children, but the older boys portrayed seemed to take on a burden and hardness that teens from more promising backgrounds might not. My first interpretation was, therefore, to represent this change – both through reordering the photographs and the use of the song. Secondly, I used the repetition of a few of his shots of buildings in Fall River to represent urban decay, hopelessness, the power of the environment on the psyche and the general lack of any kind of bright future in this post-industrial, manufacturing town in New England. The song repeats the line, '*Sun lights up the sky and humming birds do fly*', several times, represented through the visual irony of crisp, bright sunlight on decaying buildings and streets. Nonetheless, these "humming birds" seemed unable to fly or flee their environment. I noticed that, in many of the pictures, the boys were associating themselves with a means of transport or "a way out" such as bikes, skate boards, scooters and cars. The song laments, '*Winter turns to spring, A wounded heart will heal, but never much too soon. Yes, everything must change*'. But will it for these teens caught up in circumstances beyond their control? The presentation ends with a shot of two teens working behind the counter of a fast food outlet, then fades to shots of the timeless Taunton River – nature's conduit – both to the town of Fall River and away from it.

2. "Thoroughly Post-Modern Mary" [A Biographic Narrative Interview with Mary Gergen] by Kip Jones and Mary Gergen

In 2004, the editors of the online qualitative journal, *FQS* (<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>), were creating a special issue devoted to interviews with prominent researchers in the field of qualitative research and asked me to interview the feminist, scholar and writer, Mary Gergen. I had met Mary and her husband, the social psychologist, Kenneth Gergen, on several occasions at conferences in the past and had been invited to brunch with them at their home in Wallingford, Pennsylvania on one occasion. Because of this 'familiarity' with the subject of the interview, I felt that an opportunity presented itself to make use of the open-ended, unstructured interview technique that I use in my primary research, the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (Chamberlayne, Bornat, Wengraf, eds. 2000; Wengraf 2001; Rosenthal 2004; Jones 2004), but test its capacity to generate story

¹ "Everything Must Change"; music and lyrics by Bernard Ighner

Everything must change	Winter turns to spring
Nothing stays the same	A wounded heart will heal
Everyone will change	But never much too soon
No one stays the same	Yes everything must change
The young become the old	Rain comes from the clouds
And mysteries do unfold	Sun lights up the sky
'Cause that's the way of time	And humming birds do fly
Nothing and no one goes unchanged	Rain comes from the clouds
There are not many things in life	Sun lights up the sky
You can be sure of except	And music makes me cry
Rain comes from the clouds	
Sun lights up the sky	
And humming birds do fly	

under very different conditions. By using its unstructured, interview method, the personal journey to “who the interviewee is today” is encouraged, rather than merely a list of accomplishments, typical of more journalistic interviews.

The Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method uses an interview technique in the form of a single, initial narrative-inducing question (minimalist-passive), for example, *'Tell me the story of your life,'* to illicit an extensive, uninterrupted narration. This shift encompasses willingness on the part of the researcher to cede 'control' of the interview scene to the interviewee and assume the posture of active listener/audience participant. A follow-up sub-session can then be used to ask additional questions, but based only on what the interviewee has said in the first interview and using her/his words and phrases in the same order, thus maintaining the narrator's gestalt.

In typical usage of the method, microanalysis of the narrative of the reconstructed life follows the interview stage, using a reflective team approach to the data, facilitating the introduction of multiple voices, unsettling and creating a mix of meaning and encouraging communication and collective means of deliberation (Gergen 2000: 4). In brief, The *'Lived Life'*, or chronological chain of events as narrated, is constructed then analysed sequentially and separately. The *'Told Story'*, or thematic ordering of the narration, is then analysed using thematic field analysis, involving reconstructing the participants' system of knowledge, their interpretations of their lives and their classification of experiences into thematic fields (Rosenthal 1993: 61). Rosenthal defines the thematic field as: 'the sum of events or situations presented in connection with the themes that form the background or horizon against which the theme stands out as the central focus' (1993: 64). The process typically begins by recruiting team participants (two, three or more per team) from varying backgrounds (professionally as well as demographically) to be immersed in the transcript, at times 'line by line' and hypothesise at each new revelation of dialogic material. Finally, through hypothesising how the lived life informs the told story, the case history is then constructed from these two separate threads. In the case of the Mary Gergen interview, however, a conscious decision was made not to interpret her life story in this typical manner.

I mailed Mary Gergen a cassette tape, blank except for the opening life story question. Mary took up the challenge and recorded her life story on the tape (transcript available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-04/04-3-18b-e.htm>) and returned it to me through the post. This was followed up by several email question and answer messages back and forth (also included in the transcript). One of the first things I noticed (interpreted?) about the interview was Mary's use of films as metaphors for transitional moments in her life. The second was that Mary's story was quite “playful” and I wanted the presentation in *FQS* to reflect that. I decided to use illustrative photographs (often from film) and graphics to enhance the storytelling and to represent one possible interpretation of the story. By using typefaces and colours (not usually available to us in hardbound journals), I was able to portray the journey through time and its period effects so that Mary's narration was set against a visual background of the influences and cultural sea changes that abound in any life story's passage through time (Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-04/04-3-18-e.pdf>).

A decision was made to present the 'lived life' and 'told story' (as well as the transcript) online in the journal in a 'raw' form with the further involvement/interpretation of the reader/viewer in mind. The story has not been "academically analysed" by the interviewer or reflective teams, but left open and transparent, in order that the reader/viewer becomes part of the interpretive process. Still, the production of the story becomes the creative output and social construction of both the storyteller and the interviewer (the performer and the first audience) and, in this case particularly, one story of many stories that could have been told by the person interviewed. Routine facts are often back-grounded by the narrator through the use of this method in favour of spontaneity in the storytelling and the creation of meaningful life metaphors.

The Biographic Narrative *Interpretive* Method has much to say, in fact, about the formal interpretive process (see Wengraf 2001; Jones 2004). Still, it is important to emphasize that interpretation on the part of the researcher begins early, even within the interview. During the initial encounter, the researcher is often making and dealing with subconscious observations whilst maintaining a position of active listener. Through the procedure of note taking in the first subsession of the interview, the researcher begins a process of interpretation, making choices about which areas of the story should be explored further in the second subsession. Subconscious thoughts are brought into the interpretive process through such note taking; post-interview debriefing (with oneself or others) follows the interview sessions and is inherently interpretive. Later, when the interviewer (preferably) types the transcript of the interview, further reflection and notation takes place. Further hearings of the tape recorded interview produce additional insights and interpretations which are diaried by the researcher as well. When constructing the Lived Life and selecting passages of the Told Story for team analysis, again, the interpretative skills of the researcher come into play. All of these interpretive processes were incorporated into the creation of the final product in the *FQS* Mary Gergen interview.

Asking a person to tell us about her/his life is just a beginning. By doing this, in a less than perfect way, we are at least starting by participating in the storytelling of the person in her/his world, her/his expectations, successes, failures and dreams. By presenting a visual interpretation of Mary Gergen's story, I was able to emphasise the performative nature of her storytelling and her biography in general. I believe that the Biographic Narrative Interpretive interview with Mary Gergen is a success because it foregrounds the participant and her life as she recalls it today, thus providing insight into the social construction of her 'identity', but leaving enough space for the interpretation of the final audience, the reader.

3. "I Can Remember the Night ..." by Kip Jones and Polly Humberstone²

The final example presented at the Huddersfield conference was a presentation that resulted from a more traditional use of the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method from my study of identity and the informal care role (Jones 2001). Through the use of the in-depth, minimalist-passive interview technique of the Method, I have discovered that when a particularly traumatic or life-defining event is being described in interviews, the expressed memory of it

² Polly Humberstone is a pseudonym for one of the participants in the study.

becomes more than a verbal *reportage*. Time becomes very precise in these dreamlike sequences as interviewees struggle to recall minute-by-minute details in a specifically detailed time-space. There is a great effort to describe a physical atmosphere, an ambience, a three-dimensional space and the physical relationships in this space (between people, objects, and so forth). I liken it to trying to describe a dream and how words cannot quite capture the 'feeling' that we have had in the dream. These revelations seemed to fit with the model that I have been developing, sometimes referred to as 'flashbulb memories' (Brewer, 1986: 36). That concept's photographic analogy, however, excludes a sense of three-dimensional space as well as the passage of time – a memory with its cinemagraphic or theatrical qualities. For me, these narrators' precise descriptions resonate more accurately with the 'interior drama' of theatre or film.

An example of these three-dimensional, atmospheric and hyper-detailed recollections is demonstrated in Polly's story (Figure 1). Following the Second World War, when Polly was eight, her father returned from the army and her parents decided to divorce. Her parents sat her down and asked her whom she wanted to be with after their separation.

I can remember the night that they did split up erm it was a wet night, I saw my mother go out I didn't know where she was going I thought oh – I shouted after her, she said nothing she just walked out, my father then called me and he said we are going out I asked whether mother was and he said she wont be coming with us (1) again ever and that's (1) that was the night they finally split up before the divorce. I can so clearly .. and I .. my mmi er (1) I don't know I felt devastated and then there was a meeting in the house at my fathers house in the front room and I can remember it so clearly, he was sitting in the armchair (1) in the corner, my mother was on the settee near the window and (3) they was asking me who I wanted to be with (1) and I said but I want to be with both of you I can remember it so well (2) and I .. I was supposed to pick who I wanted to be with (1) I think that was awful of them now, in hindsight I think it was dreadful, and I couldn't pick I loved them both (1) oh yes I remember it very well !

Figure 1: Polly remembers [Numbers in brackets (1) refer to pauses in seconds]

The reversed chronological order of events portrayed in Polly's description above (Figure 1) becomes first, a passage about her mother leaving and secondly, a report of the preceding conversation with her mother and father. In this passage, expressive passion overshadows chronological time. This was a very intense and detailed part of her life story: she depicts the atmosphere (*'wet night'*), movement (*mother walking out*), then the meeting in the front room, remembering who was sitting on which furniture, locating the players in three-dimensional space: *'in the corner'*, *'near the window'*, etc. She is describing it like one would describe a dream, clutching at details to make it more real. Yet, when she is stumbling, she is reflecting her inability to verbalise something, a feeling. These are important pauses, because she is trying to "paint" an exact picture: *'I can remember it so well'*. Her visualisation

takes over from the verbal telling, whilst the verbal is trying inadequately to paint the picture that is so much stronger in the subconscious. The psyche does not always speak in complete sentences; Bakhtin refers to this as 'the border of the verbal and the non-verbal, the said and the unsaid' (Thorton, 1997: 4).

For audience clarity in the audio/visual conference presentation (the audio track is available at: (<http://www.angelfire.com/zine/kipworld/Track-01.mp3>), I put the description in chronological order, setting the scene and bringing the audience into the physical space first, emphasising the crucial three-dimensionality of the story. Because Polly's memory (retold to me when she was 65 years old), seemed to be a memory that had resurfaced over a lifetime since the childhood event, I decided to present the story with three voices – one a youngster, one a middle-aged woman and the third, an older woman in her mid-60s – representing Polly at three stages in her life. The three performers – all characterizing Polly's telling – come from three generations of the same family (for consistency in accent). Their performance of Polly's narration was studio recorded – the three voices signifying the passage of time and Polly's recurring memory. Lines were repeated by each of the performers, lending a poetic quality to the narrative. The visuals were made up of photographs of the interior of a working class northern UK 'front room' in the late 1950s/early 1960s – with only the period furniture acting as symbols of the three characters. The photos were converted to black and white, with some sections filmed as movies in grainy Super-8 type style – a frequently used home movie film, introduced in 1965. Although the presentation only lasts for less than two minutes, it is a powerful representation of a narration of space/time and how the physical is part of our memories of life events.

Conclusions

Where do we find an aesthetic in which to base our new 'performative' social science? 'The criteria for evaluating qualitative work ... are moral and ethical. Blending aesthetics (theories of beauty), ethics (theories of ought and right) and epistemologies (theories of knowing), these criteria are fitted to the pragmatic, ethical and political contingencies of concrete situations' (Denzin & Lincoln 2002: 229). The 20th Century was not kind to 18th Century notions of the aesthetic. In the 21st Century, ideas of what "truth" and "beauty" mean need to be re-examined from a local, quotidian vantage point, with concepts such as "aesthetic judgment" located within community. The principles of Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002) offer a theoretical grounding to the search at hand. Relational Art is located in human interactions and their social contexts. Central to its principles are inter-subjectivity, being-together, the encounter and the collective elaboration of meaning, based in models of sociability, meetings, events, collaborations, games, festivals and places of conviviality. Bourriaud believes that Art is made of the same material as social exchanges. If social exchanges are the same as Art, how can we portray them?

One place to start is in our (re)presentations of narrative stories, through publications and presentations. Ken Gergen argues that the words and stylistic conventions used in typical journals "derive their meaning from the attempt of people to coordinate their actions within various communities" (Gergen 1997: 6). These linguistic conventions evolve over time into codified symbols with the ability to compress large amounts of assumed knowledge and background information and deliver it for their intended audiences (and, by intention or coin-

cidence, to withhold such information from others). The members of different groups of scientists, policymakers, campaigning communities and so on go through a lengthy socialisation process to enable them to produce and understand papers comprised of a kind of 'shop talk' that heightens participation in the language game, enabling them to ring-fence their areas of expertise. This professional "codification" produces icons with the accumulated power to persuade, convince, establish authority and represent authenticity, but which through this very process carries the inevitability of skewing and/or stifling wider community discourse and input. Left out of the mix in the standard scientific report is a consideration by authors and publishers of their own participation in, and communication with, the larger community to which we all claim membership.

Rethinking our relationship within communities and across disciplines such as the arts and humanities offers up opportunities for us to move beyond imitation of "scientistic" reports in dissemination of our work and look towards means of representation that embrace the humanness of social science pursuits. This creates a clearing in which meaningful dialogue with a wider audience is possible, feedback that is constructive and dialogical in its nature becomes feasible, and dissemination of social science data transforms into something not only convivial, but also even playful. Presentations can then evolve into ways of creating meaningful local encounters and performances, in the best sense of these words.

A final note about collaboration

One of the joys of working with the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method is its collaborative nature – first with participants in the interview process and, second, in the assemblage of reflecting teams to respond to the stories of narrators. These few examples of arts-based production of narrative data described here represent a third kind of alliance, the collaboration in the production of devices for dissemination of our findings. A danger exists, however, that, in our enthusiasm to embrace the arts as social scientists, we may both narrow our concepts of the possibilities available to us in the arts and humanities and also reach beyond our own grasp and capabilities. Too many of us have sat through somewhat embarrassing dramatisations comprised of well-meaning social scientists' attempts at becoming actors. I fear that Mickey Rooney's excited exclamation to Judy Garland: "I know what we'll do! We'll put on a show!" is sometimes taken too literally by some enthusiasts of the performative possibilities of narrative data.

This is where collaboration becomes crucial. Reaching across disciplines and finding co-producers for our presentations can go a long way in insuring that, rather than amateur productions, our presentations have polish and the ability to reach our intended audiences in an engaging way. Pushing the limitations of means of dissemination already available to us (print, web-based, PowerPoint) to new and creative levels, provides platforms for attention-grabbing, evocative diffusion of social science data. Indeed, taking inspiration for styles of presentation from other disciplines also broadens our canvass. It is a historical fact that the major upheavals and transformations in Western art and science occurred during periods of cross-pollination from discipline to discipline. With this in mind, our collaborations offer us opportunities for meaningful dialogue between disparate communities, opening up unknown possibilities for future dialogues and associations. Co-operation itself, therefore, becomes a

creative act, often stretching the boundaries of our understanding and prodding us to come up with fresh and innovative ways of overcoming practical obstacles in knowledge transfer.

Several collaborations took place in producing the presentations described in this paper. First, in *Fall River Boys*, I entered into a collaboration with photographer, Richard Renaldi, as described earlier. This is not to say that a presentation of photographs that I took myself would not be appropriate, but by using a professional's work, the message became that much richer and stronger, creating a mix of voices and collective meaning. In the end, the "dialogue" created between the photographer and me, by working together to visually narrate through the use of his photos, enhanced and contributed to the final dialogue with the audience.

Secondly, in the Mary Gergen interview, a follow-up email dialogue developed between the two of us, the results of this being incorporated into the final presentation. After the interview, Mary discussed her story and participation with her husband, Ken Gergen, and his input, although tertiary, makes its presence felt. Permission³ for use of all of the photographs and artwork used in the final document was obtained through email correspondence. This process resulted at times in some interesting electronic conversions as well. I was, of course, in dialogue with the editors⁴ of *FQS*, and their input was extremely helpful. The transcript of the interview was compiled by the administrator at our research centre who also acted as a "captured audience" for early versions of all three presentations and provided helpful feedback.

Finally, in the Polly Humberstone sequence, more collaborations took place. The three amateur performers⁵ all agreed to participate in the recording of the monologue. A composer/musician⁶ friend donated his studio and his time to produce a professional recording of the narrative as well as compose the background music. *The National Trust*⁷ agreed to the use of their photographs of the Liverpool house shown in the presentation.

Refusing to be limited by more traditional means of dissemination of social science data also means that a modicum of humility and a state of "not knowing" is necessary in our collaborations with others from far a field. Looking beyond the safety of our own discipline, with its protocols, procedures and "ring-fenced areas of expertise" to what Frances Rapport calls 'the edgelands' (Rapport, Wainwright & Elwyn 2004), can be both daunting and liberating. The trick is, I believe, to remember that art and science are both 'fuelled by creativity' (Taylor 2001) and that the potential for inventiveness resides within all of us. After all is said, creati-

3 Photographic reproductions courtesy of the following: Rolfe Alumni Group; True Catholic Organization; Tom Tierney; The Roy Rogers-Dale Evans Museum, Branson, MO; The Missouri Heritage Project, 1999 for educational use; Chuck Adams; Marilyn Monroe, LLC (CMG Worldwide); B. Krist for Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation; Swarthmore College; Matson Navigation Company, Inc.; University of Pennsylvania; Vidisco Ltd.; Peter Kurth; Stephen Mifud (Malta) – <http://www.marz-kreations.com/home.html>; Diva Las Vegas; Tickety-boo Ltd; Paul Ivester. Music: "Theme from *The Last Tango in Paris*" (Gato Barbieri, arr. by Gotan Project); "Happy Trails to You" (music and lyrics by Dale Evans Rogers, sung by Roy Rogers).

4 Katja Mruck, Günter Mey

5 Sirron Norris-Hall

6 Engineering and Music: Ross Hillard; recorded at *Magic Number Studios*, Leicester

7 Photos courtesy of *The National Trust*: 251 Menlove Avenue, Liverpool, John Lennon's home with his Aunt Mimi until 1963, restored by *The National Trust*, with furnishings and interior decoration similar to the way the rooms looked when Lennon lived there.

vity is that uncanny ability to work within rule boundaries while, at the same time, changing them.

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Maria Helena Menna Barreto Abrahão⁸ (Brazil)

The life history approach about outstanding educators to understand universal teacher's characteristics

Abstract

In the preface to the author's book about outstanding educators in Brazil, Antonio Nóvoa, of Lisbon University, reported that the characteristics identified in Brazilian teachers, who lived in Rio Grande do Sul, were found in other countries. This paper examines those characteristics based on teaching theory and praxis. It argues that, with some exceptions, there are universal characteristics in outstanding teachers which may be deduced from individual and social histories. An understanding of these characteristics may be developed in teacher education for new generations of teachers.

Introduction

In the preface to the book "History and Life Stories – outstanding educators make up the history of the Rio Grande do Sul education" (Abrahão, 2001)⁹, António Nóvoa (2001) wrote that, in research work carried out by him and his colleagues, the features found in the educators of their study were the same as those seen in our highly regarded educators of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The twelve educators, whose life stories we have studied, were chosen based on indications that pointed at them and justified them as being really committed with education, having, thus, a great expression potential within the communities in which they act/acted. Participants in the research group all lived/live around different cities in the interior and in the state capital, which enabled the study of educators coming from different inland places.

In the present paper, the central theme – the universal features of teacher thinking and acting – is laid out in three parts. In the first part, the referred preface is reproduced so as to present the features shared by outstanding peers in Rio Grande do Sul and educators from other countries studied by Nóvoa. In the second part, these features are concretely analyzed, presenting some examples of narratives in which the twelve life stories of highly regarded educators from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, are revisited in transversal fashion. In order to make up the present article, the twelve life stories were revisited and cross-read so that the universal features became visible. In the third part, reference elements that help to

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⁹ This book is the result of the investigation done by a research team coordinated by me at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul. The research we have developed fits into the research line on Teaching and Teacher Education. In southern Brazil, South America – and more specifically in the State of Rio Grande do Sul – there are educators who have written the history of education and whose life stories are likely to vanish due to the lack of patrimony on the theme. In the book, these features are spread over the three categories that were more specifically worked on in the research: Education; Personal/Professional Life; Identity Construction. In order to develop this research we used the Life Stories Methodology (Santa Marina & Marinas, 1994; Goodson, I., 1992; Pujadas, J.J., 1992; Nóvoa, A., 1995), based on narratives (Benjamin, W., 1988; Larrosa, J. et al., 1995; Mc Ewan, H. & Egan, K., 1995; Ricoeur, P., 1995; Fabra, M.L. & Domènech, M., 2000; Jovchelovitch, S. & Bauer, M. W. 2002) and documents – diaries, mail, photos, video tapes, published material, etc – (Pujadas, J.J., 1992). We analyzed this material using Content Analysis (Bardin, L. 1977).

gain understanding of the “universal features of teacher acting and thinking theory” are briefly revised.

Educators studied by Nòva

This is the text: “As I read, I could not help remembering the anguish shared with Jean Houssaye and other colleagues when, after having published *Quinze Pédagogues - Leur influence aujourd’hui* (1994), we decided to set out the task of writing the biography of *Pédagogues Contemporains* (1996). What we found reveals traces that are present in many educators wherever they come from. Let me refer to four such traces, which I acknowledged in the Rio-Grande do Sul educators.

First of all, there is constant attention given to the link between theory and practice. These men and women know that the educational space does not exist without constant reference to a theory but they also know that this theory exists in practice, that it rises from it, inspiring and renewing it. The theory-practice dichotomy is useless and unfertile. What really matters is to find out this *plus* that is born into the connection between theoretical ‘doing’ and practical ‘thinking’.

Secondly, there is a curious mixture of distrust and belief towards the school. Disbelief leads educators to stress the point that their formation trajectories were not utterly achieved by their in-school experience; this reminds me of the manifest-book of the New Education in which Adolphe Ferrière ‘candidly’ explains that the great wise people are those formed despite the school and not due to it. The ‘belief’, takes them to underline certain pedagogical experiences and particularly rewarding moments in their professional life

Thirdly, there is the conviction that it is possible – that it shall be possible – to educate all children without ever forgetting that there is only teaching when there is learning. Being an educator is not to conform to teacher obligations, but rather to do whatever is needed to make room for learning to happen. It is about giving value to culture, which is inserted in people, thus contributing to their formation. They know that the essential mission is to present the world to those who get there: thus, the first word is the one of the teacher. But they also know that the formation process aims at allowing each one of them to ‘regard themselves as people’: thus, the last word is the one of the pupil.

In fourth place, there is the stating of pedagogy as the exercise of civic intervention. The biography of educators is defined by the dissatisfaction before the state of the school and the search for new paths. As others give up, they continue stubbornly to wish for graduating all students, avoiding exclusion and the ‘*apartheid*’. As others resign, they associate in collective fashion so that, by the sharing of teamwork, they may find useful and necessary answers. This attitude is also reflected in their permanent focusing on teacher formation. They do not overlook the fact that the effort to educate, as an effort towards culture and human relations, depends mostly on the competence and the talent of the master” (Nóvoa, 2001, pp. 7-12).

Educators from Rio Grande Do Sul

The theory-practice relation

The theory-practice relation may be observed in our educators according to some indicators.

One such indicator is related to the coherence between discourse and action as a person and an educator. Such coherence has proved to be a highly significant educational ingredient for the personal formation of the pupils of these educators. Examples from narratives¹⁰, like the ones that follow, show us that educating by example is an important expression of the theory-practice relation:

"I think it was not only what she said, but rather her words translated her acts". "His pedagogical fundamentals, the theoretical positions were deeply coherent with his practice, not only in teaching, but also in existing".

Another indicator that allow us to infer about the existence of the theory-practice relation refers to subjects in context according to the world students live in, which enables the teacher to plan and carry out classes that meet features, needs, aspirations and possibilities, on the side of the student, allowing him to build more meaningful knowledge:

"They talked to me and among themselves. From these conversations I started to draw their cultural world, their interests, their needs, acquiring information that, certainly, would provide me with knowledge for the planning and the organizing of the work".

Still, there are other indicators, as the circular theory/practice/theory relation:

"She used a very special methodology, seeking to raise our taste for sociocultural issues, inducing us to good and interesting reading activity. Besides that, she led students to experience situations that, probably later, she would be faced with. She offered us not only theory; but led us to put in practice the acquired knowledge". "He knew how to do and to adequately articulate the two dimensions of the teaching-learning process: the articulation of theory and practice".

Non-formal and continued formation in professional life

Without neglecting the importance of school education, in their narratives, our educators stress the value assigned to non-formal and continued formation, which is achieved by them already acting as educators, for their own education and professional expertise.

Among the twelve educators, some had their first literacy and art lessons at home with their mothers. The values, culture and religion were acquired within the family:

"The 30ies. Each one attempted to prepare their descendents for the future. Traditional values as applied to family structure were predominant. The concern of the mother was to see to good learning to all, or better, solid culture".

Religious formation, considered as non-formal, was equally a strong formation component: "From an extremely Christian family he was given influence to follow a religious life and also due to personal traits: quiet, introspective and reflexive". "At 10 years of age, I withdrew from my family, and came to form my personality, my identity in the seminar".

¹⁰ The examples registered in this article are from narratives in our research (from the outstanding educators whose life stories we studied, their students, colleagues, family members and friends). From this moment on, they will refer to several educators, whose names we did not declare in order to preserve their anonymity.

The continued formation, already as a teacher, was a powerful element, i.e. is when the Sufficiency Exams¹¹ was taken by many of them:

"In his continued formation he highlights the Sufficiency Exams taken between 1950 and 1956". "In the years 1957 and 1958 he took Sufficiency Exams".

There were also other important formation elements: travelling, reading, courses taken along the teaching life:

"Every five years, he traveled to Europe. He profited from these trips to visit universities. He visited study centers, libraries, brought books and contacted authors. His continued formation has always been undoubtedly receptive to the world of culture, education and work". "His trip to Europe on a mission for study deepening was interpreted by the academic, at the time, as a rare example of dedication and investment in the teaching career".

Besides these elements, educators here studied have paid homage to key-elements to their formation, names of early time professors, fellow teachers and peers, friends, family members – especially the mothers – which led us to conclude how important interpersonal relations are to the formation of these.

Occupation (theory and action) as a pupil forming process

The speeches, transcribed as follows, give us the dimension highlighted by Nóvoa with regard being given to the value of universal culture and student culture as a right for their learning as well as the respect given to it by the educator so that the student can refer to himself as "a person" (Nóvoa, 2001, p. 11).

The first indicator reveals the teaching-learning process as resulting from a theory and cooperative educational practice between educator and pupil, which is to be understood through the construction of an identity of subjects:

"In the pedagogical action, if you believe in the person as a being capable of being free and autonomous, the classroom working style should let this show. However, this should be a class in which responsibility is passed over to the student so that he can see how committed the teacher is to education. Methods and techniques shall not be imposed but, rather, proposed to the students who, on their turn, should know how to react to these". "We do really form a group, I was committed to them; they were committed to me. Two years were enough to show that education is achieved with boldness and trust, with action and much affection. In this space of time, I could see the change in the behavior of the adolescents".

Another indicator is oriented towards dialogs with the reality acquiring methodology, student needs and expectations as referred to school and the teaching-learning process:

"As they (the students) produced, we went on student-teacher-student, and student-student chats. From these dialogs I drew their cultural world, their interests and needs that supplied me with data that has certainly given me subsidies for the planning and the organization of the work". "From the communication emerging from classes I could see how needy, frail,

11 Sufficiency exams were promoted by the Campaign for the Improvement and the Diffusion of the Second Grade Teaching – "CADES", in a way such that teachers with no titles could have a license from the Ministry of Education to teach. Such license was obtained for more than one disciplines, often for different fields of knowledge provided that the courses and specific examinations for each case be certified.

frightened, conflicting, mixed up, hurt they were: identities that featured the prevalence of order being dictated by those who have the power, leaving others to conformity”.

The concern about making the content of knowledge meaningful to students and its possible re-signification is another indicator for the fact that teachers have regard to high quality formation processes to be profited from by students:

“He is an educator who loves his pupils, interested in meaningful learning and in the formation of autonomous subjects”. “Latin language, as is known, is not a simple discipline since it is not currently spoken. I needed to make up a more accessible study of Latin, more pleasant, more turned towards Portuguese Language. I try to encourage students to pay attention to the constant presence of it, be it for their Latin origin, in our daily language, in quotations, newspapers, legal language, showing their meaning”. “He is a professional who is always attentive to the needs and expectations of his students, concerned with the relevance of his discipline in the course as well as in the context he is acting in”.

Pedagogy acknowledged as a civic process and teacher formation

The extracts from narratives to follow make evident indicators for the understanding of the action of highly regarded teachers as regarding the formation of citizens:

“I had the feeling that the adolescents I was to work with were longing for justice... and I tried to raise this virtue during all of my teaching activity”. “He has always fought on behalf of an education that raised the critical sense of life in youngsters, preparing them (in order to make up critical analysis) about social, cultural and political pressures that affect liberty. A kind of education that breaks up with individual standpoints as it encourages people to act in the interest of community life among men in the interest of those who are deprived of support”.

The speeches below highlight the indicators that demonstrate teaching work in the perspective of social inclusion for students:

“Producing something, feeling useful, being given value and respect has contributed not only to make the boys involved in the project happier, but also served as stimulus for calling others to join the project”. “Helping people to acquire knowledge is a political project. Teaching how to think by one’s own mental means and to be critical is political activity. I always try to encourage students to think and to inquire about their own lives and existences. Education and politics are, thus, closely related”.

As for teacher formation, we may bring in some of the many indicators found:

“I think that we should work on our teachers by means of specific opportunities for moments of reflection in order to allow for their reviewing of their own teaching-learning process, making teaching a differentiated process by adding a humanistic sense to it, in all that there is about the expression of the word human”.

Universal features of the theory and of teaching actions

Nóvoa himself is one of the authors to give support to the ideas advocated in this article about the universal nature of features, as shown by teachers with respect to their thinking and acting, due to the statement by this author when he states that “it is impossible to separate the *personal* from the *professional*, mostly in a profession that is full with values and

ideas, and very demanding, from the human commitment point of view" (Nóvoa, 1995,p.7), providing clear evidence of the social cultural nature of teaching practice.

This is a phenomenon to overlook geographical borders and, even, timeline limits, to which we shall be attentive to "the point is to give back to readers, through *singularity* and *specificity*, the 'world' that relies upon the history of each one. When we read about these lives, we feel that it is about their 'placement' in a given space in time but also about 'universality' that goes much beyond the physical frontiers of concrete presence" (Nóvoa, 2001,p. 10).

Among the 12 educators selected for the study, six lived/live and acted/act and have marked students in different places. The remaining subjects lived/live and acted/are in action in the State Capital (Porto Alegre). On the timeline of highly-regarded educators, they fill up the spaces that go from births taking place between 1895 and 1955, with working lives, as for school formation, that account for the period between 1902 and 1979 (not considering continued formation), and with productive lives ranging from 1922 up to the present days. This means that the highly-regarded educators have experienced, altogether, different and important stages of the social, economical, political, economical and cultural changes to the Brazilian context, with reflexes on both the education and the life standards of citizens in general with conditioning structural strategies having been carried out by them in the different communities in which they grew up, were granted the status of educators and have acted on.

The life story of each one of such educators is, thus, very rich from the individual and social point of view. We may perceive, from the narratives and checked documents that each history was written and has been re-written under the strong influence and conditioning, during the corresponding period, according to the contexts available in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, which, placed in a national context, and, even, international, but, certainly, strongly conditioning those stances according to a dialectics in which individual stories and social experiences overlap, are implied by each other in a way such as to allow for the dialectic reason to make us attain the "attain universal and general goals (society) relying on individual and singular aspects (man) (Ferrarotti,1988,p.30)".

This is why, in virtue of the universal features of a theory and teaching practice, Nóvoa (2001) spotted common features between educators from different parts of the world and "our" educators, since " what we have found are traces present in many educators, wherever they come from around the world" (op.cit.,p.11).

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

'NARRATIVE, MEMORY AND KNOWLEDGE' 5TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 5TH APRIL 2005

Organised by The Narrative and Memory Research Group, University of Huddersfield in association with Biography and Society, RC38, ISA.

Around 75 people attended this day conference that has now become an established event each year in the area of 'narrative' drawing particularly on research being undertaken in health related fields. Participants this year came from a number of countries including Germany, Greece, Finland and the USA. A feature of the conference is that it allows a high number of papers to be delivered in the one day – this year nearly 30 – so that it provides a forum for existing work to be presented and contacts made between researchers in the same field.

The two invited keynote speakers this year were Professor, Dr. Gabriele Rosenthal (President, Biography and Society RC38, ISA) and Professor Michael Bamberg (Editor, Narrative Inquiry). Gabriele's paper 'The Narrated Life Story: On the interrelation between experience, memory and narration', used the 'gestalt-theoretical phenomenological concept of the dialectical interrelation between experience, memory and narration' to explore how people reconstruct in the present their experiences of the past. She argued that 'Just as the past is constituted out of the present and the anticipated future, so the present arises out of the past and future'. Michael began his talk 'Small Stories: A narrative-discursive approach to Self and Identity' by describing how 'the study of the self and identity has been transformed by narrative approaches' but emphasised the danger in approaches that used 'story' or 'identity' without 'paying sufficient attention' to 'the local situatedness and interactional occasioning of stories about self and others'. He argued for a 'discursive-narrative perspective' to identity formation as process that 'allows for a more contextually-sensitive exploration of the social interactive processes used to construct situated senses of self'.

Sessions at the conference included 'Aesthetics, methods and power'; 'Reclaiming the past?'; 'Narrative, knowledge and integration'; 'Images both past and present'; 'Embodied meanings'; 'Storytelling: intersubjectivity and collaboration'; 'Generating knowledge: methodological insights'; 'Working on Identity'; 'Narrative configuration: plot, fact and fiction'; 'Institutions, aesthetics and performance'; and 'Storying the life-course' (for Conference programme and details on previous conferences see:

<http://www.hud.ac.uk/hhs/dbs/nme/2005/index.htm>)

Brian Roberts

**BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON
EUROPEAN SOCIETIES RESEARCH NETWORK
7TH ESA CONFERENCE
9TH - 12TH SEPTEMBER**

Apart from some confusions due to two versions of the programme that were solved during the first session, this meeting of biography researchers in the beautifully situated mediaval town Torun in the northwestern part of Poland, turned out to be both well visited (most sessions had between 20 and 40 participants) and intellectually stimulating. The programme was arranged in 7 sessions and circled around such different topics as Biography, memory and time; Health, illness and biographies; Biography and intergenerational relations; Religion, life politics and use of visual methods in biographical research; Biographical uncertainties and social inequalities; Biographical research in post-Soviet societies; Use of Concepts and The problem of generalizing from biographical data. My overall impression was that European biographical research is reaching into new levels of sophistication. As the usual problems of the pioneers to legitimize a new endeavour are becoming history, new members are joining who are perhaps less timid and more daring in their approach and will move the field further into new terrain and dig deeper into previously dark areas. The great strength of biography research, its ability to combine a rather narrowly defined methodological approach with a great openness in relation to what substantial areas to investigate became very visible to me. Alas new and stricter visa regulations due to the entrance of Poland into the EU made it difficult for many researchers from the former Soviet Union to attend the conference, perhaps illustrating how far away we still are from reaching Habermas' ideal of *Herrschafts-reie Kommunikation*. But for those who did manage to come there were certainly many awards apart from the exceptionally good weather and the equally warm Polish hospitality which has certainly changed to the better. My own father who returned here in 1946 having survived in the Soviet Union was met with stones by his not too happy Polish countrymen, some of whom were not much better than the Nazis. This is said not to provoke but to remind us all, that as biography researchers we too have biographies which perhaps explains why we have entered this particular field in the first place. The question of how biographies enter science, could perhaps be a theme for a coming conference. Not in a confessional mood, but for the sake of intellectual clarity and theoretical analysis, which is our business as biography researchers.

Feiwei Kupfeberg

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Course Announcement

Seventh Intensive Short Course in the Biographic-Narrative-Interpretive Method (BNIM)

Date: November 17-18 and 21-23 2005
Venue: London
Presented by: Tom Wengraf
further information: tom@tomwengraf.com, 24a Princes Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10 3 LR, UK, 020-8883-9297

Further details:

Designed for PhD students and professional researchers, the course provides a 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. The cost is £600 per person. Taught by Prue Chamberlayne and Tom Wengraf in North London., the course's small number of students ensures close coaching and support for the intensive work that is needed for you to fully acquire both the understanding of principles and the practical capacity for proceeding with the systematic practices involved in BNIM - both for BNIM and for other types of narrative interviewing and interpretation.

You will be expected to have looked at (not read!) chapters 6 and 12 of Tom's textbook, *Qualitative research interviewing: biographic narrative and semi-structured method* (2001: Sage Publications), Examples of the use of BNIM can be found in the case-studies from the European Union 7-country SOSTRIS project in our (edited) *Biography and social exclusion in Europe: experiences and life-journeys* (2002: Policy Press) and other items in our *Short Guide to BNIM* (25pp) sent on request. Preliminary and supplementary material will be provided. More recent debates and developments in theory and method are integrated into the programme.

Conference Announcement

Workshop on Comparative Biographical Research

Organizer: Michelle Cage, Institute of Education, University of London
Date: November 24-25 2005
Venue: London
Further information: Michelle Cage, M.Cage@ioe.ac.uk
Further details of conference:

This workshop aims to discuss the use of biographical methods in comparative and cross-national research. Biographical methods are increasingly popular in the context of rapidly changing societies and the negotiation of changing life courses. They provide a holistic focus upon individuals and the contexts they inhabit, bridging the different contextfields of their lives in time and space and integrating the ways in which people act upon their lives and interpret their experiences. The method is highly sensitive to structural and institutional contexts and to historical change and typically involves using contextual material of different kinds. Key issues in comparative analysis to be discussed include: the selection and matching of cases; identifying the most relevant contextual factors for analysis; ensuring comparability of data; enabling the building of theory. The method enriches both the knowledge base and lays foundations for research using other approaches. The Workshop will involve presentations from biographical researchers from a number of European countries and the use of biographical methods in cross-national studies

Conference Announcement
Call for paper

International Workshop: Event and Process in organized discourse

Organizer: Thomas Scheffer, Emmy-Noether Group at Sfb 447
(Comparative Micro-Sociology of Criminal Proceedings),
Free University Berlin

Date: March 10-11th, 2006

Venue: Berlin

abstract: deadline: 1st December (about 150-250 words). The organisers will select relevant papers and organise them thematically into panels or group presentations. Electronic submissions (MSWord) should be sent to scheffer@law-in-action.org

Conferece language: English

Further information: <http://www.law-in-action.de/>

Further details of conference:

How are local events and translocal processes related to each other? How does this relation affect the micro-analyses of encounters, spectacles, or happenings? The relation of event and process is essential for those research projects that seek to understand legal, medical, political, scientific, economical, and other discourses.

What is organized discourse? The term „organized“ refers to the understanding that discourse processes are to various degrees directed, channeled, regulated, and designed. They are ascribed to certain forms, sites, and times. For example in the legal discourse, legitimate participants perform formal instructions, judicial protocols, and procedural rules thus constituting the contingent event. How then does the court hearing count as a phase of the legal process? How, in other cases, is the surgery connected to the medical checkup or the scientific lecture to the ongoing research?

The workshop intends to provoke other issues that engage both empirical and theoretical researchers. Of interest are questions concerning the relation of history and proximity, of the past and its bearing on the presence. At issue, in addition, is the making of history at certain junctions that are themselves bound to previous occurrences. Subthemes can be drawn along the lines of the relation of agency-structure, orality-text, and preparation-performance.

The organisers invite scholars from a wide range of disciplines (discourse analysis, ethnography, workplace studies, organisation studies, etc.).

Conference Announcement

XIVTH INTERNATIONAL ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

'Dancing with memory: oral history and its audiences'

Organizer: Paula Hamilton, Faculty of Humanities, University of Technology Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007, Australia

Date: 12-16 July 2006

Venue: Sydney, Australia

Further information: <http://www.ioha.fgv.br/>, Email: IOHA@uts.edu.au

Further details of conference:

Much of the research and reflective work in oral history over the years has focused on those who carry out oral histories and the process of interviewing itself. But what has been the effect of telling stories largely through the sound medium over the last 40 years? As we move to a new age of digital storytelling which strengthens the visual elements, it seems timely to ask: who listens and how? Oral history is one of the ways in which people share memories and how people hear and respond to them is partly shaped by the contexts of their telling and listening.

The conference theme invites presentations which investigate that 'dance with memory' which occurs between the speaker and the listener, and between the performer or product and their audiences. We therefore encourage people who have worked with oral history in a wide range of environments such as museums, heritage agencies, academic institutions, law courts, radio and television, performing arts, community projects all of which express a relationship to the past through a particular cultural medium.

The conference theme also invites reflective analysis of the ways in which, through past and current projects, 'dancing with memory' involves both pleasure and pain – for the subject, the interviewer and the audience – and the ways in which awareness of particular audiences shapes the focus and conceptual framework of individual projects.

We encourage proposals which explore indigenous lives, and we envisage that some sessions will focus specifically on comparative indigenous perspectives and experiences.

Conference sub-themes offer an opportunity to tease out some of these issues as well as to extend discussion to include ongoing concerns within oral history scholarship and practice.

Proposals are invited for individual papers, thematic panels, workshops, performances and special interest groups. There will also be some oral history master classes before the conference led by internationally recognized oral history scholars and practitioners.

Conference Announcement

XVI World Congress of Sociology
QUALITY OF SOCIAL EXISTENCE IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

Date: JULY 23-29, 2006
Venue: Durban, South Africa
Further information: <http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/congress2006/>
Further details of conference:

We will send you all the details till the end of the year.

Conference Announcement
Call for paper

The European Mind: Narrative and Identity

Organizer: Ezra Talmor, Henry Frendo, ISSEI, University of Malta
Date: 24 - 29 July 2006
Venue: Malta
abstract: The deadline to submit a proposal for the workshop: »Women`s Narratives in American Ethnic Literatures: The European Connection« is 15 April 2006
Further information: issei@nachshonim.org.il, henry.frendo@um.edu.mt
Further details of conference:

We live in an age of mass production of narratives. The prophecy of the European thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, prescribing a paradigm for the creation of narrative, has become a reality. The result of the mass production of narratives is the leveling of all narratives, posing a challenge to authority. One 'grand narrative' after another is discarded, leaving the European mind longing for a unifying narrative that crystallizes the European identity.

The 10th international conference of ISSEI, to be held in Malta in 2006, invites scholars from various disciplines such as History, Politics, Literature, Arts, Philosophy, and Religion to examine the European Identity and the multiplicity of narratives in the age of globalization.

Conference Announcement
Call for paper

Narrating the city: everyday experience and urban networks

Organizer: Caroline Varlet, maître de conférences associée – Ecole d'architecture de Paris-la-Villette/EHESS; Wladimir Fischer, research associate, Vienna University; Anastasia Christou

Date: 30th August to 2nd September 2006

Venue: Stockholm

abstract to: wladimir.fischer@wu-wien.ac.at, varlet.c@wanadoo.fr, anchrist@hol.gr

Further information: <http://www.historia.su.se/urbanhistory/eahu/>

Further details of conference:

The „urban imaginary“ (James Donald) is made from narrations about cities, usually of planners, social critics, architects, artists, filmmakers and writers. In this section the focus is on the narratives of 'ordinary' and/or marginalized city dwellers, and how they weave themselves into the urban texture through various networks. Such urban networks can be inter-personal or inter-group relations, negotiated to urban places, in workspace, or to the public sphere of the city. Networks can rely on various means of communication, such as face-to-face interaction, telecommunication, public urban rituals, dress codes, sprayed tags on street corners etc. Urban networks can be very durable but also temporary, they can be visible and widespread but also obscure but far-reaching etc. The narratives of non-elite city dwellers often intersect and overlap with or are inspired by mainstream discourses about the city. But non-mainstream collective urban narratives can also interact with elite discourses by rejecting it and creating counter-narratives. Then again, personal narratives often digress from any urban collectivity and/or intersect with several 'master-narratives' about the city.

The section invites contributions on how urban experiences of every-day life are dealt with in personal narratives, what their relation to urban collectivity is, and what makes this way of transferring and structuring information special. Which influence does narrativity of sources have on the work of the historian? Are memories articulated by the narrator into some kind of history? What happens if we transform such narrations into an Urban History? Both theoretical reflections and pure case studies are welcome. Methods may comprise, but do not have to be limited to oral history, social history, historical discourse analysis and micro-history. Preferably contributions will deal with their topic in a comparative way, either comparing two or more cities or urban settings, or several methods, such as research with oral and written sources, or several historical periods.

The time-scope is, due to the topic of narrations, roughly 20th century, however, if written narrative sources of non-elite members are available, also other modern history presentations are welcome.

NEWS**QUALITATIVE SOCIOLOGY REVIEW – SPECIAL ISSUE -
'BIOGRAPHICAL SOCIOLOGY'**

Qualitative Sociology Review (a new electronic journal) is planning a thematic issue on 'Biographical Sociology'. The Special Issue will review the position that biographical work is now in, given its recent rapid expansion. It will provide a review to guide those who are interested but perhaps confused by the development of the field.

It intends to examine methodological, epistemological and theoretical developments in the field, particularly in how the use of biographical materials (for instance, biographical interviews, autobiographies, diaries, letters, personal artefacts) have raised issues, questions and insights in different substantive areas.

The social sciences are currently facing a great challenge in analysing rapidly changing social and cultural horizons. There is a need to develop new vocabulary, concepts and categories, which would better grasp the world that is less and less understandable through the old ideas and frameworks. Social research is facing a need to renovate its analytical tools and practices in order to produce more pertinent knowledge about the increasingly complex world. What has biographical research to offer in this task?

Call for Submission of Articles

We are looking for articles examining the state of biographical sociology generally, to demonstrate the variety, strengths and developments within current 'biographical sociology' in different areas and countries.

The Special Issue will also consider contributions from related disciplines which point out ways in which biographical sociology can benefit from work outside sociology, and in turn, identify areas of possible collaboration.

Possible topics for the proposed Special Issue:

- in reflecting on your work using biographical materials – or other work in your area– are there particular methodological developments, new insights or major challenges which you believe important for the field of biographical sociology in general and could be addressed more fully by the journal issue?
- what benefits to your substantive area of research (e.g. health, welfare and related areas) has resulted from your use of biographical materials? What kinds of dis/continuities in terms of issues, developments, types of research can be traced in your area/country?
- what has the use of biographical materials given to 'theory and concept building' in your area?
- are there areas, issues, questions in – or ones relevant to – biographical sociology which have perhaps been neglected and require development (e.g. visual sociology)?

The issue is to be published later this year. All submitted articles will be reviewed according to the procedure laid out on the journal's web site (www.qualitativesociologyreview.org).

Riitta Kyllonen (University of Tampere, Finland): email riitta.kyllonen@uta.fi

Brian Roberts (University of Huddersfield, UK): email – glentrob@btinternet.com

BOOK REVIEWS FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

Book Review Editor Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, Israel, dkalekin@construct.haifa.ac.il

This is a call for submissions to the International Sociology Review of Books (ISRB) to be published bi-annually, as numbers 3 and 6 of International Sociology. Highlighting work available in different languages, the ISRB provides a platform for informing sociologists about varieties of sociological thought that would ordinarily not be accessible. We are interested in publishing review essays, book reviews, and reports on sociological publications of all kinds, with an emphasis on sociology around the world. For the time being, however, we are restricted, as in the past, to publication in the official languages of the ISA: articles in English, with short summaries in French and Spanish.

Goals:

- Relating to a broad spectrum of professional writing, the ISRB is a vehicle for considering, examining, analyzing, appraising, assessing, and evaluating books by sociologists all over the world. This will enable the ISRB to encompass work on how different societies understand themselves, as well as to follow the evolution of debates on the nature of the field.
- Minimally, then, the ISRB will provide readers with a coverage of streams of sociological ideas on all continents. This will include the types of theories that govern research as well as the types of questions that are of central concern in different social milieus.
- At the same time, the ISRB will enable sociologists to become familiar with problems that are common in different corners of the globe; and thus to scan and scrutinize approaches from cross-cultural / cross-border perspectives.

ISRB calls on contributors to submit articles for the following sections:

- Reviews of books that are of salient interest, especially books published in languages other than English;
- Review essays may take different forms. We will publish:
- Review essays of publications that relate to similar topics;
- Review essays of several books written in the same language that compare and contrast the publications in sociological terms, providing information about how they relate to the socio-political and historical context;
- Review essays on books written in different languages that deal with similar or parallel issues;

- Review essays devoted to comparing publications by non-Anglo sociologists with (a) publication(s) that arouse(s) current debate in English-speaking countries to clarify similarities and differences among 'sociologies'.
- Symposium-type discussions by readers who have different orientations to a given publication can be suggested. Such a symposium may explore, for example, connections between sociology and other disciplines.
- Discussions of books of the sociological canon and their impact on the development of the discipline in different countries.
- A special section will be devoted to comparing and contrasting how sociological theory or research is presented in different media: books, journals, internet sites, as well as in the mass media: films, radio, and television.
- A section will be devoted to 'the state of the art' on different continents: who / what is published; in what language, or languages; extent of the distribution, including price ranges; audiences; connections between publications and research and teaching.

For details of format, see [Guidelines for Contributors](#). All submissions should be sent to the editor: Devorah Kalekin-Fishman; Faculty of Education; University of Haifa; Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905; Israel; dkalekin@construct.haifa.ac.il

INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY QUARTERLY

A quarterly has been established by the International Sociological Association to publish papers which deserve worldwide circulation and which reflect the research and interests of the international community of sociologists. All branches of the discipline and all regions of the world are represented in its pages.

Book reviews for

- International Sociology Guidelines
- for Contributors Subscriptions List
- of Published Issues Indexing/Abstracting

Frequency: Quarterly

ISSN: 0268-5809

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Editors (as of January 1, 2004) Jeanne de Bruijn, Melinda Mills, Gerhard van de Bunt

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NEW FREE DATABASE OF DOCUMENTS WRITTEN IN THE FIRST PERSON

In the First Person is a landmark index to English language personal narratives, including letters, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, and oral histories. Working with archives, repositories, publishers, and individuals we've indexed first person narratives from hundreds of published volumes – those that are publicly available on the Web and those that are held by repositories and archives around the world. Our intent is to make it possible to find and explore the voices of more than 300,000 individuals.

The most comprehensive archive of social memory yet created, In the First Person is a one-stop starting point for historians, sociologists, genealogists, linguists, and psychologists who want to find, explore, and analyze human experiences. The stories of diverse groups and ordinary people from all walks of life can at last be heard alongside those of the well-published and famous. And, the public voices we hear in print and in the media reveal the more honest and personal accounts of their lives.

Future updates will contain full-text sources and hundreds of thousands of bibliographic records. The index will allow users perform in-depth field and keyword searches across all letters, diaries, oral histories, memoirs, and autobiographies within Alexander Street Press databases – more than one million pages of editorially selected materials spanning 400 years. The index also applies the same extensive search tools to scholarly materials that are freely available on the Web. With a single search, users can perform keyword searches across thousands of personal narratives from the English-speaking world.

Carolyn McGee; Alexander Street Press, LLC; 3212 Duke Street; Alexandria, VA 22314; cmcgee@astreetpress.com, Email: cmcgee@astreetpress.com, Visit the website at <http://www.inthefirstperson.com>

LIVE ABSTRACTS™

Live Abstracts™ is a free content management service for conference organizers and journal publishers. Powered by Business One, Inc. - the creators of the [PapersInvited database](#), Live Abstracts™ has been developed with input from editors and reviewers of journals and conferences as well as from authors and conference organizers.

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Online Conference Content Management - from A to Z: In addition to the 'Abstract and Manuscript Management System', the Live Abstracts™ team would also manage the entire conference content online i.e. right from the announcement of the conference (venue, location, dates etc.), announcement of 'call for papers', release of final program and management of presentation content for the day of the conference.

Christine Kavin, Live Abstracts Team, Business One, Inc., 19111 W. Ten Mile Road, Suite A-18, Southfield, MI 48075, U.S.A., kavi@liveabstracts.com

WOMEN'S ORAL HISTORY WEBSITE

VOAHA, the Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive (www.csulb.edu/voaha), provides open access to perhaps the largest collection of women's oral histories in the country. The full audio recordings of over 800 hours of interviews can be heard there, with narrators whose lives and experiences range from the late 19th/early 20th century to the women's movements in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s.

CENTRE FOR NARRATIVE RESEARCH OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

The centre for narrative research autumn newsletter can now be accessed on <http://www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/newsletter.htm>. Further information: Dr Maria Tamboukou, Reader in Sociology, Co-director, Centre for Narrative Research, Docklands Campus, 4-6 University Way, London E16 2RD, Room: 2333, tel. 020 8223 2783, fax: 020 82237595, M.Tamboukou@uel.ac.uk or centrefornarrativeresearch@listserv.uel.ac.uk

CALL FOR PAPERS

SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL 'HEALTH, RISK AND SOCIETY' IN 2006

The Biographical Approach in Health and Illness. In research on health and illness, studies using a narrative approach are gaining ground in a context where a statistical quantitative approach as well as an 'objective' approach to illness have dominated for decades. Against this background, the biographical approach has developed and provides us with opportunities to enhance understanding of the individual's management of risk and uncertainty in health and illness. This includes how biographical experiences influence current management of health and illness as well as the impact of biographical constructions on health and illness. The special issue will take stock of this research. Empirical as well as theoretical contributions are welcome which refers to the link between biography and health/illness. If you are thinking of submitting a paper then you are welcome to contact the editor of the issue Jens Zinn to discuss your paper and how it would fit in with the issue by email. (j.zinn@kent.ac.uk). Deadline for contributions: 30 November 2005

NEW PUBLICATIONS – BOOKS

Brannen, Julia/Moss, Peter/Mooney, Ann (2004): Working and Caring over the Twentieth Century: Change and Continuity in Four-Generation Families. Palgrave

Increased longevity and better health are changing the nature of family life. In the context of changes in the world of work, increased divorce and a declining welfare state, multi-generation or 'beanpole families' are a potential resource for family support. Focusing on four-generation families and the two central careers of the life course - employment and care - Working and Caring Over the Twentieth Century explores this question. Based upon new research that employed biographical methods, it maps in detail from 1910 to the late 1990s the lives of men and women as great-grandparents, grandparents and parents. The book provides unique insights into processes of change and continuity in family lives and the ways in which different generations of men and women make sense of their lives.

CONTENTS

Setting the Scene (available for download, as above)
Changing Childhoods Across Three Generations of Women
Mothers' and Fathers' Work and Care Practices Over the Generations
Motherhood: Intergenerational Transmission and Negotiation
Timetabling, Talk and Transmission: Fatherhood Across the Generations
Intergenerational Transfers and Cultures of Transmission
Towards a Typology in Intergenerational Relations:
Processes of Reproduction and Innovation
Concluding Reflections

Froggett, Lynn/Chamberlayne, Prue/Buckner, Stefanie/Wengraf, Tom (2005): Bromley by Bow Centre research and evaluation project: integrated practice - focus on older people

This report is the outcome of a three-year collaborative research and evaluation project at the Bromley by Bow Healthy Living Centre, an arts-based regeneration and community development agency in London. It characterises the organisation's model through the lens of its work with older people. Based on biographical-narrative interviews, participatory action research and observational methods, it identifies the impact of the Centre on people's lives. The report portrays life journeys in the context of the organisation while drawing from people's narratives and other data to present insights about the organisational culture. Findings from the specific combination of data sources allow it to paint a detailed picture of the Centre's successful approach to transforming the lives of individuals and building a 'healthy' community.

For further details and information on how to obtain hardcopies of the report see the attached flyer, or visit the project website to access the online version (PDF format) at <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/health/socialwork/bromleybybow/index.htm>

Miller, Robert Lee (2005): Biographical Research Methods. A four Volume Set, Series: SAGE Benchmarks in Social Research Methods series

The life history or biographical research method was popular in the early decades of the twentieth century and, after a period of eclipse caused by the rise of quantitative methods, is enjoying a resurgence of interest. This burgeoning of interest is enough that we can now speak of a biographical 'turn' as the social sciences

These four volumes present the first established collection of the biographical method literature and brings together the many diverse strands. The set will serve to set the canon for this re-established research area.

The collection is organized around eight themes: the classical statements dominated by the pre-war American 'Chicago School' of sociology; the neo-classical statements of the first wave of renewed interest in the 1970s; interviewing, including reflexivity, recall and narrative structures; analysis and the principles of selection in generating stories for narrative biographical interviews; biographical concepts such as life courses and generations; transitions and social trauma; biography and social policy; and controversies in biographical research. The titles of the four volumes and the sections that make up each volume are:

Volume 1: Time and Biographical Research

Section 1: The Place of History

Section 2: Generations and Life Courses

Volume 2: The Construction of Biographical Meaning

Section 1: Narrative and Biography

Section 2: The Past in the Future: Questions of biographical identity

Volume 3: Contexts

Section 1: The German School

Section 2: The Significance and Role of the Family

Volume 4: Disputes and Concerns in Biographical Research

Section 1: Methodological Issues and Debates

Section 2: Ethics

Further information about the volumes and about ordering can be found on the Sage Publications website at: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/book.aspx?pid=106840>

LIST OF NEW PUBLICATIONS

Brannen, Julia/Moss, Peter/Mooney, Ann (2004): Working and Caring over the Twentieth Century: Change and Continuity in Four-Generation Families. Palgrave

Chamberlayne, Prue/Rustin, Michael/Wengraf, Tom (2002): Biography and Social Exclusion in Europe: experiences and life journeys. Bristol: The Policy Press

Foggett, Lynn/Wengraf, Tom (2004): 'Interpreting interviews in the light of research team dynamics: a study of Nila's biographic interview'. Critical Psychology vol.10., 94-122 or http://www.centralbooks.co.uk/acatalog/Online_Catalogue_Lawrence___Wishart_4_647.html#a0853159955

Froggett, Lynn/Chamberlayne, Prue/Buckner, Stefanie/Wengraf, Tom (2005): Bromley by Bow Centre research and evaluation project: integrated practice - focus on older people. <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/health/socialwork/bromleybybow/index.htm>

Miller, Robert Lee (2005): Biographical Research Methods. A four Volume Set, Series: SAGE Benchmarks in Social Research Methods series

Rosenthal Gabriele (2005): Veiling and Denying The Past: The Dialogue In Families Of Holocaust Survivors And Families Of Nazi Perpetrators. In: Steinert, J.-D. / Weber-Newth, I. (Ed.): Beyond Camps and Forced Labour. Hamburg: Körber, 478-490 - Wiederabdruck von 2002

Please tell us if changes:

- **Your e-mail address**
- **And your full mail address**

Our e-mail address is:

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The deadline for the next newsletter is 30th May 2006

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