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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I discovered the Research Committee Biography & Society during the XIth World Congress held in New Delhi in 1986. At the time, I was active in another research committee, but I found myself being irresistibly drawn to the biography sessions. After a brief struggle with feelings of disloyalty, I gave in and admitted that this was apparently where I belonged. Besides having the most interesting sessions, Biography & Society always seemed delightfully informal and welcoming to scholars from various nationalities and disciplines.

In the year in which I have had the privilege of being President of the research committee, I have been amazed and delighted at the growing interest in biographical research. I have received a storm of letters from sociologists (but also philosophers, historians, anthropologists, and psychologists) who are working in the field. They have expressed their enthusiasm about the last world congress in Bielefeld. They have written about their research in the field of biography. They have requested information about international activities and they have passed on information about conferences and seminars. Their interest has convinced me that, while biographical research is sometimes viewed as marginal to mainstream sociology, as subject, as theoretical orientation, and as research method, it is very much 'alive and kicking'. And, indeed, so is our research committee. Our ranks continue to swell and we are on our way to becoming one of the largest research committees in the ISA with more than 360 members on the mailing list.

Many members have expressed a desire to contribute to making our research committee a success. I would like to thank the 17 members of the new Executive Board for their commitment and interest. In particular, Wolfram Fischer Rosenthal, Daniel Bertaux, Brian Roberts, and J.P. Roos have been supportive and helpful. I would also like to thank Susan Bell and Gabi Rosenthal for keeping an eye on activities in North America and Germany, respectively. Stephan Cremer and Henk van Alst have helped assemble the newsletter and made it a treat to see as well as to read. And, last but not least, Helma Lutz as the secretary and most active member of the board, has done everything possible toward making the research committee and the production of this newsletter a successful

and enjoyable endeavor. This has been a Presidency of the 'two-for-the-price-of-one' variety and for that, I owe her my warmest thanks.

As I wrote you in June, 1995 the newsletter is compiled of announcements, information on conferences, conference reports, new publications, organizations in the field of biography and developments within the ISA. It includes some 'discussion pieces' under the rubric VIEWPOINTS and I hope that it works to generate some debate among our members about theoretical, methodological or substantial issues involved in biographical research. I think this newsletter will give you a glimpse of the scope, variety, and richness of our activities and I hope that you will all be encouraged to contribute to the next newsletter. Remember: the success of the newsletter depends on you!

Submissions for the next newsletter should be sent to me or Helma Lutz by August 30, 1996.

The board is scheduled to meet in the summer of 1996 in Amsterdam to discuss activities for the next two years before the next World Congress in Montreal in 1998. If you have ideas or would like to get involved in organizing conferences on the subject of biography, please let us know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

All best wishes,
Kathy Davis

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VIEWPOINTS

THE PROBLEM WITH IDENTITY: BIOGRAPHY AS SOLUTION TO SOME

(POST)MODERNIST DILEMMAS *Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal*

Let me begin by briefly characterizing modernity as social process which is different than the academic discourse about it in political science or sociology. Modern societies do not simply become increasingly differentiated, but change from pre-modern topological differentiations (i.e. sectors and social strata) to functional differentiations (with sub-systems like politics, law, economics, science, education, health care, etc.). In the course of this process, the individual is no longer assigned to a single place, segment or stratum of society, but rather functionally included within it. This means that the individual partially belongs to all sub-systems, while being excluded as an integrated individual. Functionally fragmented, the simultaneous participation of the individual in various sub-systems is required and enforced throughout his or her life. Being located everywhere and nowhere, the individual as a "whole" is expelled from society.

This raises two basic problems. The first concerns how individuals are to orient their actions and experiences as self-integrated persons and socially-integrated members of society. If there is no society "out there", how can there be an individual "here"? The second problem concerns how society is to deal with individuals in such a way that its inner dynamics as well as the growth of its members is maintained. If there are no individuals "out there", how can there be a society "here"?

Academic discourses in philosophy, political science, and economics have accompanied this process, sometimes foreshadowing it, sometimes trying to catch up with it after-the-fact. Ultimately, sociology emerged as the academic discipline par excellence which could thematize the process of modernity as the problem of social order - in other words, how is social order possible? Social order became the term for the fundamental problem of early modernity, raising the issue of how the individual would be influenced by society and, conversely, how society could be maintained and changed by individuals. More recently, the legitimacy of any order - indeed, of the possibility of order itself - became the focus of sociological discourse. Strongly influenced by the philosophical discourse of modernity, all late 19th century sociological classics paid serious attention to the development of a theory of the subject vis-a-vis the object. They attempted to link the individual as subject to society by conceptualizing their mutual relationship.

The very process of academic discourse observing and describing social reality produced a fundamental understanding of society and the individual subject as distinct - a distinction which implied two separate spheres. These spheres - variously referred to as subject and object, citizen and state, individual and society - are both independent of one another and yet must be brought in relationship to one another. Thus, having been torn asunder, the major theoretical and practical task of modernity was to redefine the relationship between these two spheres.

The outcome is an increasing social institutionalization (*Vergesellschaftung*) and individualization, producing a paradoxical social order whose primary characteristics are complete ambivalence and ambiguity. From the perspective of society, the capacity and complexity of the more powerful systems are increasingly harder to manage, while trustworthy, committed citizens are becoming few and far between. From the perspective of the individual, the enormous freedom from fixed conditions and the availability of manifold choices are a direct product of being "only" associated by function to society. This is counterbalanced by the stress and strain involved in the realization of such choices. Moreover, it is society itself which unequally distributes the resources which will enable individuals to participate in social life (i.e. money, position, knowledge).

Identity and Society In the early part of this century, Georg Simmel and George Herbert Mead reflected on the incipient ambivalences and paradoxes of this situation by conceptualizing the individual as a self relating to society creatively and autonomously (Joas 1994). This attempt was aimed at providing evidence for the interlocking and mutual production of self and society.

The traditions of symbolic interactionism (Strauss 1959; Krappmann 1971; Geulen 1989) or the work of Jürgen Habermas (1981; 1988) concerning communicative action and political participation follow in their footsteps. These latter theories use a Hegelian philosophical identity concept, which is sociologically blended with experiential social processes. Moreover, they insist on an integrated self. An identity principle seems necessary in general to order their actions and experiences - especially with respect to moral issues. In order to decide how to act or how to resolve a moral dilemma, it may help to know who one is and what one wants. In other words, persons who do not know who they are, clearly do not know what to do.

But the question could be raised whether this is, indeed, the case. Does knowing the answer to the question "who am I" really provide secure foundations in a highly confusing and multi-faceted world? In a pluriform social order, members are under temporary obligations from which they are regularly disengaged, sometimes by intention, sometimes out of habit, and sometimes because the order is constantly being transformed. A straightforward "identity" in the sense of being able to identify one's self as "This-is-who-I-am-and-this-is-who-I-am-not" are hopelessly inadequate. Identity is decentered (Sampson 1985). What a person refers to as his or her "identity" invariably belongs to myriad selves lost in the past as well as to the 'strange other'. In concrete situations, it may even be easier to decide who the other person is before deciding about one's own identity. The answer to the question "who am I?" can be continued indefinitely, depending upon the number of possible situations in which it arises.

Such difficulties might incline us to simply do away with the identity concept altogether as hopeless impractical for dealing with these questions and many others like them. However, what would be missing if we were to chuck the entire concept out? The situation itself is dilemmatic. On the one hand, the notion that there are real persons who are responsible for their actions and can be held accountable for their feelings is irresistible. The conviction is hard to abandon that it makes sense to say "I". On the other hand, as soon as we try to pin down what "I" means or who a particular person actually "is", we find a "you", a "we" and a "they" lurking just around the corner, as integral parts to all human actions and experiences. The concept of "identity" is a reaction to this dilemma, reflecting the complexity and multi-layeredness of the individual's entanglement in society. Talking about identity means talking about something we are not sure of at all. While we may want it, we don't have it and probably never will.

The modernist (Habermas) and the postmodernist (Foucault) discourses on identity exemplify the problem. The former makes a case for identity and the subject, while the latter argues for the exterior and plural contingency - *tertium non datur*. But perhaps there is a third way - a solution to the opposition before it becomes an opposition. It is my contention that there is such a solution and that it may be found by looking at how the ordinary person negotiates the modern condition, ongoingly creating and recreating social order. How do people cope with the problems of modernity as part of their participation in contemporary society? How do they sustain a coherent social order and an integrated self?

Biographical work as alternative Let us assume that members of modern societies have dealt with the problems of a complex social order by inventing an interpretative genre for thematizing and describing the self, enabling them to structure their lives temporally as well as their participation in various social institutions and arrangements through time. This genre is the "biography". Contemporary biographies emerge as discursive, interpretative productions, primarily in communicative and secondarily in written processes. The notion of biography conveys a description which emerges from self-observation and structures the individual's life both before and after any given events take place. The interpretative work of orienting one's self over a life-time and in the midst of social change can be called "biographical work". Biographical work as social practice (rather than as scientific discourse on identity) is the response to the problems of social integration and social order which are of central importance in modernity, enabling these problems to be formulated both in terms of the individual and of society (Fischer-Rosenthal, 1995b; 1995d:43ff.).

In the process of looking for a way of dealing with unexpected and ambivalent situations, talk with all its communicative and narrative properties becomes the obvious means for reliably situating the individual as well as structuring social life. Through the activity of talk, members create their world. They interpret events and pass this information on to others and, in so doing, become the producers of experience and knowledge. Any social scientific approach which does justice to the basis of sociality will have to take language into consideration in one way or another.

Spoken language allows the recall and representation of past events, reordering and placing them in the context of what can be expected in the future. It is, therefore, essential for the construction of biographical structures. At a general level, spoken language enables us to temporalize events and actions, producing a multi-referential network within which the individual can both become and change who she or he is. This process takes the form of a self-referential and self-expressive narration - the individual's life-story in a nutshell. Although individuals often do not know for sure who they are or what is happening to them at a particular moment in their lives, the ability to narrate who they have become enables them to present themselves for the time being as integrated persons, despite the presence of various other possible and often contradictory renditions of the story. Life-stories are reconstructed from a self-referential vantage point, whereby the person looks back at past events and forward to what is expected or intended. Life-stories are practical, for the time being constructions - an autopoietic process by means of which individuals orient and produce

themselves. Although such stories are practical accomplishments, they are by no means arbitrary; nor will just any story do for those prepared to listen to it. Unlike fictional stories, the life-story depends on a life-history. A life-story entails what a person goes through in the process of living his or her life, the significance of interactions with others, and, last but not least, the development of his or her embodied self.

There has been an enormous expansion of autobiographies in the last 250 years, written by individuals from all social strata. Empirically speaking, any individual is able to tell his or her life-story; i.e. to narrate a biography or parts of it on a given occasion. The individual who is unable to tell his or her life-story is likely to have difficulties in becoming oriented in the world around them or to interact with others. Being unable to formulate a biography can be a reason to embark upon psychotherapy. By the same token, certain kinds of psychotherapy are geared toward helping patients develop a reliable and livable version of their life-story - a version which fits their lived-through life-history. Telling or writing a life story satisfies the human need to master contingency; i.e. by telling who one is, one explains how one got to be that way. Self-understanding is only possible by conceiving one's self as constantly in flux. Increasingly, only a story - and not a statement of one's position in society - seems to be able to encompass the complexity of one's self over time, including biographical transformations and contradictions. An individual's social position or myriad functional relations to the major sub-systems appear to be of less importance as orientation for the person and others in his or her environment that being able to tell the story as experienced in all its interpretational variability. A life-story seems to be the only means of being accountable to others, for helping them understand what they may reasonably expect from the person in question.

Individuals are not alone in being subject to the requirements of temporality. Organizations and social institutions operate under the constraints of temporality as well and, subsequently, develop biographically normative patterns. In the context of work, for example, complex actions and intersubjective processes have to be coordinated temporally. Thus, institutional demands require that an individual displays his or her work activities as a "career" - a pre-determined biographical pattern which the individual can and, indeed, must draw upon. Networks of temporally ordered positions and action sequences is increasingly available to the individual, integral to the process of becoming a full-fledged member of society. Generally speaking, lives are not only divided into stages - childhood, youth, adult life and old age - but also are biographically ordered to a small degree by educa-

tion and to a large degree by occupational training. This process of temporal differentiation means that the very process of growing older sometimes entails losing possibilities which do not "belong" to the appropriate stage in life just because the individual has passed a certain age. Biographical patterns are also instrumental in organizing specific contexts - for example, occupation training for a particular job - or as pre-scripted possibilities within most contexts of contemporary social life - from the family to education and work. Biographies are necessary for institutional practices which are responsible for keeping society "ordered" - the law, politics, religion. In short, biography as a special form of temporalization allows both the individual and the society to deal with contingency, providing the balance of more possibilities and options.

Biography versus identity At the outset of this paper, the question was raised concerning how individual and society might be connected and which theoretical concept would be most useful for understanding this connection as a process. It is my contention that biography and biographical work, both as social practices and sociological concepts, provide the solution. Biography entails by definition the intersection of individual and society. It makes the concept of identity redundant.

Biography is a relational concept. It represents a network of events and possibilities which are ongoingly brought together and interpreted in the course of a life. Identity, on the other hand, is more likely to denote a logical relation between events, along the lines of "a equals b". Biography is a concept which takes temporality into account. It both constitutes and processes temporality, referring to irreversible, sequential or chronological order (for example, in institutionally sedimented careers) and to phenomenological time centered in the present and embodying specific recollections and anticipations of the future (as in autobiographical narrations). Identity represents temporality in the once and for all sense of "belonging". For example, sexual, ethnic or national identities appear unalterable.

Biography refers to an interpretatively open process of "becoming". Identity, on the other hand, focuses on a fixed state of "being" or "having".

Biographical work is dialogical and interactive. A symbolic network for self-orientation is ongoingly constructed through an individual's life in a process of communication and shared interpretation of what has happened and what can be expected to happen in the future. Identity, on the other hand, tends to be linked to intentional "decisions" or "ascribed" personal characteristics.

Biographical analysis entails hermeneutical reconstruction, whereas the notion of identity imposes normative criteria. It requires determining to what degree a particular stage - according to scholarly measures - has been achieved.

Biography is related to the history and capacities of the body, as, for example, aging, sickness, or social functions. Identity seems to ignore the body and relate only to the social.

In conclusion, the notion of biography does not reproduce the split between individual and society, but rather structures both spheres. In its manifestations of life-history, life-story and institutional biographical patterns, biography bridges the theoretically constructed gap between an inner and outer sphere. Thus, biography has a double meaning. It refers to social structure by providing agents with various socially patterned life-courses to be transversed in the course of their life-histories. Numerous studies on the institutional prefabrication of biographies attest to this (Elder, 1985; Mayer, 1990). It also refers to the story which the individual is able to - and, indeed, must - tell.

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BIOGRAPHICAL AND EMPIRICISTIC ILLUSIONS:

A REPLY TO RECENT CRITICISM.

Thierry Kochuyt

[The following is an outline of some of the arguments advanced in *Het Leven Beschreven* (Life as Described), a short publication on the use of life histories in sociology by Thierry Kochuyt and J.C. Verhoeven (Department of Sociology, Leuven, Belgium). It gives an overview of the recent criticism which disqualifies the method and tries to develop a well-considered defense in the line of the arguments presented above.]

The rediscovery of the life history method in the seventies created an enthusiasm which was inspiring to many. Due to dissatisfaction with quantitative research, parsonian functionalism or structural marxism, life histories were used to (re)introduce the subject into sociology. Diverse applications from different theoretical backgrounds and in different fields were made, but success also fuelled skepticism. Does the life history tell us something about life or is it just a story about 'something' else, whereby that 'something else' has to be specified?

Every mortal has only one life to live but he/she can tell several stories about it, which are also quite diverse. Oblivion is responsible, of course, but there is more to it. The present can alter the meaning of past events because only now do the final consequences appear of what happened. According to the present situation the significance of the previous history changes. What is true for the present is equally true for the future or, at least, the future as anticipated by the subject. In the light of his/her expectations, the present and past can gain a different meaning. Consequently, what the life story presents is a history of the present or the anticipated future, but not necessarily the past.

Rather than revealing life, the life story may be telling about the interview context and the interaction which produced the story. The very fact that most life stories are told on request already indicates the influence of the interviewer. But also his/her reactions to what is told can steer the story, all the more because telling the story of his/her life can generate emotional difficulties or therapeutic effects. But perhaps the most problematic aspect of the interaction lies in the fact that teller and auditor share what Bourdieu calls 'the biographical illusion' (1986). Both postulate that life makes sense i.e. : (1) that it has an underlying meaning which can be conceived as a history and told as a story; (2) that it has a direction which shapes the life of a subject like a linear track with a beginning, a succession of sequences, and a temporary end which foreshadows the final goal. Con-

sidering the discontinuous rhapsody which life is, the life history appears to be an illusory construction made by the literary convention. Also Denzin points out that the life history is characterized by quite problematic assumptions which are specific for the autobiography as literary genre. For example, the theme of the life history is a complex of motives; it is structured around 'epiphanies' (i.e. crucial events which give life another direction); the story suggests objectivity and correct reproduction of the facts, etc. (Denzin, 1989 : 17-23). In short, the life history does not necessarily concern life as such but reveals more about the conventional assumptions - shared by teller and listener - on how the amorphous life should be told.

Pushing these thoughts to their limits, one can even say that the subject of the life-history is not only a biographical illusion but a biographical product. The life story raises the question who one is the answer to which can only be found through retrospective reflection. One has to reanimate what was forgotten or repressed, recollect what was dispersed, and bring together what was broken. By constructing and telling his/her life story the subject becomes in an artificial way the conscious actor of a life which was never lived as such. So the identity is not pre-existing but is rather realized by the narrator who becomes more reflexive about him/herself in the endeavor to construct an 'I' as protagonist of the life story. In other words, the life history does not depict a reality but creates one in the course of the telling of the story.

All of us would question the naive realism which uses the life history as a documentary method to grasp external realities. Indeed, considering the above, we have to acknowledge that the life history as referent of the referred life is far from transparent. Thinking that social reality can be represented in a transparent way is an 'empiricistic illusion'. Social reality is always ambiguous, unclear, fragmented and discontinuous and no method can capture it as such. Even if it would be possible (which can be doubted), one could not gain any clarifying insight from this realistic picture because it would remain obscure and partial. The fragmented ambiguity which life is not clear in itself, nor does it explain itself independently. It must be questioned, investigated and reflected upon before it becomes accessible. In other words, because life can not present itself, it has to be represented in order to become knowable. While discussion between sociological methods is still possible and necessary, the advantage of the life history method is that the representation is not made by the sociological wise guy (or girl) but by the subjects themselves. It is up to the latter to clarify the ambiguity, to bring unity in the fragmented, and to cope with the chaos their life is. Because they do it themselves, their interpretation-

gains a degree of authentic authority which can never be claimed by other methods. Sociology as empirical science can not invoke some better way of knowing (or knowledge) without considering the way in which the subjects interpret things themselves. Following this reasoning, narrators become subcontractors of the sociologist who uses their life stories not as raw empirical data but rather as a preliminary processing and interpretation of these data. In that sense the life story can be used as a kind of self analysis.

This epistemological reconsideration alters the status of the life story from an informative document into an interpretative account. It is indeed a biographical product, but a product which gives more clarifying insight than the unclear raw material the empiricists are looking for. And if we see the life story as self analysis, it is also understandable why several stories can be told about the same life. Gaining insight through self analysis is a work-in-progress in which the meaning of past events can change in the light of present or future circumstances. The resulting provisional character of the life history is an indication of its quality rather than a proof of its misleading nature. The problems of the 'biographical illusion', remains; that is, the notion that life is a totality and the 'I' a unity.

Without entering into a philosophical-epistemological debate, it suffices to remember that the life story as cognitive product constitutes facts and experiences according to apriori's and formal categories, which can not be traced back to the empirical reality. But this does not mean that the resulting life story as self analysis is false. For the apriori's and formal cognitive categories function as Kantian conditions. They do not pervert, but rather generate knowledge, enabling communications between the teller and the listener in which both are oriented towards the life being told. The notion of the constructed character of life histories can also be found in the work of Schütze (1984). It suggests that cognitive figures function independently from the interview context and the interviewer, thereby safeguarding the life story from the interactive influences which can distort the narration.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

NARRATED IDENTITIES

Angelique van den Braak

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands, October 27, 1995)

This seminar on biographical research was organized by *Comenius* (a Dutch journal on education and culture), the SISWO (a Dutch institute for social scientific research) and the Biography and Society Research Committee. The occasion was a special issue of *Comenius*, dedicated to identity and biography.

The discussion focussed on the thesis of Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal (TU. Berlin), which was also the focus of the special issue (and has been included in an abrid-ged version in this newsletter), where he argues that 'identity' has become too problematic as a concept and should be re-placed by 'biography'. Six researchers (half historians, half social scientists) were invited to respond to his views and to explain what implications their biographical research held for how they conceptualized identity. The two groups differed in their reactions to the thesis; the historians more or less stressed they didn't agree with Fischer-Rosenthal in giving up 'identity', whereas the social scientists emphasized the benefits of a biographical approach, each illustrating a different aspect of it.

The first speaker during the morning session was Barbara Henkes (University of Groningen), who has conducted biographical research among German maids who came to work in Dutch households between the two world wars. She had chosen a biographical approach to allow for a bigger role to be played by these women in her research and to distinguish the different kinds of narratives they constructed while presenting themselves through their life-histories. She didn't think it necessary to do away with 'identity' as a research concept, as it is an interpersonal, processual and dynamic concept. Bernard Kruithof (University of Amsterdam) studied the life of Elise van Calcar, the founder of the Kindergarten-movement in the Netherlands. He didn't see the real gain of replacing 'identity' with biography either, if one is willing to use a broader conception of 'identity'. His own research demonstrates that someone can have several identities during a life-time, which might seem to us as scientists to be conflicting or at least very different, but which are, in fact, connected. Selma Leydesdorff (University of Amsterdam) stated that writing a good life-history without using 'identity' isn't possible. She prefers identification, as this is a much less static concept than 'identity'. While interviewing Antillian women in the Netherlands, the narratives of her respondents were shaped by varying identifications, which could be understood only when looking at their complete biographies. However, exchanging 'iden-

tity' for 'biography' wouldn't solve the problems that arise because the material, gathered when doing oral history research, are very specific. Kathy Davis (Utrecht University) explained that a biographical approach allows for a strong notion of agency in the stories of respondents, preventing a representation as 'cultural dopes'. During her research among women who experienced cosmetic surgery, she came to the idea that identity is an ongoing process in constructing a sense of self instead of a unified core of stable traits. Davis agrees with Fischer-Rosenthal that there are a lot of problems connected with 'identity', but she remarks that innocent concepts do not exist in social sciences. Moreover, as the concept has been embraced by all kinds of institutions and movements, it would be very hard not to use it any more.

Anna Aalten (University of Amsterdam) came across the problem of writing biographies of people that have, as she put it, 'unfinished identities'. She discovered that the female ballet dancers she interviewed told their life-stories in a very different way and, indeed, weren't able to produce a coherent review of their lives. They were constructing and re-constructing their life-stories during the interview, but were, in a way, unable to master the incongruities of their lives. She thinks age would be the best explanation for this 'lack of historical quality' and urges researchers to look at the processual nature of self-identification. Helma Lutz (Utrecht University) conducted biographical research among mothers and daughters from the Surinam-Creole migrant culture. She explained that ambivalence can be an important aspect of life-histories. The migrational heritage that second generation daughters receive doesn't place them between two cultures and they don't inevitably experience an 'identity crisis'. Both mothers and daughters find ways of dealing with different value systems. They succeed in passing on their migrational heritage by means of 'generational work'. Lutz argues that the biographical approach provides a better understanding of the strategies that are used doing this generational work, managing emigration in everyday life.

The audience reactions gave the impression that not everybody was convinced about the advantages of using 'biography' instead of 'identity'. Responding to the doubts expressed by the audience and the speakers, Fischer Rosenthal stated in his conclusion that fortunately, there is no such a thing as a 'concept-police' saying 'identity forbidden'. We should see 'biography' as a different perspective for looking at people and who they are. I think the seminar was a warm plea for biographical research methods, either with or without a focus on 'identity'.

THE 2ND EUROPEAN CONFERENCE FOR SOCIOLOGY

(Budapest, Hungary from August 30 - September 2, 1995)

In the ESA conference in Budapest, the Working Group on Biography and Society had 38 participants and 15 papers with topics ranging from national identity, education, holocaust, blood feuds, comparison of European life stories, cultural modernization, and feminism. The papers displayed a richness of material as well as analytic possibilities. Discussions in the sessions were lively and most people stayed on after arrival - always a good sign at conference of such diversity.

A business meeting was held to discuss further activities and was attended by more than 20 persons. We decided to create a research network called 'Biographical Perspectives on European Societies' and the following proposal was made:

Sociological theory and research on life history is a topic which, after a long period of neglect in the postwar era underwent a very strong revival in the seventies. In recent times, life history research has established itself as an important sociological research perspective or approach. Rather than being a distinct technique of research, life histories, autobiographies and other 'documents of life' have very important consequences for sociological research and lend themselves to different and flexible use. Current high profile theoretical dis-

cussion about self and reflexivity, identity as a process, life politics or narrativity are all related to the life history approach. Subject areas where life histories are used within a European context vary extremely: generational and family change; ethnic, gender and class identity; religious and national identity.

An interim steering committee was established:

- J.P. Roos, chair (University of Helsinki)
- Zuzana Kusa, secretary (University of Bratislava)
- Gilad Noga (University of Tel Aviv)
- Ann Nilsen (University of Bergen)
- Brian Roberts (University of Huddersfield)
- Viktoria Semjonova (Russian Academy of Sciences at Moscow)
- Liz Stanley (University of Manchester)
- Talis Tisenkpf (Latvian Academic of Sciences)
- Elena Zdravomyslova (Russian Academy of sciences at St. Petersburg).

A book of the proceedings was proposed, to be edited by Elina Haavio-Mannila, Brian Roberts, J.P. Roos and Liz Stanley.

For further information, contact:

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Fax: +358 0 1917019
E-mail: jproos@cc.helsinki.fi

NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, CALL FOR PAPERS

FINLAND

Call for papers: THE NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF LIFE STORIES

This session will be organized as part of the International conference, CROSSROADS IN CULTURAL STUDIES in Tampere, Finland from July 1-4, 1996.

The purpose of a life-story is not only to account for facts, circumstances and chronology of a past life. By actively configuring the past, life stories participate in the process of identity formation. This session deals with various strategies which individual narrators employ in constructing their narrative identities as well as social, cultural, and political constraints on these strategies. Themes of vital interest range from how to achieve biographical coherence, narrative techniques like irony

and metaphor, and narrative types like comedy and romance, and the relationship between narrator and protagonist.

Authors are encouraged to present research on different forms of life stories: oral narratives, diaries, written life stories, autobiographies and memoirs, and even fiction.

For further information, contact:

Dr. Matti Hyvärinen
University of Tampere
P.O. Box 607
33101 Tampere, Finland
Fax: +358 31 2156502
Tel: +358 31 2156999
E-mail: ytmahy@uta.fi

A further session of interest is DIARIES AND EVERYDAY LIFE, coordinated by Katarina Eskola, University of Jyväskylä (E-mail: keskola@dodo.jyu.fi)

For further information about the conference: CROSSROADS IN CULTURAL STUDIES

University of Tampere
Dept. of Sociology and Social Psychology
P.O. Box 607
33101 Tampere, Finland
Tel: +358 31 2156949 or 3681848
Fax: +358 31 2156080
E-mail: iscsmail@uta.fi

GERMANY

The National Congress of German Sociologists (DEUTSCHER SOZIOLOGEN-KONGRESS), Dresden, October, 7-11, 1996 is organized under the theme: Difference and Integration. The Future of Modern Societies. (Differenz und Integration. Die Zukunft Moderner Gesellschaften.) One plenary session (Anerkennungsprozesse und individuelle

Modernisierung) is organized by the section "Biographieforschung" in cooperation with "Bildungsforschung";

Contact: Prof. Ursula Apatzsch, Kleine Höllbergstr.3, D-60431 Frankfurt am Main & Prof. Ursula Rabe Kleberg, Universität Halle, Institut für Pädagogik, Brandbergweg 23, D-06120 Halle.

Next to this a session under the theme of "Biographical Integration of Discontinuity and Social Difference" (Biographische Integration von Diskontinuität und Sozialer Differenz) is organized by: Dr. Lena Inowlocki and Priv. Doz. Dr. Gabi Rosenthal.

Working conference: "Pedagogical-educational biographical research" (ERZIEHUNGSWISSENSCHAFTLICHE BIOGRAPHIEFORSCHUNG), November, 17-18. in Siegen, Universität GH Siegen

Information: Dr. Imbke Behnken, Universität GH Siegen, FB Erziehungswissenschaften, Adolf-Reichweinstr. 2, 57068 Siegen

Conference: "Arrival in the West. Women's life-strategies five years after reunification." (ANKUNFT IM WESTEN. LEBENSENTWÜRFE VON FRAUEN FÜNF JAHRE NACH DER VEREINIGUNG), November, 27, Berlin, Französischer Dom am Gendarmenmarkt, Information: Dr. Hans-Joachim Veen & Frau Christine Henry-Huthmacher c/o Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Forschung und Beratung, Postfach 1420, 1000 Berlin

Conference: "Biographical work in adult education" (BIOGRAPHISCHE ARBEIT IN DER WEITERBILDUNG), December 4-6, Magdeburg, Information: Institut f. Vergleichende Geschichtswissenschaften e.V., Cuvrystr. 20-23, 10997 Berlin, tel./fax.: 030 6125 444

Conference: "This is not just yesterday, it is tomorrow and today. Coming to terms with the aftermath of the Shoah in East and West." (DAS IST NICHT NUR GESTERN. DAS IST MORGEN UND HEUTE. ZUR NACHTRÄGLICHEN WIRKSAMKEIT DER GESCHICHTE DER SHOAH UND IHRER BEARBEITUNG IN OST UND WEST), December 13-17, Berlin, Adam von Trott Haus

Information: Christian Staffa, Institut für vergleichende Geschichtswissenschaften e.V., Cuvrystr. 20-23, 10997 Berlin, tel./fax: 030 6125 444

Lectures on the theme "Memory and History. Oral History and National Socialism." (ERINNERN UND GESCHICHTE. ORAL HISTORY ZUM NATIONALSOZIALISMUS) January and February, wednesdays in Berlin, Rathaus Steglitz, Schloßstr. 37 Information: Volkshochschule Steglitz, Rathaus Steglitz, Schloßstr. 37

The working group "Educational Science Biographical Research" (ERZIEHUNGSWISSENSCHAFTLICHE BIOGRAPHIEFORSCHUNG) offers a session on "Biography, education and culture" (Biographie, Bildung und Kultur) at the DGFE congress in Halle, March 10-13, organized by: Prof. Heinz-Hermann Krüger (Halle), Prof. Winfried Marotzki (Magdeburg) & Prof. Theodor Schulze (Bielefeld)

The INSTITUT FÜR QUALITATIVE SOZIALFORSCHUNG E.V. BERLIN offers seminars and workshops on textanalysis and -interpretation all around the year, Information: Roswitha Breckner, Gothaerstr. 5, 10823 Berlin

NETHERLANDS

Call for papers:

The International Society for the Study of European Ideas is holding its 5th Conference in Utrecht, The Netherlands on August 19-24, 1996. The theme is MEMORY, HISTORY AND CRITIQUE: EUROPEAN IDENTITY AT THE MILLENIUM. As part of this conference, a workshop on 'Autobiography, biography, and history: individual and collective memory' will be organized.

Background: Biography as well as autobiography recognized the importance of the individual for its own sake and is a late form in telling life stories. It is a particular European contribution, corresponding to its emphasis on individuals and their place in transmitting the collective memory. The multi-disciplinary

session will investigate this development and stimulate discussion on these important issues. Papers are welcome on any aspects of this theme, but in particular, on

- biography as history: critical reflections on personal and collective memories (accuracy, possible distortions and omissions in memories of individuals and collectivities)
- biography and autobiography: the role of personal memories in European historical traditions (the relation of personal life courses and their representations to large-scale historical changes and their interpretation)
- autobiography, life stories: memories of self-narrative (the development of autobiography as a literary form in the context of developing individualism)

Send short abstracts (one page or less) to:

- Debra Kelly
University of Westminster
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U.K.
Fax: +44 171-911 5001
- Kurt W. Back
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USA
Fax: +1 919 660 5623
E-mail: kback@soc.duke.edu
- Devoran Kalekin-Fishman
School of Education
University of Haifa
Haifa, Israel 31905
- Conference Secretariat:
Lenette van Buren
Institute for Humanist Studies
P.O. Box 797
3500 AT Utrecht
Netherlands

NEW ZEALAND

A conference entitled NARRATIVE AND METAPHOR ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES will be held in Auckland, New Zealand from July 8-10, 1996. The conference will bring together thinkers in fields ranging from anthropology to economics, gender studies to history, law to mathematics, medicine to philosophy, physics to political science, psychotherapy to sociology who are currently working on the rhetoric of their disciplines. Deadline for proposals is January 15, 1996.

For more information, contact:
Mike Hanne
Comparative Literature Department
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand
Tel: +64 9 3737 599, Ext. 7106
Fax: +64 9 3737 483
E-mail: mihamne@auckland.ac.nz

PORTUGAL

A conference on THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITY will be held at the University of Évora in Évora, Portugal from March 25-29, 1996. For further information, contact:
Prof. Sandi Michele de Oliveira
Comissao Organizadora- RC 25
Department de Linguística e Literaturas
Universidade de Évora
7001 Évora Codex
Portugal
E-mail: cidchus@cuniv.uevora.pt

The conference of the AISLF (ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES SOCIOLOGUES DE LANGUE FRANCAISE), July 8-12, Evora, Portugal, includes a research committee on the theme 'Transmissions et Mobilités', Information: Daniel Bertaux (address see colophone)

SWEDEN

THE IXTH INTERNATIONAL ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE is organized in June 13-16, 1996 in Gotenborg. Information:
Birgitta Skarin Frykman or Sven B. Ek,
Dept. of Ethnology,
University of Gotenborg;
Vaestra Hamngatan 3,
S-411 17 GÖTEBORG,
Sweden.
tel: 46 31 773 19 71,
fax: 46 31 13 80 30.

UNITED KINGDOM

The AUTO/BIOGRAPHY STUDY GROUP is part of the BSA (British Sociological Association). Member-ship is open to people from other disciplines, from other countries, and those with a broad general interest in auto/biography. The aim of the group is to bring together people interested in looking analytically at all forms of biography and autobiography, the relationship between different genres of representing lives, and the intertextuality of biography and autobiography, texts and lives. The Study Group is a large and lively one with a growing international membership. It publishes a fully refereed journal auto/biography which is distributed free to members. A list of members, interests and addresses is distributed annually and an annual international residential conference plus at least two day conferences are organized each year.

Workshops and other meetings are convened at the annual conference of the BSA to ensure that the intellectual concerns of auto/biography stay on the sociological agenda. Membership subscriptions are due on April 1 of each year. The 1995/1996 subscription rates are:
£ 11 for unwaged BSA members
£ 18 for wages BSA members
£ 14 for unwaged non-BSA members
£ 20 for waged non-BSA members.
Overseas subscribers should add £10 to these rates for airmail delivery. All cheques must be received in British currency.

For general information about the Study Group or if you are interested in becoming a member, contact:
Michael Erben
School of Education
The University
Southampton SO17 1BJ
U.K.

Articles submitted for publication in auto/biography should be 6,000 words or less and referenced according to the Harvard system. Three copies should be sent to the editor:
Liz Stanley
Sociology Department
University of Manchester
Manchester M12 9PL U.K.

If you would like to receive a sample copy, review copy or back edition of the journal, contact the editor.

UNITED STATES

The SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF NARRATIVE LITERATURE - an international association of scholars dedicated to the investigation of narrative, its elements, techniques, and forms; its relationship to other modes of discourse; and its power and influence in cultures past and present - is organizing its annual conference at Ohio State University in April 1996. It also sponsors sessions at the MLA (Modern Language Association) which meets in December each year. For more information about this conference or becoming a member, write to:
Journal Manager
Ohio State University Press
1070 Carmack Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1002
Tel: +1 614 292 6930
Fax: +1 614 292 2065

The KENTUCKY CONFERENCE ON NARRATIVE organizes an interdisciplinary conference each year, bringing together scholars from the humanities and social sciences. Conference proceedings are published through the College of Communications and Informations Studies, University of Kentucky. To subscribe to the Conference network, send the following command to listserv@ukcc.uky.edu: Sub narrate [first name] [last name] For more information, contact:
Joachim Knuf
Department of Communication
University of Kentucky
107 Grehan Building
Lexington, Kentucky 40506-0042

The American Anthropological Association includes a session on narratives. The next meeting is in San Francisco from Nov. 20-24, '96. For information, contact:
David Givens
American Anthropological Association
4350 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 640
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1621
Tel: +1 703 528 1902, Ext. 2
Information about submitting a paper or panel abstract is published in the AAA Newsletter in January (the deadline for abstracts is April 1).

A session titled narrative, RHETORIC, REPRESENTATION: DISCOURSE APPROACHES TO ORGANIZATIONAL KNOW-

LEDGE will be held at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Cincinnati, Ohio on August 11-14, 1996. For more information, contact
Ellen O'Connor
College of Business Administration
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0399
Tel: +1 219 631 4133
E-mail: eoconno2@vma.cc.nd.edu

The annual meeting of the AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION invariably has at least one session on narratives. The 1996 meeting will be held in New York City on August 10-14, 1996 and the 1997 will be held in Toronto, Canada on August 9-13. For more information, contact
American Sociological Association
1722 N Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036-2981
Tel: +1 202 833 3410
Fax: +1 202 785 0146
E-mail:
asa_meeting_services@mcimail.com
Call for papers: THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL MEETING (Holiday Inn Center City, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 10-13, 1996)
The theme of the meeting is "Oral History, Memory, and the Sense of Place." Proposals that relate oral history to popular and professional notions of history; the construction of local memories; the relationship between vernacular, covert, or sup-

pressed histories and official history; the importance of locale in shaping community identity; the nature and role of nostalgia in local memories; the 'uses of memory in heritage based tourism; and related topics are especially encouraged. Proposals on other subjects are also welcome. The Program Committee invites proposals from oral history practitioners in a variety of disciplines and settings, including academic institutions, museums and historical societies, archives, and community organizations, as well as independent historians. Sessions may address oral history as it is used in a variety of media, including radio, film, video, exhibitions, and drama. While sessions may be organized as panels with formal presentations, the Program Committee also encourages roundtables and workshops, media and performance-oriented sessions, and sessions that invite audience involvement. Graduate student proposals and proposals related to undergraduate and precollegiate use of oral history are encouraged. OHA policy disallows those who have presented a paper at the 1995 annual meeting from doing so in 1996; such individuals may, however, serve as session chairs or commentators. Proposals for entire sessions should include a title and one-page description of the issues and questions the session will address; the title, name

of presenter, and one-page abstract of each presentation in the session; the name of the convener; a suggested commentator; and short vitae, including affiliation, mailing address, and phone numbers, for each presenter. The Program Committee encourages sessions in which participants represent the full diversity of oral history practitioners. Individual paper or other proposals should include a title and one-page abstract of the presentation and a short vitae of the presenter. Deadline: December 15, 1995. For further information or to submit proposals, contact:
Howard L. Green,
New Jersey Historical Commission, CN 305,
Trenton,
NJ 08625;
(609)984-3460 (phone),
(609) 633-8168 (fax),
hlgreen@pilot.njin.net(e-mail);
or
Linda Shopes,
Division of History,
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission,
Box 1026,
Harrisburg, PA 17108;
(717)772-3257 (phone),
(717)787-4822 (fax),
lshopes@llpntn.11.pbs.org (queries only).

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E-MAIL RABO BANK Amsterdam
SPECIAL INTERESTS Kinkerstraat 91
1053 DJ Amsterdam
BANK NR 3135
ACCOUNT NR 39.38.44.889

Date Signature

PUBLICATIONS

Cipriani, Roberto and Bolasco, Sergio (eds.) *RICERCA QUALITATIVA E COMPUTER. TEORIE, METODI E APPLICAZIONI*. Angeli, Milano, 1995, pp. 444.

INTERNATIONAL YEARBOOK OF ORAL HISTORY AND LIFE STORIES, edited by Daniel Bertaux, Luisa Passerini, Paul Thompson

Migration and Identity, vol. 3 (ed. by Rina Benmayor & Andor Skotnes), Oxford University Press, 1994, 240 pp. This volume appears at a time of both massive worldwide migration and of apparently intensifying

national, ethnic, and racial conflicts. The essays examine how the identities of migrants are shaped not only by gender, class, and ethnicity, but also by the experience of migration itself; and how migration is thus a crucible for both individual development and wider social change today. Guest-edited from the U.S. and with a special relevance to the Americas, this volume spans the whole complex global web of migratory patterns with contributions linking Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North and South America, without losing the particularities of local and person experience.

Contributors: Francesca Battisti, Gadi Ben'ezer, Rina Benmayor, Homi Bhaba, Mary Chamberlain, Elizabeth

Crespo, Evelina Dagnino, Mario T Garcia, Ivan Jaksic, Alessandro Portelli, Andor Skotnes, Paul Thompson, William Westerman, Janis Wilton, Dorothy Louise Zinn.

CURRENT SOCIOLOGY devoted a special issue to Biographical Research which includes 15 papers and a very detailed, up-dated bibliography. Papers are written by sociologists, but also historians (Le Goff), psychologists (Jerome Bruner). Among the sociologists: Denzin, Hoerning/Alheit, Catani, de Gaulejac, C. Delcroix, D. Bertaux; plus two reviews of the state of the art of biographical research, in Italy (by A. Rammstedt) and in Germany (by MF Chanfrault-Duchet). 264 pp.

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