EUROPEAN STUDIES ON INEQUALITIES AND SOCIAL COHESION

Dates of coverage: 2004 to present
ISSN: 1734-6878
Frequency: Quarterly

European Studies on Inequalities and Social Cohesion is a peer reviewed international journal that publishes original papers which offer analyses of new empirical material and/or theoretical insights and review articles. It is affiliated at the Institute of Sociology, University of Łódź and published by the Łódź University Press.

It covers broad range of topics concerning multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach to social inequalities, processes of social exclusion and inclusion, social stratification and mobility, as well as social policy issues.

The European dimension of above mentioned phenomena should be taken into account by the contributors. Comparative approaches will be treated with specific attention.

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Editorial note

"European Studies on Inequalities and Social Cohesion" has been established in the year 2005. The idea was to create a forum for dissemination of results of the research project PROFIT (Policy Responses Overcoming Factors in the Intergenerational Transmission of Inequalities) funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. The project was realized by the international consortium lead by the Institute of Sociology, University of Łódź. Journal Board and Editorial Board are constituted by the scholars from nine countries and twelve universities who took part in this successful research project. Since the beginning, we were publishing four volumes a year containing outcomes of the study in national and comparative articles, up to the termination of the project in the year 2007.

The current volume, as well as two forthcoming ones, will provide an opportunity to present the results of other research attempts undertaken by the scholars from the Institute of Sociology, University of Łódź in collaboration with partners from various universities and various countries.

However, we do not plan to limit the scope of the journal in any other way than via taking care of the quality of the articles and their relevance to the general subject area. We are open to any proposals from the academic community which will meet the guidelines for the authors. We hope to retain the international character of the journal and work hard in order to receive positive acclamation from an academic community.

We are pleased to invite potential contributors to read the rules regarding submission of the articles and not to hesitate to provide us with outcomes of their academic work.
Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas

Introduction

The two current issues of the “European Studies on Inequalities and Social Cohesion” (1-2/2008 and 3-4/2008) consist of the texts of educational modules developed as a result of the research project „Invite. New Ways of Biographical Counselling in Vocational Rehabilitative Training“, conducted in the years 2003–2006 under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The aim of the project was to design Educational Curriculum (consisting of fifteen educational modules) on biographic method application in professional counselling and social work. The project was targeted at professionals conducting widely understood vocational rehabilitation with the disabled people. During the project an idea emerged that the new materials could be useful for other “professional helpers” – psychologists, social workers, educationalists, teachers as well as social sciences students.

The team carrying out the project consisted of various kinds of university scientists: sociologists, social work specialists, lawyers), professional counsellors, and social workers from Austria, Finland, Germany, Poland, Great Britain, and Italy – some of them being the authors of the texts published in this issue. The main coordinator of the project was the University in Magdeburg, Germany. Members of the international team met at work conferences devoted to exchange of experience in biographic counselling in particular countries and work on the curriculum modules created by partners.

The Polish project team included: sociologists of the Institute of Sociology University of Lodz, professional counsellors from the Non-material Help Centre for Unemployed, which is the department of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre in Lodz, Lodz-Baluty Division, professional counsellors and psychologists from the Psychological and Educational Counselling Clinic for Young People, social workers from the Poviat Centre for Family Welfare, and Disability Diagnosing Section in Zdunska Wola. Throughout the whole project narrative interviews were conducted and analysed during workshops on the application of the biographic method in the work with clients and from 2005 training workshops for professionals from labour offices, psychological and educational counseling clinics, and social care centres were organised.
Biographical Counselling: an Introduction

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This module deals with the complex task of professional counsellors in vocational rehabilitation to encourage and to support the biographical work of their clients. Firstly, the text stresses the importance of biographical insights into the life course of clients within the counselling processes of vocational rehabilitation. Secondly, the basic social science concepts that are important for biography analysis are developed: identity and self; developing identities; fluid, fragmented and fractured identities, situational identities vs. biographical identity unfolding as long-term processes. Thirdly, the concept of biographical work is explicated, and fourthly, a theoretical model for biographical counselling in rehabilitation situations is outlined.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Giving an understanding for the intricacies of identity formation in complex modern societies.
2. Providing insight into the importance of biographical work for persons with severe (and quite often multiple) inflictions, such as chronic illness and long-term unemployment.
3. Understanding the basic dimensions of biographical work.
4. Getting an overview over basic steps of professional biographical counselling for clients in situations of vocational rehabilitation.
1. The Basic Idea of the INVITE Project

The aim of the project INVITE is to construct, to try out and to put into practice a curriculum for further education, i.e. learning and training on the job, in biographical counselling using the methods of sociological biography analysis. The curriculum is addressed to professional counsellors (vocational teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, etc.), who work in the field of integrative vocational rehabilitation with clients living in the aftermath of a severe, life-changing medical crisis (caused by a sudden accident, by the contraction of a severe disease, by the deterioration of physical abilities under the condition of a chronic illness, etc.) and being unable to go on with their former occupation, and/or living in the critical life situation of having lost their former job position and being totally incapacitated to practice their former occupation.

INVITE adopts theoretical concepts and methodological procedures successfully developed and practiced in qualitative social research under the catchword of autobiographical narrative interviewing. These scientific theoretical concepts and research procedures are now applied to the professional work field of vocational rehabilitation, and therefore they have been transformed into a tool of exploring the life situation of the client and counselling him or her to do biographical work connected to the tasks of choosing a new occupation and getting educated for it and trained in it as a beginner or an apprentice. Clients in life situations of vocational rehabilitation have to choose new biographical options connected with the choice of the new occupation, and they must thoroughly open themselves for it. Hence, they have to change themselves tremendously and do biographical work in order to accomplish such a change. Vocational counsellors should assist their clients in such a task by strengthening their biographical abilities of working through their experiences of severe suffering, of regaining biographical sense and self esteem and of searching in their own personal history to understand under what life circumstances they gained biographical resources for developing action capacities and under what life circumstances they were afflicted by biographical dispositions of getting hurt and consequently incapacitated for certain types of circumspect action. Vocational counsellors should teach and train their clients to explore and decide when to focus and to work on their biographical dispositions of getting hurt and incapacitated to do certain elements of occupational work, and when just to circumvent those work situations that tend to hurt. And, of course, they should teach and train their clients how to exploit their biographical resources for developing action capacities and for biographical metamorphosis.
Vocational counsellors should spend at least some time to on personal assistance to teach and train clients to do their biographical work. This time span is specifically prolonged if the counsellor is involved in a stretched-out process of occupational re-education. (e.g. in some countries involved in the INVITE project clients get the chance to undergo an occupational retraining lasting for one or two years). Vocational counsellors involved in prolonged training courses are in an ideal position to develop and/or to try out concepts of counselling, teaching and training in biographical work connected to occupational change. However, INVITE’s specific approach to vocational counselling that harnesses concepts and methods of sociological biography analysis on the empirical base of the autobiographical narrative interview can also be applied to short term counselling situations. Even under short-term counselling arrangements the sensitisation for biographical underpinnings and depths of medical crises, unemployment traps and enforced occupational changes will be pivotal for the biographical self-understanding of the client and the professional hetero-understanding of the counsellor. And, in addition, under very specialized personal conditions of the client’s life situation and ethically taking into account the professional paradox of teaching and learning (how much to prod the client that she or he should explore something new, on the one hand, and how long to wait for her or his own inner development, in order to make sure that it is her or his personal way to follow up, on the other) the sociological research instrument of narrative interviewing and pertinent biography analysis as a specialized powerful version of social work case analysis could clear the life situation of the client in a dramatically short time span, if she or he is willing and personally strong enough to undergo such an intensive short endeavour of self-exploration.

The Leonardo project INVITE is run by four European universities in Finland, Germany, Poland and Wales (Helsinki, Magdeburg, Łódź, and Bangor) and by ten practice institutions in the said countries and, in addition, in Italy and Austria. In cooperation between professional practitioners and social scientists, an on-the-job-training curriculum of further education for the biographical counselling of clients in severely difficult situations of vocational rehabilitation has been developed, tested and reshaped. In close cooperation with the practice institutions involved, INVITE will be made known and distributed through the networks of their substantive fields of counselling practice for various types of clients.
2. Institutional Processing vs. Strengthening Personal Autonomy

There are two different processes of handling clients in social assistance institutions: bureaucratic and professional ones.

Bureaucratic procedures are steered by conditional internal organisational programmes. The logic is: The organization has provided for alternative paths of handling problems; let’s find persons with corresponding problems, who fit those alternative paths of handling. Bureaucratic procedures can be extremely helpful and efficient, if the problems of clients perfectly fit the problem definitions and the paths of handling provided by the social assistance organisation. Efficiency in terms of costs and counselling time to be spent is at its utmost if there are many similar problems of clients that perfectly fit the predefinitions and operative ways of handling by the organization. Part of the work of public and private job centres can be of that kind. But bureaucratic procedures would not be flexible enough to handle problems that are beyond their pre-selected and operationally defined patterns of handling and many problem constellations of vocational rehabilitation are of this kind. Quite often, the client carries a very specific, biographically conditioned problem constellation to the assistance organization. For example: A client may be forced into an apprenticeship by outer forces, as when a young man was kicked out of an advanced secondary school education and put into an disliked plumber apprenticeship; or when parents forced a young woman into a disliked apprenticeship which seemed to be easy to get into and fitting for a young woman. Therefore, he or she was trained in an occupation and would work in it for a long time, which he or she could not identify with, but at the same time had to integrate that work and occupation, which they experienced as self-alienating, into their everyday life. But if it then becomes a personal attitude to see work and occupation in general as self-alienating and if one never detects the powerful potential of work and occupation for self-identification, than it is for such a person very difficult to open up for intensive re-training into a new occupation. Thus, professional counselling work becomes important in order to let the client reassess the biographical value of occupational work as a potential for positive self-evaluation and for personal growth. This becomes an important precondition for successful retraining.

The other alternative to handling the clientele- the professional way- becomes pivotal in any problem constellation in which the problem of the client does not fit the standardized problem definitions and the various standardized paths of handling them offered by the assistance organisation. Most biographically co-conditioned problem constellations are of this kind. In these cases the assistance agent has to embark on the much more time-consuming
endeavour of doing a deeper case analysis including the scrutiny of biographical processes, and for this she or he has to take into account the personal perspective of the unique client. Case analysis and the exploration of the perspective of the client, especially regarding aspects of their lives which they do not understand or have a restricted focus on, is professional work. The problem presentation of the client must be basically done by narrative means, since she or he has personally been involved in it and this problem involvement unfolds as a more or less dramatic or tragic story. Thus, professional case work requires the narrative problem presentation of the client as partially elicited and encouraged by the professional as well as her or his interpretative analysis of that problem presentation and, of course, the following counselling of the client, and the counselling work of finding a way out of the problem constellation should be mutually shared by both parties.

The bureaucratic way to handle clients is to process them without taking into regard their own point of view and personal plans, their own perspective of experiencing, their own understanding of the problem and their own interpretation of the opaque activities of the practitioners and their organization. The expected order of the bureaucratic institution determines activities and the time sequence of events. The value relevancies, goals and assessment criteria of the interactive action schemes between clients and practitioners are dominated by the going concerns of the bureaucratic institution. The client is not allowed to embark on his or her own schedule of inner time in order to search, understand, evaluate, develop plans at her or his own pace and undergo a creative metamorphosis. For the client, many of the proceedings, procedures, rules and maxims of the bureaucratic institution are hidden behind the curtain of seemingly friendly and civilized proceedings of mundane conversational interaction. Nevertheless, the client feels driven by outer forces and develops lots of fear about what has happened already and what will happen in the future. But this is of no concern for the practitioner. To the contrary, in the understanding of the bureaucratic practitioner the fear helps to keep the client under control and at a comfortable distance. The client is just expected to accept the provisions of the practitioners and follow the rules of the organization. Difficulties and mistakes of handling the bureaucratic program of processing the client are concealed from the client as has been poignantly shown in Kafka’s novel “The Trial”. The bureaucratic processing with its standard procedures can be found in many types of governmental and private job centres, since the notorious lack of fitting employment opportunities and the scarcity of economic resources for subsidiary payments are the overall concern of such institutions. Hence, there is often evidence of the collective mental syndrome of Kafka’s gatekeeper connected with such an institution that aims to protect the common
good against the possibly illegitimate intentions and volitions of the private clients.

Bureaucratic practitioners – including those of job centres – tend to withdraw from listening to narrative accounts of the life history of their clients whenever the latter dare and struggle to put chunks of biographical rendering into their institutional conversations with the practitioners. (But normally this wouldn’t happen since the atmosphere of the ongoing interaction does not encourage such time consuming and un-restrained behaviour of the client). Listening to biographical accounts of the client would mean taking their perspective and their understandings seriously, and that would cause difficulties with the standard programs of the organization, since the ideas and plans of the clients might be totally different and time consuming. Autobiographical narration is an emergent endeavour, and neither the client nor the practitioner would know what new topics of, and insights into, new problems emerge. Such emergent features of conversation and of evolving social relationships are totally against the logic of bureaucratic processing. Therefore practitioners would normally shy away from offering the floor to autobiographical story telling by their clients and, in return, clients are emotionally barred from autobiographical story telling since there is no reason to trust the practitioner and her or his organization about how to use the autobiographical material properly and respectfully. Instead, the latter might use it to rule out urgently needed help for the client as well as to stigmatise, marginalize or even criminalize her or him.

The ruling out of autobiographical renderings can be extra-counterproductive for the counselling work of practitioners in job centres. In order to assist the client to find a new job position or even a new occupation, the vocational counsellor in a job centre should know the self-understanding of the client of her or his occupational history and the satisfactions, delights, annoyances and fears connected with it. Knowing about these subjective features the practitioner can assess what could be a promising direction of the search for a new position or even for a new occupation with which the client could identify and toward which he or she could develop new personal occupational strength. In addition, it would be helpful for the counsellor to know even “private”, non-occupational aspects of the life course of the client and its subjective biographical details: e.g., that he loves to tinker with old materials and to construct new things out of them or – another example – that she loves to adorn her daughters with nice clothes. Such essentially peripheral knowledge about personal inclinations of the client could provide the counsellor with fruitful hints towards the new appropriate occupation to be chosen and personally developed by the client. It could help the counsellor focus the client on for example, becoming an construction engineer after having been addicted and psychically destabilized by the study of mathematics which was beloved too much, or to focus on becoming a tailor or
a hairdresser after having been totally unsatisfied with work in a plant for metal constructions. Normally such information would not be provided by institutional communicative exchange in a bureaucratic setting, which resembles more an interrogation than a free floating conversation. A quite normal format of institutional interaction in work centres involves offering job or re-training opportunities available on stock. The reactions of the client towards the question of whether she or he would accept such a job (which is sometimes called the pinpointing and subtraction method) does not allow collection of experiential qualities and subjective perspectives (lived experiences and experiential gestalts) of the client connected with her or his former occupational situations as well as those peripheral features of her or his private life that could become a new potential for occupational life.

However, the work of the professional practitioner can be totally different, and this also applies to the professional group of vocational counsellors. The professional practitioner can be oriented towards the systematic strengthening of the action capacities and the personal autonomy of the client, i.e. towards her or his self-empowerment. There are three features that are pivotal for this client centred type of professional counselling:

- The permanent endeavour of taking the role of the client: the practitioner systematically attempts to explore the experiential perspective of the client. This includes finding out about his or her definition and explanation of the problem situation, but at the same time it does not mean taking the explanatory argumentation of the client at face value; instead one has to embed it within the unfolding contexts of her or his experiences and mirror it back to her or him.

- The stress on letting the client proceeds with the speed and in the flux of her or his own inner time. This includes the organization and social arrangement and the dramaturgical offering of moratorium phases for the client’s re-experiencing the fateful concatenation of events that led to the present problem situation, for making her- or himself a topic of search and reflection and for developing her or his own biographical (personal and social) identity; letting her or himself proceed with the speed of their own inner time also allows for some mistakes, re-evaluations, additional searches and repetitions of attempts. On the other hand, there has to be the obvious profile of an institutional time schedule in order that a strong grid of expectation is available that orients the client towards her or his tasks for development.

- The encouragement of autobiographical narrative accounts of the client regarding their own experiences of the sequential unfolding of her or his predicament and the concatenation of events leading to these experiences. This involves the more or less critical and sober self-presentation of the client. Through the autobiographical rendering of the client, i.e. through the constraints
of extempore story telling and the cognitive ordering devices of story telling, the own time of the client, her or his inner time of unfolding of identity and biographical process structures will become dominant in competition with the institutional time of the organization the counsellor is working in.

3. Two Basic Features of Post-modern Complex Society: Difference and Identity as Conditions for Institutional Processing and for Strengthening Personal Autonomy

In the last section we dealt with three features of professional counselling: to seriously take into account the perspective of the client, to let the client proceed with the counselling process according to her or his own personal (“inner”) time of learning and understanding, and to let the client tell her or his own personal experiences connected with the encroaching problem. Due to these three concerns the professional counsellor must seriously and in a circumspect way consider the biographical preconditions and the personal life situation of the client. The professional counsellor must take into account the client’s identity development and its mutual relationship to her or his life history: the counsellor has realized that understanding the unfolding biographical identity of the client is pivotal for successfully working on her or his rehabilitative problem constellation calling for occupational change and/or re-retraining. Biographical identity, as we would like to call the mutually conditioning and conditioned relationship between identity development and life history, is a very complex process in the everyday world of globalised, and at the same time variously fragmented, post-modern society.

Biographical identity flows from two general sources: (a) The ascription of certain social categories by others and by oneself differentiates the individual from other social aggregates and groups in which it does not belong. This categorization ensures the otherness and difference of an individual from others; (b) At the same time the ascription and self-ascription of social categories also is the base of belonging to „we-collectivities” and of personally identifying with them as well as of personal self-identification. Self-identification has as its natural base personal experiences with the concatenation of events of one’s own unique life and one’s own inner development as well as with the categorization processes included in those life experiences. In addition, it is a self-reflexive process that uses those social „we-categories”, collates and integrates them and interprets their special combination as part of constructing a personal self that fits these personal experiences and this inner development. From this the person’s essential uniqueness and unity with oneself is ensured. The categorized
otherness and difference of the individual is very much used to process him or her institutionally, to let him or her be an object of organizational control procedures and to include or exclude them from societal services. The personal self, instead, is the essential condition for individual autonomy and self-empowerment. But biographical identity as a social whole flows from both sources; it is the ever changing and at the same time constantly self-identical product of real socio-biographical processes of becoming an object for the social ascription of categorical differences, and of becoming the agency for constructing one’s own individual uniqueness.

Identity – an Introduction

Identity is to do with the way an individual answers the question „Who Am I?” It is „our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and others” (Jenkins 1996). It involves making comparisons between people and therefore establishing similarities and differences between them. Those who are believed by themselves and others to be similar share an identity which is distinguishable from the identity of people who are believed to be different and who do not, therefore, share the same identity. Identity is thus an integral part of social life. It is only by distinguishing the identities of different groups that people are able to relate to other people. An awareness of different identities provides some indication of what sort of person you might be dealing with, and therefore how you can relate to them. According to Jenkins (1996) „Without social identity, there is, in fact, no society”.

If identity provides us with the means of answering the question „Who am I?” it might appear to be about personality; the sort of person I am. That is only part of the story. Identity is different from personality in important respects. We may share personality traits with other people, but sharing an identity suggests some active engagement on our part. We choose to identify with a particular identity or group although sometimes we have more choice than others. Identity requires some awareness on our part. Thus, social identities do not refer to specific, discrete personality characteristics (such as shyness, honesty, or reliability), though any of these may be involved in an identity. They are, rather, clusters of personality characteristics and attributes that are linked to particular social roles, categories or groups. Examples of commonly employed social identities in contemporary societies include such labels as woman, child, parent, doctor, student, social worker, politician, Catholic, Jew, drug-taker, etc. Some of these identities are based around clearly defined occupational roles, some relate to more general social positions, and others correspond more to stereotypes than to actual roles. Nevertheless, each designates a particular type of real or
imagined person, to whom some particular moral characteristics and social attributes and abilities are imputed, and with whom people may identify themselves or be identified by others.

Someone identifies with a particular social type – or is identified in this way by others – when there is a feeling that the type adequately describes certain key features of his or her life. A social identity may be regarded as somehow fundamental to a person’s whole way of being. However, it should not be assumed that people identify themselves in only one way. People have **multiple identities** and they may shift from one identity to another according to the situation or context in which they are acting and the roles that they take on. A man may, for example, regard himself as being a doctor when he is at work, a father when he is at home, and a football club supporter in his leisure time.

Identity is thus a social question because it concerns the groups with which we identify. It combines how I see myself and how others see me. According to Woodward (2000) it is partly internal and subjective, but also partly external and dependent on the judgement of others. Whilst there are elements of choice or individual agency involved with respect to some of the groups we identify with, it is more difficult to make a personal decision about, or to change others, e.g. Gender identity. A person may regard themselves as a man but if everyone else sees them as a woman, she or he may be unable to establish the identity wanted. Identity is always formed through a combination of individual agency and structural constraint. Although, as Woodward argues, there is increasing choice and fluidity in the construction of identities in contemporary society there are nevertheless structural constraints that continue to prevent some people from adopting the identities they would like to have. Among the important structures, which place constraints on individual choices, are structures of gender, nationality and class. „Economic circumstances, changes in employment, poverty, racism and lack of recognition of our ethnic or national identities all deny us access to identities which we might want to take up… Our own bodies put limits on what it is possible to achieve” (Woodward 2000).

Jenkins (1996) makes a similar point when he argues that the ability to claim identities for ourselves and to attribute particular identities to others is essentially a question of power. Some groups have more power than other groups to claim identities for themselves and to attribute identities to others. For example, the poor and the unemployed, living in inner-city areas, may have little power to resist being seen as part of an „underclass“. Thus, identity is never completely fluid or simply a matter of choice. Social identities exist and are acquired and allocated within power relations. Identity is something which must be negotiated and over which struggles may take place. This alerts us to the fact that identities may be collective as well as individual. The Black Power
movement in the USA, and feminist and gay liberation movements, are examples of groups organising to change the widely held perceptions of particular social identities. They were not simply the struggles of individuals to gain a more positive social identity. They were (and are) the struggles of social groups, which sought a more positive social identity for the group as a whole.

Identity and the Self

The word identity is widely used to refer both to what is called here social identity and to the related idea of personal identity. A social identity marks people out as, in some respects, the same as others. A personal identity marks someone out as a unique and quite distinct individual. Personal identity (central to which is a personal name) is the link between the concepts of social identity and self. Social identities are, in principle, shared with others. There are, for example, large numbers of people who might identify themselves as men, as fathers or as scientists. The word self, on the other hand, is used to distinguish a person’s sense of his or her own uniqueness or individuality. A sense of self is built up when people reflect on their personal history and construct a biography of how they came to be the people that they are. They grasp their various social identities and characteristics and unify them into a conception of what is particular or peculiar about them as an individual (Strauss 1959: 144–7). Only in very extreme situations where a person has a single, all-encompassing social identity might a social identity and a sense of self totally coincide. In most life situations there is a productive, sometimes even creative tension between the various social identities and the self; this is the gist of personal identity.

Developing Identities

How are identities and selves formed? How do people come to recognise themselves in certain images and not in others? How much control do people have in the construction of identities and selves? In answering these questions a range of different social scientific theories have been drawn upon.

- George Herbert Mead: Imagining Ourselves

Mead (1934) offered useful insights into the link between how we see ourselves and the ability of human beings to imagine how others might see us. For example, if attending a job interview we are careful to select clothes which will encourage the interviewers to see us as we wish to be seen. Clothes are an example of symbols which signify particular things to others. A suit worn at an interview might be used to signify that we are serious candidates for the job. Through imagining the way others see us, our personal or subjective sense of identity and self is linked to the external identity that others have of us. Thus, for
Mead, identities are produced in a social context through individuals thinking about what links them to the various social worlds in which they live, work and/or have fantasies about and this is done through symbolising. The ability to visualise ourselves and to represent ourselves gives us some degree of agency, but “The repertoire of symbols upon which we can draw is always limited by the particular culture which we inhabit” (Woodward 2000). The meanings of different sorts of clothing, the sorts of identity they project, for example, cannot simply be chosen by us, but are also influenced by our culture.

- **Erving Goffman: Everyday Interaction**

There are some important features of Goffman’s original theory on „The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life“ (1959), which contribute to an understanding of identity and to how identities are managed and presented in linking the personal and the social. Goffman saw the social world as being rather like a drama or a performance in a play. His work is sometimes described as a **dramaturgical approach**. Individuals put on a performance for others to convince them about who they are. Like an actor, they have to believe in the role in order to be convincing. In the process they may become the person they are trying to project an image of. Through presenting themselves in particular roles individuals develop identities.

In performing roles on the stage of everyday life not all of our actions are conscious or explicit. Appearance, clothes and gestures are all crucial to the public display we intend to make, but sometimes the information presented may inadvertently reveal more about a person than the information directly or intentionally given. We may „give off” information which we do not quite intend, for example, the nervous interview candidate who twists his fingers is unintentionally „giving off” an impression of anxiety whilst attempting to give a confident performance.

Through presenting themselves in particular roles individuals develop identities. Goffman admits that the roles available for us to adopt are not unlimited. We are constrained by the range of social roles available in a particular society at a particular time and we are constrained by the part or the **script** in the play, which we are performing. Actors in a play cannot act out any old part that they had played in former stage productions and they cannot just say what they like. They have to speak the lines written. “However, even if the roles are written we can improvise and interpret our roles, although there are constraints” (Woodward 2000: p. 14).

But note, Goffman always reminded his readers that the stage image of the presentation of self in everyday life is just a productive metaphor, in order to get analytical insight into the almost unconscious, “seen but unnoticed” (Garfinkel 1967), processes of the actor to present her- or himself to others. Of course there
is a qualitative difference between the script-controlled real (professional or lay) stage play and the vicissitudes of everyday interaction and handling one’s going concerns and personal affairs in it. Play-acting in the strict sense is a very special type of endeavour for which one must cross the social frame of stage acting in order to enter the inner world of drama – leaving the everyday world of existence behind oneself in one’s own imagination – but at the same time one must to do it with the work means of mundane activities; e.g. one has to be concerned to speak up in order that the audience can hear you, one has to take various bodily postures in order that one’s enactment is suited to present the character you have to play-act, etc. (Goffman discussed all this beautifully in “Frame Analysis” 1974). Instead, action and interaction in the everyday world of existence is very serious – it is not just a playful symbol for something else--; it can always happen that you “give off” something from yourself, which you did not want to convey to somebody else (see the last paragraph), or you could even fall out of your adopted official role, and there are always backstage situations, where you don’t feel forced to show off to somebody else. In addition, the range of possibilities to show off to yourself is normally quite limited; since you always have in front of your own eyes all your unsuccessful attempts to handle things, all of your own failures and all of your suffering in your life history up to now, even if they might be partially faded out off your awareness.

• **Sigmund Freud: The Unconscious**

Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory gives some insight into the way in which mechanisms of which we might not be consciously aware, determine our identities. Freud argued that people possess an unconscious mind, which contained repressed feelings and desires, which they are not aware of. Many of these are concerned with pleasure seeking and sexuality. According to Freud, to develop into a psychologically well-balanced adult, the child needs to learn to control these desires and learn to identify with the same-sex parent. Childhood experiences are vital for the development of identities in adulthood. The identity positions, which we take up, may be the result of unconscious feelings, which we may try to rationalise but which we do not know for sure. We bring childhood experiences, even those about which we are not conscious, to the decisions we make as adults. Identity is thus constructed by the past as well as through the present.

For a professional counsellor, it is quite often difficult to find out about unconscious tendencies in the minds of clients. But through listening to autobiographical narratives (or even through reading the respective transcripts) the professional counsellor can easily detect signs of fading-out difficult, hurting, painful or shameful experiences in the life history of the client. Those signs are vague textual passages, strange textual discrepancies or even
contradictions, abounding textual self-corrections and hesitation pauses and persistent attempts to rationalise and legitimise one’s activities or non-activities. Most of these textual phenomena are very much conditioned by biographical processes and could reach back to childhood difficulties, which Sigmund Freud was talking about, e.g., on the one hand, obstinate dispositions to get seduced by promising incentives which you know yourself to be indulgent to, but which stubbornly turn out to harm you, or on the other hand, dispositions to get hurt by seemingly harmless activities of interaction partners known to you as benevolent.

**Primary and Secondary Identities**

It is widely agreed that there are primary identities acquired in childhood – gender or ethnicity, for example – that are relatively durable. Even these can be changed, as trans-sexuals will attest (Garfinkel 1967a; Morris 1974). In later life, there may be important moments of transition in identity, as in the process of moving from childhood to adulthood. There may be numerous other transitions involving the acquisition of secondary identities, such as changing occupations, becoming a parent or even moving house. All these involve alterations in the individual’s sense of what kind of person she or he is. They also involve a process of negotiation (Mead 1934, Strauss 1978) between the self and external agencies. Someone who is a Muslim, for example, has that identity confirmed in constant negotiation between his or her sense of being a Muslim and others’ definition of what that means.

**Fluid, Fragmented, and Fractured Identities**

Many commentators argue that identities are more fluid in contemporary societies. People can change identities over their lifetime. They can choose who they want to be in a society in which traditional loyalties are breaking down. In the recent past, individuals would have had a number of central elements to the construction of their identity – family, locality, nation, social class, ethnicity, gender. However, modern or post-modern societies introduce more sources of identity, which crosscut these, producing a more complex pattern of identity and belonging. For example, there is more geographical mobility, with the result that individuals lose their ties to locality and family. Globalisation and supra-national political communities (like the European Union) might undermine the sense of nationhood. (On the other hand nationhood might become a symbolic shelter against all the vicissitudes and strange forces of globalisation, although the powerful economic changes involved in globalisation tend to transgress national barriers). Large social class formations break up. Identities based upon a multiplicity of lifestyles come to be important. According to Bauman (1996) identity has
become simply a matter of choices and not even choices that are necessarily consistent or regular. Individuals can change – following Bauman – their identity as and when they choose. Others (Woodward 2000) believe that there is evidence of increased uncertainty over identities and there is increasing choice and fluidity in the construction of identity, but nevertheless there are still strong structural constraints which restrict and constrain people’s choices. (There are even new ones, e.g. the paralysing conditions of mass and long-term unemployment). In addition, there is pressure to choose one’s own unique individual life course in order to be able to function as a consistent and expected social and personal identity in society whose institutional orders and social milieus more and more require the authenticity and responsibility of individual actors (Kohl 1986). There also is the pressure to juggle between alternative future life courses in order to calculate and minimise the risks that structurally come into the planning of one’s future life through the impact of the complexity of late modern globalised society and the task of living one’s own unique individual life history and developing one’s own individualized personal identity. (Giddens 1991; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994).

According to Jenkins (1996) identity remains rooted in social experience and the membership of social groups, and it is not something that can just be changed at will. Harriet Bradley (1997) argues that in contemporary societies identities are becoming fragmented and she raises the notion of ‘fractured identities’. People might lack a single identity that overarches all others. Nevertheless, even fractured identities are still essentially social. According to Bradley, while there is an element of choice over identity this is not as great as post modernists believe. As Bradley says “few of us can, as yet, choose to be English, male and middle class if we were born Indian, female and working class” (Bradley 1997). To Bradley, the fracturing of identities is not new. There have always been divisions between and within different sources of identity, which have made it possible for individuals to have fractured identities. However, according to Bradley, recent changes in society (social, economic and cultural) have led to increased fragmentation and people have become more aware of the multiple sources of identity open to them.

Summary

The concept of identity raises fundamental questions about how individuals fit into the community and the social world and how identity can be seen as the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations. Identity gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others as well as to the world in which we live, and of what is personally unique about ourselves. In particular the concept of biographical identity deals with the relationship
between the vicissitudes of one’s life history and the question of the consistency of the personal self. The later is very much related to activities of explicit or implicit autobiographical narration. Some of these issues, especially questions of identity change and identity crisis and its working through by means of autobiographical story telling, will be further explored in the following section.

4. Narratives of Identity

As has been noted, identities are not totally fixed attributes of individuals. The identities that people see as salient vary according to the particular situations they find themselves in. People have a stock of identities, on which they can and do draw as seems appropriate. Identities are multiple, diverse and constantly shifting. However, not all aspects of identity are completely negotiable. Primary identities are more stable and underpin the more shifting and transient secondary identities, and some secondary identities may be particularly salient and shape the ways in which individuals orient, construct and present themselves in a range of situations, e.g. in the realm of occupational work. Nevertheless, the fundamental flexibility of identities must be acknowledged. – The finding-out of, the making-out of, the understanding of, the orientation towards, the construction of, the interpretation of, as well as the change of identities of oneself and of others is very much linked to personal narratives of remarkable event constellations one was involved in and to the personal experiences connected with them. There are two social science perspectives towards the social and biographical function of personal narratives connected with one’s own life history.

A) The Situational Perspective

A major strand of recent work on identity involves the claim that the production of identities must be seen in relation to the narratives that people construct to account for their actions, problem involvements and courses of life. People give accounts and explanations for their actions, problem involvements and courses of life, and in doing so, construct and reconstruct their own biographies, drawing on their memories (Garden and Gerden 1983; Gerden 1994). Such accounts and explanations draw on a cultural stock of acceptable explanations, many of which tend to have a standardised form.

A range of character types and patterns of motivation are to be found in the culture of any society. These allow people to construct stories with characteristic plots that others will recognise and see as acceptable accounts of their behaviour.
These narratives shape their future action and the likely reactions of others. Narratives are, in part, self-conscious attempts to create continuity and coherence in personal experiences, but they may shift in response to the varying situations in which people find themselves. There is no „real” identity in mundane interactions of the everyday world of existence, but when people do succeed in producing a coherent account of their „true” identity in those mundane interactive encounters, this is a consequence of their narrative success and their ability to persuade themselves and others of this „truth”.

People can, then, present themselves in varying ways through the appropriate use of narratives. This may vary depending on the form of communication. Forms of communication at a distance – letter, telephone and email – allow people to escape some of the constraints of face-to-face encounters and to present themselves in alternative ways. For example, it is possible to say things in writing that may be very difficult to say in person. Internet communication has increased this greatly and opens up new possibilities of self-presentation where people can engage in „identity play” and try out an identity before presenting it in face-to-face situations.

B) The Long-Term Biographical Perspective

There is another mayor strand of research work on the function of narratives of personal experiences in relationship to the understanding and construction of coherence of one’s own personal identity. There are severely critical life situations, in which a person must come to terms with serious problems which happened in her or his life and/or which are still going on, e.g. a life endangering accident, an incisive chronic illness, a situation of sudden or long-term unemployment, a situation of a new inner development or learning which causes new and as yet unanswerable questions regarding one’s own future course of orientation, identity unfolding, partnership, social relationships, work style, etc. The critical life situation is experienced as a condition, which could destroy or has already destroyed the consistency of one’s own biographical identity as built-up over a long time. A severe chronic disease or a sudden body paralysis conditioned by an accident could cause such a critical life situation and put into question the consistency of one’s biographical identity up to now. Another condition for such a severe life crisis which puts into question one’s biographical identity could be unexpected unemployment or long-term unemployment after depressing experiences of turned-down applications and/or the cutting-off of assistance payments. The life crisis could be even harder if both conditions come together. The afflicted person, as well as their life partner, family members and friends, has to come to terms with it, and the basic means for this is autobiographical narration.
Social science literature has mainly dealt with this type of biographical reconstruction and the involved autobiographical story telling through qualitative research in the field of medical sociology. In their important book “Unending Work and Care. Managing Chronic Illness at Home” (1988) Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss state: “When severe chronic illness occurs, it breaks into the stream of biographical time, interrupting and possibly forever changing past performances from those of the present and the future. Accordingly, time conceptions are likely to be altered for dealing with and taking into consideration these changes (Who am I now and will be is not who I was and thought I would be). New biographical projections that correspond with the trajectory projections [i.e. the ideas the afflicted person has about the course of her or his illness and/or her or his other kind of problem constellation] must be arrived at” (Corbin & Strauss 1988: 61).

Corbin and Strauss stress the implication of the loss of self that could be connected with such a central life crisis caused by the encroachment or unfolding of a severe chronic illness: “When people are unable to complete actions enabling them to carry out tasks associated with various aspects of the self (whether inability to perform as a teacher or “normal” father or even to carry out the activities of daily living), then certain aspects of the self become “lost”. Since the integration of these various aspects of the self forms the more inclusive self, or identity, with that loss comes an accompanying sense of loss of wholeness” (Corbin & Strauss 1988: 65).

Corbin and Strauss make clear, that the most basic means for working on this loss of self are mutual forward and backward biographical reviews (as one version of ideational processes in the understanding of George Herbert Mead (1932: 76), who we mentioned already): “There are accounting reviews, among them a self assessment and evaluation of past failures and successes in life, failures that can no longer be made right. Another type of accounting involves taking stock of strengths and weaknesses in order to plan the resources needed for the long struggle ahead. There are also single flashbacks, momentary remembrances of past events that pass through one’s mind, such as those that sometimes happen when a still-conscious person is being wheeled into the surgery. There are biographical replays of important biographical events, such as childhood scenes involving oneself, parents or others. And there are future forecasts, such as projecting oneself as confined to a wheelchair in the years ahead” (Corbin & Strauss 1988: 70–71).

Compared with the first mentioned type of research on narratives of personal experiences, it is clear that the use of this review-type of narratives of personal experiences dealing with the consequences of decisive life crisis situations has basically nothing to do with showing-off, with selling one’s still unquestioned
previous biographical identity and role identities to others and to oneself. There is basically no rationalization, neutralization and legitimising involved, since the predicament is too serious for all types of constructing facades. The whole biographical identity has been questioned or even destroyed by that central life crisis, and therefore the question of a new or at least systematically reconstructed biographical identity comes up, which at the same time is consistent with the present life conditions, the expectations of the changed outlook into one’s future life and the experiences of one’s past life history. The narrative accounts are not basically focused on mundane interaction episodes of daily life, which could cause doubts especially for others and partially for oneself about one’s still powerfully existing self-presentation and self-conception; instead, they are focussed on the whole life history and life course, since the central life crisis (e.g., caused by severe illness or unemployment with long-term gloomy auspices, or both as in cases of vocational rehabilitation) is putting the sight and interpretation of one’s whole life history up to now and one’s previous biographical identity into question; a review of ones whole life and not just of certain episodes now becomes pivotal.

The desired product of such a biographical review would be a new conception of one’s biographical identity. There are two features of it:

• The first is the systematic re-evaluation of one’s biographical past and the integration of the latter into one’s newly developing self-understanding, including the projection of one’s personal future. This basically means to detect or dig-out important productive features and auspices of ones former life from old remembrances, which are not yet understood in this sense. These newly detected features and auspices could then be basic construction elements for a new biographical identity conception. The necessary precondition for this new biographical self-conception is the partial re-casting and re-interpretation of one’s own biographical past in the context of a newly crystallizing self-historical shape of one’s own life and personal identity. “Self-historical shape” means that the outlook on one’s personal life is formed by an overall “grand narration” of oneself and by oneself, which productively combines one’s past, one’s present and one’s future perspectives. The self-historical shape is the evolving ego- and/or we-perspective of being entangled in one’s own life history with its consequences and forecasts (Schapp 2004). Of course, this new self-historical shape must take into account the experiential facts of the former life – seen by oneself and partially by significant others, too. These experiential facts of former life of the afflicted person exert a factual and mental pressure on her or his remembrance, on her or his focussing of awareness and on her or his interpretation and evaluation; therefore the experiential facts cannot be circumvented or faded-out in the course of re-casting one’s biographical past without severe personal detriment.
• The other aspect of the new biographical identity relates to necessary basic assumptions of the afflicted person about her- or himself regarding the ability to efficiently act and/or work on the predicament and the involved problems. These are assumptions about the authenticity and solidity of one’s own biographical identity. More specifically these assumptions consist of the following beliefs: that the mode of one’s experience, of one’s interpretation, of one’s evaluation and of one’s problem solving is realistic and rational and can be demonstrated to anybody to be reasonable; that there is security of expectation regarding the consistency of one’s biographical identity in present, future and revised past; that there is enough personal agency and ability to handle one’s serious problems connected with that incisive life crisis; that the state of one’s own body and its health will be sufficient to deal with the upcoming life and the involved difficulties (this is the belief in the dependability of the new developed biographical body conception; this belief refers to “conceptions of self (identity) arising directly or indirectly through body, as they evolve over the course of biographical time” – Corbin & Strauss 1988: 52); as well as the belief that envisioned future biographical projects are productive, sensible, and manageable. The gist of all these basic assumptions is the belief in the essential meta-stability and essentially realistic empirical groundedness of one’s own biographical identity, although, at the same time, one knows about the permanent small changes of one’s personal identity by undergoing new experiences and by just growing older and about the dramatic changes due to central life crises (Strauss 1993: 32 and especially 44–45). The central belief in the meta-stability of biographical identity and in its essential empirical groundedness (its realistic character), although there are all these smaller and bigger changes of the (experiential and emotional) inner and (event-caused “factual”) outer state of one’s identity, is founded on the consciousness of the self-historical shape of one’s own biographical identity and on the self-evident awareness of being entangled within one’s own life history with all its constraints of consistency.

The latter consciousness of the self-historical shape of one’s own biographical identity is only possible on the basis of narratives of personal experiences that explicitly consider the whole of one’s life history. Explicit autobiographical narratives have not to recapitulate the whole life history of the afflicted person, but they must deal with the before and the afterwards of the central life crisis and must realize that both parts of the personal life history belong together – even if the experiential content and the images (and possibly even the involved biographical value orientations) might be juxtaposed in an irreconcilable contrast set. Of course, the recapitulation of the whole life history in an overall autobiographical narrative might be immensely helpful in realizing
or even reconstructing the self-historical shape of one’s own biographical identity.

**Conclusion on the Two Types of Studies Regarding Situational and Long-Term Narratives of Personal Experiences**

Two strands of social science discussion dealing with narratives of identity have been identified. The importance of the first strand of research on situational narratives of personal experiences (basically stemming from the traditions of ethnomethodology and of Goffman) should not be denigrated. As we already know from the teachings of George Herbert Mead, the self is constructed by the interface of the me-pictures, we assume others would have about our own presentations and activities, the productivity of the I as our personal energy to produce our activities and to change ourselves and the reflexive activity of bringing the two together comparing them and developing a conscious image of ourselves. We attempt to influence the me-pictures of our interaction partners and especially significant others by the rationalistic short-term stories that should account for and explain doubtful or difficult episodes of our life. This is important not only for the images our interaction partners have about us but of our own belief in the rationality and acceptability of our identity or identities. The small narratives of mundane encounters basically stabilize the present overall biographical identity. But many detrimental or even disastrous mundane encounters and the neutralizing stories about them step-by-step and without our conceptual knowledge can undermine our biographical identity and could cause – triggered by an additional detrimental event of mundane encounters – a central life crisis. In such cases the short-term episodic narratives of actors and sufferers in everyday interaction are of implicitly autobiographical import. The importance of the second strand of social science dealing with narratives of personal experiences (basically stemming from the tradition of the Chicago Sociology and its academic child Symbolic Interactionism) is connected with the analysis of the long-term consistency of the self, which – to remain in the theoretical frame of reference of George Herbert Mead – is endangered by the discrepancies of the various me-pictures assumed by myself and/or to be held by others about myself or of different impulses of the I that turn out to falsify one’s me-pictures or of different self-conscious conceptions of the self generated in reaction to those falsifications of me-pictures by impulses of the I or to the impact of central crisis event constellations on one’s life history. For the working on central life crises explicit autobiographical narration is extremely important. Since the sense of inner biographical time and consistency has been lost, it is the first step of biographical work in order to restore biographical identity, which was impaired or even destroyed through a central life crisis, e.g.
through a mutilating accident, a severe chronic illness or a sudden and/or long term unemployment.

5. Biographical Work as Central Avenue for Developing One's Own Biographical Identity

Biographical work follows up the task of reconciling the expectations and urgencies of social differences and resulting otherness (the "reality principle") on the one hand and the preconditions and the logic of production for constructing a unique personal self (the "creativity and self-empowerment principle") on the other. The product will be a biographical identity that is both realistic and permanently striving for personal autonomy. For this it is important to learn to see oneself as a developing personal and social entity that matters and to realize that it makes a big difference whether one focuses on that development or not: that you try to support it if it seems to be "benign", or to stop it, if it seems to be "detrimental"; and to understand that, at the beginning, you don’t really know the quality and the dynamics of the unfolding of that development and that therefore you have to find out about it.

The task of finding out basically means to tell – at least in some bits – one’s own life history. Through at least partial autobiographical narration to significant others (who are important for one’s own identity development and biographical decisions), to professional counsellors and/or to oneself (the latter, of course, is done in an inner conversation with oneself) one understands that it is important to see the self-historical shape of one’s own biography and identity unfolding; one expresses to oneself what are possible overarching features of one’s life; and how they are linked to each other in that overall self-historical shape of one’s own biographical identity. At the same time extempore autobiographical story telling means to realize the combination of real socio-biographical process structures one has been involved in and partially still is involved in within the sequence and competition of biographical process structures of biographical action schemes, of trajectories of suffering, of institutional expectation patterns, especially careers, and of biographical metamorphosis developments. Through a biographical action scheme a person attempts to intentionally shape the course of her or his life. Conditioned by a trajectory of suffering a person is not capable of actively shaping her or his own life anymore, since they can only react to overwhelming outer events, and in the course of their suffering the afflicted person becomes strange to themselves. Via an institutional expectation pattern a person follows up institutionally shaped and normatively defined courses of life, e.g. careers in organizations or the family life cycle that starts and shapes family
life in the first part of adulthood. By creative metamorphoses of biographical identity a new important inner development is starting in one’s biography. This might be miraculous and irritating in the beginning, since it is new, and that may initially prohibit one’s pertinent competencies and ability to find out what the very quality of it might be. One has to realize how to follow up and to work on (strengthening or fighting) each of the of the four types of general biographical process structures, and one has additionally to realize their factual and potential interconnections in order that one can find out about the realistic overall shape of one’s biography. Biographical work also is concerned with the potentials of getting distracted from that self-historical shape and of getting personally hurt (e.g. by the breakdown of favourable social and societal conditions, by discrepancies and disappointments in significant social relationships, by failures to follow up one’s own life expectations or those of others, by getting disoriented through unrealistic, personally unfitting, trap-like competing life orientations) and on social forces that hinder the unhampered unfolding of the self historical shape of one’s biographical identity. For example, by being forced to experience detrimental social categorization resulting in systematic stigmatisation and being set apart, by getting seriously ill, by losing one’s job position or by not being able to practice one’s former occupation anymore.. Biographical work attempts to find out how to hinder those barriers and forces and/or how to circumvent them or push back on them in order that one can still go on with the unfolding of the self-historical shape of one’s own biography or to develop a realistic, and at the same time, promising new one using the resources of biographical processes one has factually been involved in up to now.

Biographical work is most important in incisive crisis situations of one’s life, e.g. the life situation after a mutilating accident, the break-out or the sudden fast unfolding of a severe chronic illness, the expected loss of one’s occupation or the paralysing impact of a new and difficult experience of being turned down and/or stigmatised in a job application process or of being controlled and criticised by a job centre for not being successful in getting new work. Regarding the crisis experience of the outbreak of a severe chronic illness or the affliction by a mutilating accident Corbin and Strauss (1988) provided a conceptual dimensionalisation of biographical work. According to Corbin and Strauss (1988: 68) biographical work of “putting life back together again” after such an outbreak or accident consists of four processes:

“(1) contextualizing (incorporating the illness trajectory into biography),

(2) coming to terms (arriving at some degree of understanding and acceptance of the biographical consequences of actual or potential failed performances [of the body – addition by the authors of this text]).
(3) reconstituting identity (reintegrating identity into a new conceptualisation of wholeness around the limitations in performance), and (4) recasting biography (giving new directions to biography)”. The processes analysed by Corbin and Strauss also hold for life crises that are not conditioned by severe chronic illnesses or mutilating accidents. Therefore it is appropriate to consider them in more detail.

The contextualization process consists of the following activities: Firstly there must be an understanding that the severe problem, e.g., unemployment, which has caused the incisive life crisis, is an integral part of one’s own life. For the impact of an unexpected unemployment crisis this would mean that it is detrimental to hide the unemployment from one’s significant others, to try to fade out its long-term consequences from one’s own awareness or to persuade oneself that it doesn’t change one’s biographical outlook and capabilities. Secondly there must be a search and discovery of what remains of one’s own occupational knowledge, capabilities and orientations and what has now become valueless or will be lost because of the lack of work routine and the disconnection from work experiences, and what must be totally changed in order to become usable again in a new work position. Thirdly one has to find out about the new limitations of one’s own occupational action capacity (agency) because of the paralysing effect of unemployment: e.g., the loss of the sense of the rapid course of work time, the loss of the work-organizational order of the daily time schedule as well as the loss of trust in one’s own future work capacities. Fourthly one must find out what will still be possible alternatives and strategies of managing future occupational life (searching for a new job in the same or in a different trade or even work area, searching for a re-training for a different occupation, concentrating on voluntary work, etc.).

The process of coming to terms consists of the following activities: Firstly one has to find out the facts of impairments caused by the central life problem; for example, unexpected unemployment and accept them. Secondly, one must understand the mechanisms of their impact on one’s general life situation and one’s future possibilities and accept them as new powerful conditions of one’s life. This could include the loss of capability to shape interaction situations and to carry through complex actions schemes, or the feeling of being stigmatised and the connected tendency of circumventing personal encounters and isolating oneself. Thirdly one must find out what are the consequences of the impairment caused by the central life problem for the life situation of partners, family and other significant others. For example, upcoming financial problems, the insecurity of the educational life course expectations of children, the general emotional climate in the family, etc. as well as understanding their mutual impact on each other possibly giving rise to a „cumulative mess”.
The process of reconstituting identity consists of the following activities: Firstly one must redefine the impaired parts of one’s personal identity features and capacities. In the case of the impact of severe chronic illness this means the redefinition or the new generation of a biographical body conception, e.g., not being able to work as a dancer anymore but being still perfectly fit to do mental choreographic work. In the case of the impact of unexpected or long-term unemployment this means the redefinition or the new generation of impaired occupational identity features, i.e. the redefinition of the reduced special or even general, occupational action capacity. The reduction is caused by the devaluation of one’s occupational knowledge and routines, the loss of analytical equipment, the impairment of the sense for occupational time and of trust in occupational interaction, as well as the questioning of the belief in oneself as an efficient occupational worker. Secondly one must change one’s value orientation regarding certain or all bodily performances (in the case of an illness problem) or occupational performances (in the case of an unemployment problem). For example, in the case of the unemployment of a man, who could not continue with his occupation as a plumber because of a severe chronic illness, this could involve substituting the value orientation of mental paper work as held within the occupational world of service organizations, for the value orientation of manual work held within the culture of the occupational world of artisan work.

Thirdly one must recast one’s biographical past and one’s personal future in an incipient new self-historical shape of biographical identity. This could involve transcending the negative definition of the impairment as a trajectory of suffering into a re-interpretation of it as a chance for the metamorphosis of occupational identity, e.g. changing from the identity from manual worker to the identity of organizational or even mental worker. Fourthly there must be a re-focusing of one’s biographical and daily orientation. Existing capabilities and practices must be positively re-evaluated and there must be a shift from one realm of activities to another. In the case of chronic illness this may involve a shift from bodily activities to mental substitutes or in the case of occupational work a shift from manual work to mental work. Fifthly assisting devises or support services can be used and if practicable, these have to be emotionally accepted and deployed.

The process of recasting of biography consists of the following activities: Firstly one must work on a stable and at the same time flexible structure of the new self-historical shape of ones biographical identity envisioned in the course of reconstituting identity. This will basically be done by explicit autobiographical story telling and by reflection about the recapitulated experiences. In the case of the unemployed young plumber, used as an example above, he could realize by autobiographical narration that he had more or less been forced into a plumber apprenticeship without his inner acceptance, and
living with this unloved occupation for many years meant that he never attempted to find out about his real interests, talents and potentials for occupational self-identification. Being so used to this occupational situation he did not think about it at all, and only by autobiographical story telling in reaction to, and working through, his double predicament of becoming chronically ill and being out of work, does he start to think about this former fading out or even self-delusion. This is the beginning of the biographical work of the recasting of his occupational past as a building block of the new self-historical shape of his biographical identity. Secondly there is the final overall assessment of the new impossibilities, the still existing possibilities, and the new possibilities of biographical unfolding to be followed up. Thirdly there is the focus on the control of the dynamics of the difficulties connected with the central life problem. In the case of chronic illness this means control of the health predicament and the attempt to halt the further unfolding of the chronic disease. In the case of unemployment this could mean delaying the total decline of occupational action capacities by voluntary work, by a strict time schedule for the management of one’s daily life and/or by searching for personal contributions for losing one’s occupation.

Corbin and Strauss developed their four categories of biographical work by focussing on severe chronic illness and the impairments of the overall life of afflicted persons and their spouses, caused by it. Naturally they would not focus on biographical difficulties which would have been caused by other central life problems. They assume that at the onset of chronic illness there already exists a solid sense of biographical identity. But looking at persons in vocational rehabilitation situations, one has to realize that quite often a solid sense for the existence and importance of one’s own identity development is missing. In addition, amongst this group of afflicted persons quite often an analytical sensibility regarding the mechanisms of both the retardation of identity development, and the support of identity development is absent. Thirdly, since Corbin and Strauss were dealing with a basically biologically conditioned predicament, they did not take into account that two typical biographical problems involved in the predicament of persons in life situations of vocational rehabilitation are basically contributed – though conditioned by social constraints and socialization processes of society – by the afflicted persons themselves: the first by their lack of differentiation between the time schedule, the social categorizations and the expectations of work institutions and agencies of vocational education on the one hand, and those of one’s own, on the other. The second by the incapacity to realize, to analyse and to reflect on one’s biographical tendencies – via personal vulnerability dispositions – to fall into the traps of central life problems, e.g. losing one’s work position.
In the following section we will especially deal with the difficulties, importance and development of biographical work of clients of vocational counselling and with the question, how it can be encouraged and supported by professional counsellors.

6. Biographical Counselling in Vocational Rehabilitation Situations

We must take into account that for many individuals occupational work is of central biographical importance in their life and especially for the unfolding of their personal biographical identity. Ironically this is particularly true for individuals who have lost their occupational position. It might be even more important for persons who have lost part of their work ability by a severe chronic illness or a mutilating accident. Generally speaking, by losing the ability to work in one’s position or general occupation, life has lost one of its most important features and this could cause a systematic general disorientation of one’s present life and/or general fatigue, or even a systematic paralysis penetrating all spheres of one’s non-occupational life (Heinemeier 1991). However, and generally speaking again, it can be observed that non-occupational features of one’s present life and biographical identity and, in addition, features of biographical identity coming out of almost forgotten occupational experiences in one’s earlier life can gain a central importance of finding, taking and following up a new road to occupational life.

We therefore must realize that the central concern on the overall life history of the client and on the (unrestrained or restrained) unfolding of her or his biographical identity can be of utmost importance in vocational rehabilitation counselling. In vocational counselling that integrates the biographies of clients into its analytic concern, the task of finding out and implementing new approaches to support their occupational developments must be emphatically understood as a focus on true biographical counselling work regarding the personal identity development of clients.

Tasks of Biographical Counselling in Rehabilitation Situations

For the analysis of biographical counselling in vocational rehabilitation situations we might differentiate between the following general categories of the professional’s tasks and her or his client:

a) Reminding about the treasure of personal identity: checking for the possibility of the non-existence or weakness of a client’s sense for the value of
uniqueness of her or his personal identity and its development; in such cases, sensitising the client towards the importance of her or his biographical identity is a pivotal task;

b) Understanding overall biographical structuring: bringing out and considering the overall biographical structuring of the client with its specific process logic: the specific sequence, competition, hierarchy and overall combination of the four biographical process structures of biographical action schemes, trajectories of suffering, institutional expectation patterns and metamorphosis processes; focusing on trap situations with special scrutiny to detect the unfolding of trajectories of suffering;

c) Reflecting on distractions from one’s identity development and self-theoretical distortions: searching for and detecting the fading-out practices of the narrator regarding her or his personal experiences of severe suffering, of being stigmatised, ashamed and/or feeling guilty, of respective delusional redefinitions of biographical situations as well as rationalization attempts and legitimising activities for personal mistakes done by oneself and/or by significant others;

d) Coming to terms: contextualizing and helping the client to come to terms with her or his predicament, i.e. realizing and accepting the kind and the extent of impairments and systematic difficulties caused by her or his central life problem(s) such as unemployment and/or chronic illness;

e) Realizing one’s personal conditioning: finding out about and letting the client realize her or his specific biographical resources and basic positions as well as her or his vulnerability dispositions; and finally;

f) Belief in one’s own action capacity: encouraging the client to develop a sound belief in her or his action capacity to work on the difficult predicament brought into her or his present life through one or more central life problem(s).

All the just listed tasks of biographical work must essentially be truly accomplished by the client her- or himself. The partial role of the professional rehabilitation counsellor is only to focus the client on these tasks and enable her or him to understand them and circumspectly follow them up. It would be detrimental for the unfolding of the problem handling capacity of the client, her or his identity development and her or his biographical work, if the professional counsellor would essentially work on the tasks of biographical work alone, would dominate the client’s decision or even force the client to focus and take up special tasks (perhaps, in addition, even in a certain sequential order – cf. Riemann 2000: 68–74). On the other hand, the client is quite often in a very difficult personal cognitive and emotional situation, where she or he needs incentive, a carefully mirroring listener, analytical scrutiny, counsel, encouragement and sometimes even concrete material and/or organizational help. Therefore, the counsellor cannot take the simple position just to request:
“Do something!” This would quite often discourage the client, since she or he doesn’t have the insight and the biographical power (and quite often the material, technical and/or organizational means) to tackle the problem.

An integrative vocational counsellor must therefore follow up two combined tasks: She or he must enhance the client’s own capacity for self-exploration and self understanding, and this is without any alternative. In addition she or he might cautiously embark on her or his own search for the deeper problem conditions and constellation of the predicament the client is in, for her or his vulnerability dispositions as well as biographical resources, vague biographical ideas and mundane (hobby type) interests, since the self-insight of the client might be too vague and the time span for her or his thoroughgoing autonomous problem analysis and self-exploration too short. Of course, the professional counsellor’s biographical search has to be negotiated with and approved by the client. And after the counsellor’s careful and circumspect presentation of her or his incipient findings to the client – where the professional must take the personal weaknesses of the client into account to be able to stand the results of her or his analysis – the latter has to consider, to interpret, to understand, to assess, eventually to (partially) reject, to correct and to improve the analytical results of the former or take it as an argumentative incentive for her or his own intensified analysis. The client should be totally free to accept or to reject the analysis of the professional counsellor. In any case, the best way of integrative (biographical) counselling is that the counsellor strengthens the analytical power of the client to do her or his own analysis of the central problem constellation and its biographical implications. The work the professional rehabilitation counsellor must do is shaped by the general intervention patterns of counselling (including the data collection and the analysis of the problem constellation as well as including scrutinizing ways of working on those problems), education (enabling learning, self-reflection, self-criticism and identity metamorphosis); and classical social work help of planning and assisting in shaping and stabilizing the life situation of the client (Richmond 1922).

In the following section we would like to make the formulated list of joint tasks for the client and the counsellor a bit more explicit.

(a) Reminder of the Treasure of Personal Identity

Firstly, the counsellor must check the possibility of the non-existence or weakness of a client’s sense for the value of uniqueness of personal identity and its development. This is the case in the life situation of Mr. Funke, whose interview we already introduced as an empirical example. After having been kicked out of the elite sports school, Bernd Funke did not realize that this would systematically harm his identity development. In his main autobiographical
narrative, Mr. Funke is only able to use vague descriptions about his inner state and inner change in this very severe trajectory predicament: “incisive things of great importance which I had there)” (Funke-interview, page 2, line 20); “and eh. was alone (–). well that was actually a really deep low point let me say that” (page 3, lines 8 and ). In the questioning part of the interview the narrator Mr. Funke remembers that he actually felt part of the precipitation of the incipient trajectory after having been kicked out of the elite sports school: “that was all of a sudden (‘). that was like struck by lightening (‘)+. everything at once (–)” (page 10, lines 41 and 42), but that he then did not realize what it really meant for his identity development. This non-realization becomes obvious in the following formulations, when the narrator Mr. Funke is talking about when the opaque decision was forcibly imposed on him, regarding the question of his apprenticeship as plumber and machine fitter: ‘I’ can’t remember yet on that, although it was actually fixed already, what kind of occupation I do (,) well I didn’t have much of a choice right (??)” (page 10, line 51 up to page 11, line 1). And when he is asked by the interviewer whether he would have been reflecting on his being dumped in the unloved apprenticeship (“did you have any ideas for yourself at all what you want to do (??)” – page 11, lines 31 and 32), he answers: “no not at all. … I couldn’t think of anything. My head was totally empty. (‘) … ehm. there haven’t been any ideas (,). nothing (,)” (page 11, lines 31 to 38). Looking at these quotations it might become clear, that Mr. Funke did not develop a sense for his personal identity development during the period of his former trajectory predicament of having been forced into a self-alienating occupation. And even at the very beginning of the actually ongoing autobiographical narrative interview there is still the imprint of this former lack of awareness and reflective consciousness of personal identity. Only in the course of the actually ongoing and unfolding interview the informant’s sense for his personal identity development becomes clearer step-by-step, as we can see, e.g., by how he formulates his realization of the former lack of his own awareness, regarding his missing and neglected identity development (“My head was totally empty”).

From empirical data like these we can draw the following conclusion: If there is such a lack of awareness of the importance of one’s own identity development, the rehabilitation counsellor must attempt to entice the client to embark on autobiographical extempore narration as the most elementary step of autobiographical work. This extempore autobiographical story telling has the astounding effect to considerably raise the level of awareness regarding the importance of one’s own biographical identity development. In the course of the ongoing narrative rendering the client gets an incipient deeper understanding of the mechanisms of difficult biographical process structures that were faded out before in her or his life and the respective rescue mechanisms. In the last part of
his interview, Mr Funke can formulate the following deeper insight into the escalation of trap mechanisms of his trajectory of occupational self-alienation, of unemployment, being severely chronically ill and the rescue from it:

"that with the illness ('). that was the (–) . “well now you can (–) jump (,)” like that . well that was a real

body blow (').

yea . yeah

well let me say that (–) . “well now you are down here and now you get even deeper . now it gets even deeper again”.

well it wasn’t the end (,). and of course that was of great

importance (.). but I think that would/ everybody feels like that who is at some point in his

life

yes

who had some status and all of a sudden you don’t have it anymore because it is (–) . for whatever reasons

healthwise right (,). it is really going downhill and that was well eh . well (–) . in that moment that was it didn’t matter that everybody came up “oh well I am sorry for you” . . phew .

all of that just didn’t bother me (.). and that didn’t interest me at all (.)

mhm

whereas I (–) . to that time

nothing interested me at all let me say that (.). because you were pretty deep down there (.).

right (?)

yes . mhm

and eh (–). as I said ('). if that retraining

wouldn’t have come up (–) . then eh . I believe I still would be down there (.).

if nobody would have cared about that or nobody looked

33 after (–)."

(page 21, lines 9 to 33)

In the context of a lack of awareness of the value of one’s own identity development, the client must also develop a special sense for the dangers of interchanging one’s personal (“inner”) and institutional (“outer”) time schedule.

(b) Understanding the Overall Biographical Structuring and Especially Focussing on Trap Situations

Secondly, the counsellor has to assist the client to consider the overall biographical structuring of her or his life course and identity development with its sequence, competition, hierarchy and overall combination of the four biographical process structures of biographical action schemes, trajectories of
suffering, institutional expectation patterns and metamorphoses by creative processes. The specific impact, i.e. the difficulties, the constraints and the creative dynamics of each of these biographical process structures and their joint conditioning of the present life situation of the client and her or his current overall biographical outlook should be scrutinized and reflected by both parties. Especially interesting might be the unfolding of a trajectory of suffering that results in a systematic trap situation the afflicted person is in. We could see such an instance already in dealing with the phenomenon of background construction more generally before using an example from the Funke interview (section 6 of this text). Young Bernd Funke doesn’t realize the long-term impact on his life of his being forced into an apprenticeship for an unloved occupation. He can only dimly remember the “counselling” session of the job centre after having been removed from the elite sports school:

50 I’ve been to a consultation then in ehm . in the children and youth sports
51 school (–) . where then/ . ((faster till+)) I’ve can’t
52 remember on that+ where actually it was already fixed
1 what kind of occupation I do (,) well I didn’t have much of a choice right (?)
3 you have to imagine it like there are five envelopes and the first one who
4 gets one has the best one (–) . and ehm. It was …
8 like that. well I didn’t have a choice there I had/ wasn’t even asked (–).

(page 10, line 50 up to page 11, line 8).

Only in the course of his autobiographical rendering and especially by the insertion of the two background constructions, the narrator Mr. Funke realizes the overall impact of the trajectory of occupational self-alienation: that exactly by the superimposition of the unloved apprenticeship he did not learn and partially even unlearned to ask himself what would fit the development of his own biographical identity and what not. Additionally, through his narrative rendering Bernd Funke also understands that the “normality” impression of the career pattern of this apprenticeship could deceive him about what had really happened to him: that he had lost the red thread of his life course and identity development (or even more accurately: that he was systematically hindered to find it again) and that it seduced him to accept a phoney renormalization of his severe trajectory predicament. Now, during the ongoing autobiographical story telling, Mr. Funke understands that the biographical process structure of institutional expectation pattern of an apprenticeship career has concealed to him the basic feature of the unfolding of his biographical identity: of having been
trapped within a self-alienating trajectory of forced occupational training, which neglected most potentials of his personal identity development.

All trap situations of a trajectory have quite a long pre-history, which the afflicted person also contributed to. In the case of the life history of Mr. Funke, this is his swift acceptance of the apprenticeship imposed on him by the job centre. Of course, one can “excuse” young Mr. Funke by demonstrating that he had never learned to ask himself what would be good for his personal development. The career in the elite sports school was offered to him when he was quite young, and there was no consideration by adult significant others and teachers whether or not this would be fitting his personal potential of identity development (taking into regard his other talents than sport). And, of course, he was not counselled by anybody to ask himself such a complicated question. Only the institutional demand of the elite sports school was relevant to recruit for the cadre of a special branch of team sport that was meant to become nationally and internationally competitive.

(c) Reflecting on Distractions from one’s Identity Development and Self-theoretical Distortions

Thirdly, the counsellor must assist the client as narrator and story carrier to search for and realize her or his negligence of lines of identity development, her or his fading-out practices, her or his delusional redefinitions of biographical situations, her or his rationalization attempts and legitimising activities. This task has to be focused by both parties in order to strengthen the client’s sense for the reality principle and to support her or his fight against the distraction from the self-historical shape of her or his unfolding biographical identity.

The negligence of one’s line of identity development might be more or less small and concealed. E.g., there is the case of the Polish lady Pola (interviewed and brought to our attention by the Polish team of our Leonardo project “INVITE”), who later faces long periods of unemployment. After attending the general (secondary) school in her rural village, she decides early on to attend an agricultural vocational school, since a girl friend goes there, too. At this time Pola knows already that the family will soon move to the big industrial city of Łódź, where there won’t be agricultural jobs. In addition, after finishing general school, Pola would like to learn a craft like sewing (which would have fitted much better to the dominantly textile industry in Łódź; Pola later works in the Łódź textile industry as unlearned worker). Since it would have been necessary for such a craft apprenticeship to travel to Łódź or another urban region, and this would have meant to afford travel and accommodation costs, she didn’t seriously consider her deeper personal wish what to become in terms of occupation. In her rural family there was no tradition for daughters to learn
a complex occupation; instead, there was the expectation that they would marry early, which Pola was actually talked into by her mother after finishing her apprenticeship in the agricultural school. Pola remembers: “Later, basically after general school, following my friend’s suggestion, because this school… aah didn’t attract me too much perhaps, but following my friend’s suggestion I went to the agricultural vocational school. Though I just knew that sooner or later we would move out from the village because father paid some money for flats … in the city, and we just waited for these flats. Basically I was interested in something else, so I thought about sewing”. She adds in an explaining background construction: “So there in the country one had to travel […] to this vocational school. It was o.k. for the parents as there was a bus. It was free, and elsewhere to school I’d have to pay… So everything was connected, so one can say, with money. […]” (Pola interview of Łódź team, page 2, lines 6 to 14)

Later, after long periods of working as unlearned worker in the textile industry in Łódź and long phases of unemployment, Pola is yearning for a craft or artisan occupation, in which she could follow up her own artistic design ideas. (Later she attempts to become a hairdresser). Her occupational life would probably have developed more satisfyingly, had she learnt a craft immediately after finishing general school. The decision for the agricultural school was not circumspect but almost self-understood if taking into account the attitude of the family towards the life courses of women, the uneducated state of the parents and their small belief in education, the weak material circumstances of the family and Pola’s clinging to the example of her friend. But it was factually a distraction from the red thread of Pola’s identity development already, since she had originally developed other ideas for her further education. In the case of Bernd Funke there is the biographical action scheme of becoming a state athlete, but this is destroyed by the “outer” decision of his trainers to remove him from the cadre. Therefore in his case it is not possible to speak about a move of self-distraction. But his swift acceptance of the unloved apprenticeship can be seen as something similar.

There are many possibilities for self-theoretical distortions. Some can be just too intensive or too literal identifications with values of the educational tradition or of the intellectual history of science and higher learning (in the sense of “absolute morality”). In the case of Felix (Schütze 1994), who later becomes a famous construction engineer for the repair of medieval buildings, the adolescent Felix in grammar school believed in the Platonic concept of ideas and attempted to understand abstract cognitive concepts and operations like the mathematical calculus by an attitude of inner seeing and understanding. Whereas such a “visual” attitude to mathematics is still possible in grammar school, it becomes too difficult in university studies of mathematics and physics as major subjects. After he successfully passed the first level of exams after three years,
Felix abandoned his studies since this type of learning by inner seeing became to exasperating for him. In two sessions of biographical counselling on the empirical base of his autobiographical extempore narrative he then had to realize that mathematics with its double face of inner seeing, on the one hand, and automatic algorithmic operations, on the other, was not only attractive but also dangerous for him, since he could be trapped in his futile attempt to understand the automatic algorithmic operations by inner seeing. Therefore – that was the outcome of the two sessions of biographical counselling – mathematics should not be the centre of his further studies, after returning to the university in the future. Instead, the learning, studying and testing of concrete operations for planning, shaping and managing material processes should be central in his future university study. The short term biographical counselling process produced the idea of a future study of construction engineering, and Felix’ following-up of that idea was then factually very successful. In this case, the afflicted person, Felix, had to gain analytical distance to the Platonic concept of abstract learning by inner seeing, but at the same time find a way of still practicing it and making creative use of it without becoming trapped by it. Felix accomplished this through learning and following up the relatively concrete and material operations of construction engineering, which are combined with some mathematical procedures.

Other phenomena of self-theoretical distortions are beliefs in one’s personal features that are seen by the client as strengths, although in fact they must be seen as weaknesses: e.g. Bernd Funke’s belief that his attitude and capacity to personally identify with every required or even superimposed institutional task and his aptitude to carry it through were a moral virtue and show personal strength is in fact one of the central conditions for his undergoing a protracted trajectory course of occupational self-alienation, for he accepts the unloved plumber apprenticeship and remains in it without any protest. He, for example, states at the end of his interview:

50 but actually that was always like that (–).
51 I made every effort everywhere I liked to do everything then (,).
52 in my other fields of work too, at that time (–). in the
53 steal construction or
1 as a plumber (–) . ehm . that was always a fulfilment for me (,).
4 But when it was over with that it was said then “so that’s it (,). now on 5
it’s done with”. then a new thing came up (–) . you got to (…) again

(page 25, line 50 to page 26, line 5).

Of course, even in Mr. Funke’s future, such a self-conception could become detrimental again, when he would be confronted with a task that wouldn’t fit his
biographical identity. The counsellor should not formulate her or his detection of self-theoretical distortions of the client when the latter is not prepared for it, i.e. when she or he did not begin to raise and answer these questions her- or himself. Self-theoretical distortions can be part of the self-protective psychological defence mechanism of the client; they should not be touched in a non-therapeutic setting, when the client is neither inclined nor willing to delineate and tackle them. And even if the client is interested in her or his self-theoretical distortions, the counsellor must be very cautious regarding the question whether or not there is enough inner strength of the client to face her or his theoretical self-distortions.

**d) Coming to Terms**

Fourthly, the counsellor must assist the client to contextualize and come to terms with, i.e. realize and accept, the kind and the extent of the impairment or predicament caused by her or his central life problem, e.g. the onset of her or his chronic disease or being out of work. E.g., Mr. Funke has to realize two central features of his double predicament of being chronically ill and of being unemployed: On the one hand, he has to realize that the necessity for a central change in his future occupational life is not just conditioned by the inability of his chronically ill body to carry through heavy manual work anymore, but in addition that he cannot use the social world categories and values of manual work in his further occupational life anymore. This means that educationally, i.e. socially and mentally, he has to enter social worlds of non-manual work, which are totally new for him, and to learn their unfamiliar categorizations and styles of thinking, planning, proceeding and evaluating. And, on the other hand, he has to realize that he did not learn to focus on the inevitable task of his own delineation and development of biographical identity, but that this task must be commenced right now and accomplished in a circumspect way. This also jointly includes the necessary ability to say “no” to institutionally requested tasks that do not fit the unfolding of his own line of biographical identity, as well as the necessary reflection about why he could not refute such alienating tasks in his former life up to now (referring to misconceptions about his own strengths and weaknesses dealing with his habit of super-identification with all sorts of occupational expectations).

The counsellor must then start to assist the client to reconstitute the self-historical shape of her or his biographical identity by the joint task of redefinition of her or his biographical body concept and/or action capacity and of her or his change of orientating value system and the social world(s) referred to. The first type of biographical work Mr. Funke had accomplished already when he entered the counselling process: after receiving the diagnosis he soon
realized his bodily condition and started to re-define his biographical body concept. On the other hand, in the beginning of the counselling process the counsellor very much had to assist the second type of biographical work Bernd Funke still needed to accomplish: entering the new social world(s) of paper work and mental work and learning new systems of classification connected to it (them). – In addition, after having accomplished all this, the client still must learn to control the dynamics of the unfolding of her or his central life problem(s). In the case of Mr. Funke, this means both to realize and to monitor the further impact of his (controlled or progressive) chronic illness on his future life course, as well as to learn to understand and work through the specific dangers of his general attitude of over-identification with all types of alienating work tasks.

(e) Realizing One’s Personal Conditioning:

Fifthly, the counsellor has to assist the client to analytically consider her or his biographical past, especially her or his specific biographical resources and basis positions as well as her or his vulnerability dispositions, i.e. the biographical proneness of getting hurt. The counsellor must also assist the client to make productive use of her or his insight into the self-historical shape of her or his past in considering how to make use of biographical resources and basic positions and how to control vulnerability dispositions.

The task of depiction as well as of circumvention or working through of biographical vulnerability dispositions, i.e. dispositions of getting hurt, is quite complex. Both in the life of Pola and Bernd Funke there is the vulnerability disposition that they are prone not to focus or that they are even unable to focus on the red thread of their own biographical identity development, since either of them tend to think that their own life and biographical identity are not important at all. In addition, both Pola and Bernd Funke don’t believe in their personal talents. Bernd Funke doesn’t feel competent enough to compete with West German machine fitters, and this is due to his being forced into the unloved apprenticeship as fitter of heavy machinery, as we saw already. Therefore he doesn’t move to West Germany after the breakdown of the East German heavy machinery industry. And Pola believes not to be gifted to academic learning in school, since in general school she normally earned bad marks, probably due to the systematic skipping of school hours, not doing her home work and learning at home and, in addition, not getting any help from her parents. Pola therefore doesn’t have the courage to insist on an apprenticeship or vocational education of her own liking, and only much later can she focus on this inclination of her biographical identity towards work in a craft connected with creative design (in
her case: glass painting and hairdressing), although up to now, at the time of the interview, she could not yet develop this into an occupational position.

Only later, in the vocational school, Pola gets a dim idea of her intellectual potential, when she experiences the curriculum of the agricultural vocational school as very easy. But even then she doesn’t realize her academic talent, although there she is one of the best students even in foreign languages; instead she assumes that her new excellent achievement scores in the agricultural vocational school are just due to the repetition of the subjects of the former general school. And she vaguely remembers only in a background construction the fact that in general school she had been good in a test of the Russian language, but was seen by the teacher as having cheated the test, since the teacher assumed that a student with generally low achievement marks could not be good in the most difficult and prestigious academic subject: “So when I completed this vocational school […], it wasn’t hard, because this was something like repetition from the last years of my general school, something like a reminder of all these, just ‘cause normally subjects like Polish, Maths, Russian… such subjects even /// frankly speaking I did better in Russian than in Polish… I even remember still at the general school it happened that I got a four in a test and the teacher told me that I had cheated. This hurt me very much, as it simply was impossible for me to get a four. …[The teacher had thought – appendix by the authors of this text] if I had bad marks in other subjects, it was impossible that I get a better mark just then. /// So what else, I came [almost or practically – addition by authors of this text] back to the general school again ((laughter)) in the vocational. Just as I already said, it was easier there, because there it was like a repetition”.

(Pola-interview of Łódź team, page 2, lines 20 to 29; the start and end of the background construction are marked by the graphic sign of three slashes: “///”) The fact of remembrance just in a background construction expresses Pola’s suffering of having been misjudged and stigmatised by the teacher, still at the time of the interview many years later. Thus, background constructions in pertinent textual contexts can be powerful formal text markers of vulnerability dispositions.

In the counselling process it is important to find out the specific biographical conditions (i.e. a special set of trajectory experiences), under which vulnerability dispositions are built up in the course of the life history and the specific conditions (a set of highly symbolic experiences that resemble the first ones) under which they will be reactivated in later life. In the case of Mr. Funke, the latter specific conditions for the activation of the vulnerability disposition can be any requirement by the organizational hierarchy of his employer to fulfill self-alienating work tasks, since he had learned to unconditionally obey to organizations of the powerful East German state in his childhood and adolescence. (On the other hand, he must also learn to differentiate this from the
pivotal tasks of learning something new, which might be irritating and cumbersome). In addition, the client has to find out how these vulnerability dispositions can aggravate the predicament of the rehabilitation and unemployment situation of the client. For example, in the case of Felix, any recommencement of a partial university study of mathematics or any special concentration on mathematics in his later study of construction engineering could complicate his endeavour to find a way towards a satisfying occupational life, since the lure of mathematical “inner seeing” is a permanent vulnerability disposition of Felix. Of course, the counsellor’s assistance of the client in the task of working through her or his vulnerability dispositions must be done in a very cautious and circumspect way, since they belong to the sphere of the most hurting experiences in the personal life of the client, and they put the strengths and the abilities of her or his biographical identity for positive development into question. The professional counsellor should tackle vulnerability dispositions only if the client is personally searching for them.

At the same time, the counsellor has to assist the client to search in his past life history and his present life situation for his biographical resources, basic positions and meaning potentials, in order to develop a way out of the predicament and, eventually, to start a new biographical process structure if necessary. In the case of Pola this would mean to search for her life historical and situational base of academic giftedness and her inclination to creative design and crafts work and for ways how to develop these two biographical resources. In the case of Felix it is the love for his handling and using concrete materials and to shape them, in which mathematical calculation plays an important part, – he has a special inclination to wood work and stone masonry – which could create a new meaning potential in order to hold the lure of mathematics at bay. In the case of Bernd Funke, it is his detection that he can have good academic achievements in intellectual subjects, which levels his way back from the values and categorizations of manual work to the world of planning and organizational (i.e. mental) work.

7. Social Arrangements of Learning Biographical Counselling and the Structure of the Curriculum According to the Two Aims of the INVITE Project

The INVITE project generally aims at sensitising integrative vocational counsellors for the biographical work of the client. This can be done by gathering a professional team for case analysis and jointly looking at the autobiographical rendering of life histories, their biographical process structures,
their overall biographical structuring, the precipitating conditions for central life crises and their impact on life courses. Also the clients’ processes of biographical work should be jointly looked at, especially focusing on the delineation and the reworking of their biographical vulnerability dispositions and the respective substitutive or critical use of their biographical resources, and the question of professional ways of assistance of the clients by biographical counselling. In addition, INVITE can teach – as a second more technical step – biography analysis proper on the empirical base of the autobiographical narrative interview. This professionally informed biography analysis of qualitative social research specifically deals with biographical process structures, biographical resources and biographical vulnerability dispositions in their typical textual (and partially even formal) representation. (See chapter 6 and the textual examples in chapter 8). There are formal markers of autobiographical narrative rendering that allow the empirical grounding of biography analysis, and at the same time the formal markers facilitate a specific sensitising for the shape biographical process phenomena can generally take. Enhancing the sensitivity of the professional for general shapes of biographies through the swift identification of formal markers can enable her or him to a powerful shortening up of professional biography analysis, which doesn’t run too much risk of not empirically grounded biographical insights and assessments.

The most feasible social arrangement for training on the job and further education of vocational counsellors in biography analysis is the developmental workshop arranged after the model of the research workshop (Riemann and Schütze 1987, Reim and Riemann 1997, Schütze 2005, chapter 11). To keep an appropriate level of competence and to further develop the counsellor’s capacity of facilitating biographical work means to regularly participate in case discussions focusing on the analysis of biographies. The necessary research strategies of biography analysis (and, in addition, the analysis of collective identities) will be situated in various traditions of social research: Chicago Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism, Polish Sociology of Culture and Biography Analysis, Mannheim’s Sociology of Knowledge, Psychoanalysis, socio-linguistics and conversation analysis, post-modern ethnography or ethno-history, etc. The pivotal research capacity will be to produce overall single case analyses of autobiographical materials, to realize and to overcome specific difficulties of analytical writing about texts, and to master the required stylistic devices in writing up the single case analysis.

Members of a developmental workshop are always personally expected to become active inquirers or researchers by intensely and directly working on qualitative empirical data representing the biographies and life worlds of the clients. There is always a common empirical database representing a single case of a client with a difficult occupational and rehabilitative problem. Jointly
Biographical Counselling: an Introduction

looking at the material of this single case among the round of professional colleagues and the collective exchange of initial impressions about it make it possible for participants to mutually add to their individual analytical concerns regarding the case and at the same time also to correct each other in their personal perspective and assessment. The intensive collegial co-operation in the meetings of the developmental workshop is especially marked by the experience of mutually taking the perspectives of the interacting others. Thus, for example, a female professional counsellor who is taking part in the research workshop might see important features in the life history of the client more clearly than a male participant does, since she might be able to imaginatively identify with a difficult life situation of the female client in question – say: of the Polish client Pola in our example above – because she similarly experienced being in disagreement, competition or even conflict with her own mother when it came to establishing an occupational career for herself as a young woman. (In our case of Pola, for example, her mother managed to have her daughter be married as soon as possible, although Pola was not really happy about this almost prearranged marriage with its typical rural cultural background, which has not changed so much since the times of the first quarter of the 20th century, when the famous analysis of the “Polish Peasant in Europe and America” was written by Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918/1927/1958).

The different types of emotional and ideational identification with features of the life history of the client in question, on the one hand, and the different types of emotional and argumentative distancing from her or him will become the imaginative and interpretative power house for the production of commentaries. These commentaries will then be developed in interactive reciprocity as well as in argumentative competition by the workshop participants, they will further on be contrastively compared with each other and jointly studied in regard to the different perspectives taken by the various participants of the developmental workshop – this is the cognitive operation of the triangulation of perspectives – and they will then become the topic of a joint process oriented analysis of all the participants regarding the unfolding of the central life problem(s) of the client in the course of her or his life history and the development of her or his biographical identity. This joint analysis uses the cognitive operation of following up the course of the “natural history” as developed by the Chicago sociologists Thomas and Park, looking at the sequence of conditional relevancies that one event of an unfolding social process is setting for the next, the next setting for the following one and so on up to the point where the potential for the unfolding of the social process in question has been exhausted. The operation of following up the course of a natural history, i.e. of the sequential analysis of the unfolding of a single case (mostly presenting the unfolding of a central life-historical problem, but it could also be the
unfolding of creative project development), is one of the basic steps for doing an exhaustive scientific and professional analysis of a single case. (Other cognitive operations are involved, too, which we cannot deal with in this introductory module). It is essential for the success of the joint analytical work in a developmental workshop that members have at least the chance to focus on new and open questions of inquiry or research, i.e. on questions that make heuristic surprises possible. They should offer a personal creative potential of exploration even for the experienced inquirer or researcher leading the discussion to discover and to learn something new. This is quite often the case with all kinds of deeper problems of the relationship between biographical identity development, on the one hand, and occupational development and its interruption or even distortion by a severe chronic illness or a mutilating accident, on the other.

Connected with the active participation in a developmental workshop is the acquisition of the following elementary abilities:

• The capability of the professional counsellor or researcher to assess and define the complex interaction situations of autobiographical story telling.
• The capability of the professional counsellor or researcher to establish a trust relationship between the conversation partners or interview partners as strangers – a trust relationship that is required for sharing one’s own autobiography with the communication partner.
• A sense for the extempore production of verbal texts with its formal structures of orderly and chaotic features; this sense will be enhanced by the ability to careful listening or even meticulous transcription and reading of extempore autobiographical text productions.
• A sense for the careful presentation work of the producer of narrative texts, who attempts to make them logical, impressive, convincing, legitimate, important or harmless, non-offensive, etc., but at the same time has to realize, that – dealing with chaotic life historical constellations – this will not always be possible and might lead her or him into presentation difficulties of implausibility, obliging her or him to use correction devises (such as background constructions) and to take the chaotic phenomena of biography and one’s own presentation difficulties into account.
• A sense for the stylistics and the artistry of verbal texts about (individual and collective) identity developments in all their diversity of conditions for text production, of strategies for presentation, of genres, of orientations in style, etc. – in order to understand the presentation work of those (identity focussed) texts in expressing essential features, the ”gist” of social and biographical processes.
• An attitude of open listening and sensitive understanding regarding the textually presented activities and suffering of the protagonists encountered in
autobiographical texts, who will then emerge as quasi-interaction partners of the analyst.

- An ability of looking at, sequencing, contextualising and retrospectively assessing the presentation activities of the autobiographical text in order to grasp the faculty of the text production to express social and biographical processes in a (partially) "oblique" or "indirect" way.

- An ability to withstand the pseudo-sociological suggestiveness of ready-made (but often quite misleading) general statements of the informant’s theorizing found in the autobiographical text material and to "refract" them through looking at their “embeddedness” within the sequential and contextual order of the formal text structures (the cognitive operation of pragmatic refraction).

- A sensitivity for analytical professional coding in order to continuously interrelate empirical data, on the one hand, and theoretical professional categories (and propositions), on the other; a sense for the openness and fallibility of the professional and social science theorizing as well as for the hidden "theoreticity" of the empirical text materials.

- A sense for the process-type, perspective-bound, interpreted, symbolically represented, interactive, negotiated, subjective and, at the same time, objective character of social and especially biographical reality.

- A sensibility for, and understanding of, the dialectical relationship between the production of social and biographical reality by individual biography incumbents, on the one hand, and the forceful structural restrictions for their activities of production through obligations, constraints and mechanisms of institutional and organizational processes, on the other hand. Awareness as well of collective processes in general; within collective identity units, such as a nation crystallized in her special societal formation as, e.g., the organized order of the state socialist society that would “play fate” in the life histories of Pola and Bernd Funke, and also between collective identity units, e.g., when Bernd Funke loses his opportunity to work in his occupation of fitter of heavy machinery, since the West German heavy machinery industry thoroughly took care to almost totally destroy its East German counterpart in order to get rid of its competitor.

- The inclination and openness for cooperative research work in the sessions of the developmental workshop: firstly, looking at the empirical (textual or visual) material together, i.e. structurally describing, coding and abstracting the textual and/or visual data collectively by the communicative scheme of description; secondly, formulating various, often discrepant, perspectives of interpretation in the workshop group, mutually criticising them by referring to empirical data in the textual and/or visual material and triangulating the different
perspectives of analysis; and thirdly, utilizing the dynamics of the communication scheme of argumentation in the session of the developmental workshop for joint theorizing.

The application of the methodology, the collaborative process and the meta-writing that it involves, is associated with a number of essential skills that the participants of the developmental workshop partially have already developed through their former interactive professional case analytic work with clients and through their sessions of joint professional case discussions, supervision groups and Balint groups. But these skills, in addition, must be clarified in terms of their epistemic procedures and cognitive operations; they must be more deeply trained and partly even newly acquired within the developmental workshop and its collaborative mood. For the success of the developmental workshop it is most important that the participants engage in mutual scrutiny and analysis of each other’s data. This should be done not just in terms of the comparability of the component parts of the dataset(s) and their analysis, but also in terms of the consistency and cross-individual intelligibility of the materials and their interpretation (especially taking into regard the different perspectives of clients and professionals).

As we said already, it is not essential for the success of a developmental workshop to elaborately practice the socio-linguistic base of narrative analysis. In their professional practice, good professional rehabilitation counsellors have already developed a sense for biographical process structures and the sequential unfolding of central life problems resulting in trap situations. But it might be helpful for them to see more clearly the complex biographical conditioning of the unfolding of central life problems and the overwhelming biographical impact of occupational problems, especially unemployment, and/or severe illness in the life situation and the future biographical identity development of the client. Presenting autobiographical narrative interviews of clients in the stable collegial group of the developmental workshop and jointly looking at the autobiographical narrative texts and analysing them can accomplish this. The ability is thereby enhanced to identify vulnerability dispositions of the client, such as sliding into a biographical trajectory in the sphere of occupational work and to get trapped by it. The joint focus on autobiographical texts and their joint analysis enhances the ability as well as the use of text-related cognitive operations to explore hidden biographical resources, i.e. basic contexts of biographical sense making, biographical interests and natural skills. This can lead the counsellor to entice the client towards additional biographical planning, to elicit formative and enactment power in him, to help bring it out, supporting and accelerating it.

Looking at the history of the developmental workshop of the Łódź, Helsinki and Magdeburg groups of the INVITE project, we can state that the involved
professional counsellors who participated in the developmental workshop
developed *themselves* quite a lot in their ability to look at the biographical
ramifications and biographical dynamics of their clients’ unfolding of central life
problems of unemployment and/or of the precipitations of their severe chronic
illness or mutilating accident.

Learning about the formal structures of autobiographical narrative rendering
will additionally enhance the analytical ability of the professional rehabilitation
counsellor. In a certain sense she or he knows these formal structures already as
a common member of the everyday world of existence by virtue of her or his
communicative competence, and, in addition, she or he has already listened to
many partial autobiographical renderings of clients and has made sense of
formal markers of the client’s story telling (e.g. she or he has noticed self-
corrections and their meaningful implication of world irritation and self-doubt of
the client). All these formal markers of autobiographical story telling are
normally “seen but unnoticed” (Harold Garfinkel) by the common member of
the everyday world of existence and – as we could additionally say – known but
unnoticed and interpretatively handled in a routine way by the professional. The
analytical noticing of the formal textual markers of autobiographical narrative
rendering, as learned in a developmental workshop through jointly looking at
transcribed autobiographical extempore narratives will certainly enhance the
professional ability to identify biographical vulnerability dispositions, which
might otherwise contribute to the proneness of the client to become unemployed
and to be trapped by it in a central life crisis. It will also help the professional
counsellor to detect hidden biographical resources of the client and to find
alternative ways of her or his future occupational and/or biographical development
and rescue ways out of the trajectory trap of the central life crisis. We could see
this in the Magdeburg developmental workshop, in which the joint analysis of
autobiographical narrative interviews has been practiced for more than two
years. Whereas the acquisition of the formal apparatus of socio-linguistic
narrative text analysis might be quite time consuming in the beginning, it later
on will not only make the case analysis of central life problems of clients safer,
but in addition will allow the swift detection of formal markers and the
respective biographical process structures and other important biographical
phenomena as vulnerability dispositions in the very process of listening to the
actual autobiographical narration of the client and, in addition, in re-listening to
it from the audio-recording one or two days or a week later. In this special sense
of sensitising, the formal analysis of autobiographical narrative texts will even
speed up the professional analysis of central life problems of the client. But in
order to reach this swiftness of analysis, one first has to undergo the
cumbersome practice of looking at transcriptions of autobiographical text
materials again and again, although this is very much made less onerous by the joy
of joint detection and discussion of formal textual phenomena of autobiographical narratives and what they might mean in terms of biographical process phenomena.

Of course, in the developmental workshop there will also be the question how to communicate with the client about her or his specific biographical problems and phenomena. The basic feature is that the advocated biographical analysis will be done together. Even the autobiographical narrative interview itself cannot be even commenced, not to say finally accomplished, without the establishment of a basic trust relationship of the two participants of the interview situation, i.e. the client and the professional. The presumptive narrator must be able to deeply trust the presumptive listener, that she or he will not misuse the information and the general impression coming out of her or his autobiographical extempore narrative; otherwise she or he would never offer the personal gift of her or his personal life history at all. And just as this gift has been freely given, the analysis of the narrative rendering must again be done in a joint mood of cooperation. This especially means that the professional’s confrontation of the client with findings of the analysis of her or his biographical case problem or creative project without her or his own formulated interest and obvious cooperation in it would be unethical, since it might hurt the client and since there would be no effective psychotherapeutic setting of working it through and finding a way out of the deep valley of emotional pain and depression. In addition, a non-interested client would not be able to make fruitful use of the findings because they are not the result of her or his own insights. Additionally, in the ongoing counselling process the counsellor must always take into account whether the client is strong enough to stand the tacitly drawn conclusions of the counsellor coming out of her or his listening and tacit inner insights in the course of the joint biography analysis or not.

But in this regard, surely a lot of professional tact and sensitivity will be already assembled at the beginning of the sessions of the developmental workshop. The colleagues will automatically and thoroughly ask themselves and each other about the question how much the client really could make productive use of the findings of the joint collegial biography analysis within the developmental workshop, where she or he, the client, is not present her- or himself, and what could be dangerous or even detrimental to tell her or him about them. Such considerations regarding the poignancy of a biography analysis the client doesn’t take part in – which is unusual for a normal professional biographical counselling process – and where the knowledge gap between professional and client can be dramatic, will sensitise the professionals for the problem of a much less severe knowledge gap in awareness, regarding the results of a joint analytic work situation between client and professional, where the client is face-to-face and actively present and will take part in the different steps of analysis. As professionals always do, when they work together
in a meta-group for the analysis of professional work (as they practice in Balint groups, supervision groups, focus groups of joint case analyses, etc.), they also search for, and reflect on, the professional paradoxes (Schütze 1992, 2000), that are very much involved in professional case analysis and counselling, and especially in counselling dealing with biographical problems. This is because such counselling involves personal identity issues, which are intimate and value laden, the inner life sphere of the client is open then to the access of the professional stranger. In addition, these biographical problems are extremely complex since they belong to two spheres of reality, the individual and the collective, and they are shaped by their complicated mutual relationships. Such professional paradoxes consist of contrastive as well as competing necessities or urgencies of work tendencies and work steps.

**Paradoxes of Professional Action**

Such professional paradoxes are:

1. The need for the use of general categories for the classification and understanding of the case, on the one hand, and the need for specifying the problem situation and the personal ramifications of the case, on the other.

2. The need for projecting a prognosis for the social and biographical processes of the future unfolding or development of the problematic case or the creative project, on the one hand, and the unavoidable condition that one has to do it on a vague and non-dependable empirical base.

3. The perseverance of waiting for the creative development of the client or for the further unfolding of the case problem up to the point, where loss of time cannot be endured and accepted anymore, on the one hand, and the option of instantaneous powerful intervention of the professional, on the other.

4. The surplus knowledge of the professional regarding the dynamics of the unfolding of the trajectory of suffering of the client and the dreadfulness of this surplus knowledge, on the one hand, and the endangering of the trust relationship between client and professional when hiding this surplus knowledge in order to protect the hope and spirit of the client, on the other.

5. Considerations of keeping order and insuring the safety of proceedings, on the one hand, and the reduction of the liberty of the client to decide for her- or himself, on the other.

6. The biographical wholeness of the unfolding of the project case or problem case, on the one hand, and the specialisation of the expert (in the sense of Talcott Parsons “specificity” of the professional work – Parsons and Shils 1951, p. 77), on the other.
7. The educational dilemma: exemplary demonstration by the professional, how to handle the problem or the creative project unfolding of the client, on the one hand, and the danger of making the client dependent on the permanent assistance of the professional, i.e. the risk of endangering her or his autonomy, on the other.

8. The fight against the dominant and mighty power of the potential of the trajectory to unfold the case problems as well as the control of the connected sceptical concerns regarding the high societal and personal costs of working on the case, on the one hand, and the low rate of a successful handling and outcome of the case management, which conditions a trend towards the putting up with the case problems or at least indulging in them and not fighting them, on the other.

9. Organization as necessary and enabling instrument for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of professional work, on the one hand, and the tendency towards an alienating control of body and agency of the client by organizational mechanisms – a control that exerts an automatic and schematic constraint towards taking action regarding the predicament of the client, which is orientated just on outer criteria of effectiveness.

10. Being oriented towards the division of labour and the expert specialisation of professional work regarding the analysis of the complex case problem and the handling of it and the accompanying slicing of different aspects and levels of the case problem, on the one hand, and the orientation towards the overall arc of work of handling the case problem and the necessity of connecting its several features and sequential phases according to an overall structuring, on the other.

11. The dilemma of the safety value of routine procedures, on the one hand, and the reduction of professional openness and alertness of mind, on the other.

12. The orientation on state authority tasks and/or collectivity oriented tasks of the professional, on the one hand, and the connected danger of reducing the potential of the client to develop her or his own personal potential, on the other – where the professional is either oriented towards the well-being or common good of the involved collective identities (or state or governmental order) or towards the afflicted individual client.

13. The dilemma of addressing: focusing of the professional orientation on one single client or on a single party of clients, on the one hand, or focusing on the overall gestalt or the network of interaction processes and social relationships of clients, who might be – and very often factually are – in bitter conflict among themselves.

14. The orientation of the professional towards gaining and keeping the power of interpretation and disposition within the orientation frame of a higher
symbolic mode of analysis in the sense of Alfred Schütz’ “finite provinces of meaning”, and/or within the orientation frame of a special professional “social world” in the sense of Anselm Strauss (Schütz 1971: 263–298; Strauss 1991: 233–268), and within the respective sphere of higher-symbolic interaction, on the one hand, and the dangerous tendency of the professional as “controller of the institutional procedure” to focus just on the amassing and maximizing of interactive and procedural power, on the other; there is especially the danger of destroying the base of cooperative reciprocity of the social relationship and interaction between the professional and the client.

15. The urgency for the non-inhibition, naturalness and authenticity of professional work contributions, on the one hand, and the risk of fading out of one’s awareness the impact and the effects of one’s own individual work contributions (especially “interventions”) with their personal ramifications and radiations to the unfolding of the case problem.

Mistakes at work occur when the professional doesn’t take into account the permanent contrastive urgencies of the two sides of the paradoxes, or even the conflicts between them and doesn’t work towards a circumspect, balanced handling of both sides of the paradoxes at the same time or in close sequence. E.g., Bernd Funke’s counselor, Mrs. Brühl, would make a serious mistake if she just pre-decided for her client the handling of central biographical “switches” without personally letting himself work on the biographical decisions (paradox 7). Of course, such mistakes can be additionally conditioned by structural constraints: for example, if the case load of Mrs. Brühl of social worker in the rehabilitation field would be that high that she would feel not to have enough time, energy and circumspect attention to be entitled to wait for the accomplishment of the time consuming self-exploration of Bernd Funke, in finding out the right personal moves and decisions for the upcoming biographical switches.

8. Ethics

The INVITE project’s association with the name of Leonardo is both appropriate and a salutary challenge. Leonardo da Vinci’s polymath genius included an exceptional ability to translate ideas into practice. The contributors to this project come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds and include practitioners engaged in the day-to-day delivery of vocational advice and counselling services.
As indicated in a later chapter, it is a moot point whether the biographical interview and the methodology advocated in the modules can stand alone as a beneficial intervention in the context of an individual’s rehabilitation (see A. Golczyńska-Grondas, J. Grotowska-Leder’s). The potential for good and the risk of harm in the context of both research and rehabilitative practice must be managed and to this end we have adapted and adopted existing ethical guidance as operation principles.

The EU Code of Ethics for conducting Socio Economic Research inter alia suggests the following principles as guidance for research (Dench, Iphofen, Huws 2004):

- The research aims of any study should both benefit society and minimise social harm.
- Researchers should endeavour to ensure that the research team has the necessary professional expertise and support.
- Researchers should endeavour to reflect on the consequences of research engagement for all participants, and attempt to alleviate potential disadvantages to participation for any individual or category of person.
- Researchers should endeavour to ensure that reporting and dissemination are carried out in a responsible manner.
- Researchers should endeavour to ensure that methodology and findings are open for discussion and peer review.
- Researchers should endeavour to ensure that any participation in research should be voluntary.
- Researchers should endeavour to ensure that decisions about participation in research are made from an informed position.

Similar principles are elaborated in national and International Codes for professional intervention. For instance, The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) have developed a code which recognizes that ethical awareness is a fundamental part of professional practice. In particular the Code emphasizes that Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person’s physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being. We believe that the application of the methodological and practice procedures implied by the biographical approach advocated in this

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Biographical Counselling: an Introduction

project to be both consistent with and a heuristic step forward in the achievement of the above aim. Moreover, we have endeavoured to ensure that the fieldwork undertaken by the project team has been consonant with the principles espoused².

9. Exercises

- Professionals working in vocational counselling are encouraged to think about those clients in their own counselling and support practice where a deeper knowledge about life history and biographical processes would be important for the counselling process. What would be these important biographical informations? How to get them? How to talk about them with the clients?

- The reader is encouraged to take an autobiographical text from the published belletristic literature – it could be a fictional autobiographical text, too – and to apply the theoretical concepts of identity, self, fractured identities, situational identity, long-term biographical identity and biographical process structures to this text. If these categories do not totally fit, one should think about other concepts to be developed.

- The reader is encouraged to think about one’s own biographical work she or he had to do in the past. What are one’s own vulnerability dispositions and one’s own biographical resources? What were the specific tasks of that former biographical work?

- The reader who is working in vocational counselling might check the list of tasks of biographical counselling given in section 6 of this text. Are they applicable on a case from one’s own practice? What of the mentioned task concepts would not work on one’s own clients? Should other tasks be added?

- Professional counsellors might think about the possibility of a developmental workshop for jointly analyzing autobiographical texts of persons in situations of vocational rehabilitation. Think about the possibility of taking anonymized cases, which one could get from colleagues not involved in the joint analysis and discussion of the case.

References


SHORT DESCRIPTION
This module considers the importance of collective identities to the way in which individuals fit into the community and the social world. It discusses changes in collective identities in western societies and the effects of these individuals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1. To familiarise students and professionals with the notion of collective identity.
2. To explore a range of collective identities; how they are formed, how they change and their significance for individuals.
3. To explore the way in which cultural constructions and stereotypes constrain and limit identity choices.

1. Introduction: Identity And Collective Identity
Identity has to do with our sense of self, it defines who or what we think we are. Identity is about the question ‘Who Am I’? As a way into discussing this concept and its various dimensions, we can start with a simple test that can help us explore our own sense of self or identity. This is known as the Twenty Statements Test (TST).

EXERCISE 1 Who Am I?
Please answer this question by filling in the blank lines below:
1) I am ………………………………………
2) I am ………………………………………
3) I am ………………………………………
4) I am ………………………………………
5) I am ………………………………………
6) I am ………………………………………
7) I am ………………………………………
8) I am ………………………………………
9) I am ………………………………………
10) I am ………………………………………
11) I am ………………………………………
12) I am ………………………………………
13) I am ………………………………………
14) I am ………………………………………
15) I am ………………………………………
16) I am ………………………………………
17) I am ………………………………………
18) I am ………………………………………
19) I am ………………………………………
20) I am ………………………………………

Now look over your answers. Typically, most peoples’ answers fit into one or other of the following two categories: Count up your answers that fit into each category.

**Category One:** External or Social statements – statements that locate you in society, refer to positions that you hold and groups that you belong to e.g. student, father, sister, salesperson, doctor, jazz fan, Baptist, etc. or to social categories e.g. age, gender, 'race', ethnicity, etc.

**Category Two:** Internal or Personal statements – statements that describe an interior quality or trait you have or a behavioural tendency e.g. optimistic, dependable, ambitious, shy, contented, etc. or ‘animal lover’, conservative, ‘prolifer’, etc.

If identity is about the question ‘who am I?’ the exercise above should indicate to us that identity links the personal and the social. It links how I see myself and how others see me. It provides a link between individuals and the world in which they live. Identity involves the internal and the subjective, and the external. Identity presents the interface between the personal – what is going on inside our heads, how we as individuals feel about who we are – and the social – the societies in which we live and the social, cultural and economic factors which shape our experience.
Furthermore, our exercise should also indicate to us the way in which identity involves questions of similarity and difference. Your list of category one statements shows that identity marks us out as having the same identity as one group of people and a different one from others. In a situation where we meet someone for the first time, and in trying to find out who they are, we will often ask questions about where they come from and what they do. In such situations we are trying to find out what makes up this person and also what makes them the same as us – that is what we have in common – and what makes them different. Seeing someone wearing the badge of an organisation we belong to, marks that person out as being the same as us, as sharing an identity. If when travelling abroad we hear the voices of those who speak our own language, we may feel both a sense of recognition and of belonging. In a strange place finding people who share our language provides us with something and someone with whom we can identify. Symbols and representations such as these are often important in marking the ways in which we share identities with some people and distinguish ourselves as different from others.

Many of our identities are a product of the society in which we live and our relationship with others. Much of the way in which we see ourselves and understand ourselves is in terms of the way/s in which we are situated in social space. Our social identities are typically grounded in established social roles (e.g. teacher, mother) or in broader social and cultural categories e.g. gender categories. These identities serve as orientational markers as the routines of everyday life are negotiated and they are formed relationally by making a claim of similarity with some e.g. other females, and a claim of difference from others e.g. males. Many of our identities are then, collective identities – those we share with others and which relate us to a group. Such identities are rooted in the culture and structure of society – they are social constructions which give us a location in the world and present the link between us and the society in which we live.

Individuals live within a large number of different institutions or what Pierre Bourdieu calls ‘fields’, such as families, peer groups, educational settings, work and political groups. We participate in these institutions or ‘fields’ exercising what we may see as varying degrees of choice and autonomy, but each of them has a material context, a space and a place, norms and expectations as well as a set of symbolic representations. Although we may in common sense terms, see ourselves as the ‘same person’ in all our different encounters, there is also a sense in which we are differently positioned at different times and in different places according to the different roles we are playing (Hall 1997).
EXERCISE 2

Pause for a moment and think about some of the settings in which you find yourself. How many different identities do you have? Focus on some of your personal relationships with people in the workplace and in the home – as parent, relative, friends, worker and employer – you could consider other areas of your life and other positions you may occupy, perhaps related to leisure activities or involvement in your community or politics. In what sense are you ‘the same’ person in all of them? How far are these identities defined for you and how do you represent yourself to others in occupying these positions?

We all have multiple identities. The complexity of modern life requires us to assume different identities, but these different identities may conflict. We may experience tensions between our different identities when what is required by one may infringe upon the demands of another. For example, the conflict between identity as a parent and as a paid worker. The demands of the one may impinge upon and often contradict the demands of the other. To be a “good parent” we should be available to our children, meeting their demands; yet our employers may also require commitment. Attending a parent’s evening at our child’s school may conflict with our employer’s demands that we work late.

Conflicts arise out of tensions between social expectations and norms. Every context or cultural field has its controls and expectations. For example, mothers are expected to be heterosexual. Different identities may be constructed as ‘other’ or as deviant. Audre Lorde (1992) writes “As a forty nine year old black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two including one boy and a member of an inter-racial couple,I usually find myself part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior or just plain wrong”. Some of these identities may seem to concern the most personal aspects of life, such as sexuality. However, how we live our sexual identities is mediated by the cultural meanings about sexuality produced through dominant systems of representation which position some identity categories as the ‘other’. Identities are contained by dominant discourses and by cultural norms, controls and expectations. Thus, whilst social and collective identities may be empowering, providing a sense of belonging, they can also, through their very existence produce boundaries of ‘in’ and ‘out’ and norms of behaviour which limit peoples’ freedom to be and to do. Identity can be disempowering, it can even threaten peoples’ lives, as nationalist and homophobic attacks show.

Summary

The concepts of identity and collective identity draw our attention to the ways in which individuals fit into the community and the social world. Identity can be seen as the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural
situations. Identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live. Identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not. Often, identity is most clearly defined by difference, that is by what it is not. Identities are frequently constructed in terms of oppositions such as man/woman, black/white, old/young, normal/deviant.

2. Collective Identities: Stereotypes and Stigmatisation

Identity is always in some way marked by difference and sameness. It relies on peoples’ understanding of these symbolic markers whether they be on gender categories, class divisions, racialised or ethnicised identities, or categories of age, sexuality or ability/disability. Such categorisations are cultural and the differences may frequently be stereotyped. Stereotypes reflect and reinforce unequal relationships of ‘us’ and ‘them’, of ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups. They shape the way we perceive other people and the way we behave.

Gender identities are one example of categories that are constructed through social and cultural classification systems. All societies have ways of differentiating between women and men and between femininity and masculinity. These differences are often expressed through stereotypical language through words which are associated with women and with men. The following exercise explores this.

Reflect on the terms that you have chosen and what they say about your identity. Do you think you are typically masculine or feminine?

Your responses will vary according to how you see yourself and the culture you are from. However, how you see yourself is only one part of identity. Looking at the social side of identity we find that different traits are often characterised by society as a whole, so that some are associated with men and others with women.

Look through the list of character descriptions in Table 1 again. For each one, write down whether you think it is thought to be typical of men or women in general, or neither, in your culture today. Then compare your list with that in Table 2 below. This shows a gendered categorisation of traits based on a small survey carried out in the UK.
EXERCISE 3

The table below contains 45 different terms which might be used to describe people. Which, if any, of these words would you apply to yourself?

| Table 1 |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| tall | tender | arrogant |
| lucky | active | jealous |
| humane | proud | individualistic |
| tactful | modest | commanding |
| athletic | intuitive | unpretentious |
| weak | kind | passive |
| benevolent | decisive | conventional |
| assertive | unfriendly | strong |
| irresponsible | tidy | co-operative |
| perceptive | playful | robust |
| anxious | unemotional | responsive |
| gentle | informal | flexible |
| vulnerable | calm | acute |
| dignified | vigorous | cheerful |
| crude | faithful | timid |

| Table 2 |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| **Feminine** | **Masculine** | **Neutral** |
| characteristics | characteristics | characteristics |
| anxious | active | acute |
| co-operative | arrogant | benevolent |
| faithful | assertive | calm |
| gentle | athletic | cheerful |
| humane | commanding | conventional |
| intuitive | crude | dignified |
| kind | decisive | flexible |
| passive | individualistic | informal |
| perceptive | irresponsible | jealous |
| responsible | proud | lucky |
| tactful | robust | modest |
| tender | strong | playful |
| tidy | tall | unfriendly |
| timid | unemotional | unpretentious |
| vulnerable | vigorous | weak |
Categorisations like those in Table 2 reveal some aspects of how society and culture describe, and prescribe, gender-appropriate behaviours, qualities and characteristics. These categories are not only the product of everyday exchanges, they can even be used in psychological testing, to classify and to measure the way we see ourselves. Gender categories are associated with stereotypes, and within particular cultures these can reflect either positive or negative values which can reinforce the relationship of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

As has already been noted, all identities are formed relationally by making a claim of similarity with some and a claim of difference from others. Where the identities involved are collective identities, for example gender identities, the categories used may involve stereotypes which can constrain, limit and even stigmatise occupants of that identity. Cultural constructions of gender, ‘race’, ethnicity, class and nationality shape and influence the identities which people can adopt. The following exercises focuses on cultural constructions of age and disability.

**EXERCISE 4**

Read the poem ‘Kate’

Consider the following questions:

1. What does this poem tell you about society’s attitude to the elderly?
2. How much control does Kate have to negotiate her own identity?
3. Are there any examples of clues given/given off, stereotyping and sameness/difference in the poem?

---

**KATE**

*What do you see nurses, What do you see?*

*Are you thinking when you are looking at me.*

*A crabbit old woman not very wise,*

*Uncertain of habit with far-away eyes,*

*Who dribbles her food and makes no reply.*

*When you say in a loud voice 'I do wish you'd try'*

*Who seems not to notice the things that you do,*

*And forever is losing a stocking or shoe,*

*Who unresisting or not lets you do as you will*

*With bathing and feeding the long day to fill.*

*Is that what you're thinking, is that what you see?*

*Then open your eyes nurse, You're not looking at me.*
I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,
As I use at your bidding as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who love one another,
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet:

A bride soon at twenty, my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep:
At twenty-five now I have young of my own
Who need me to build a secure happy home.
A young woman of thirty my young now grow fast,
Bound to each other with ties that should last:

At forty my young ones now grown will soon be gone
But my man stays beside me to see I don't mourn:
At fifty once more babies play round my knee,
Again we know children my loved one and me.

Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead,
I look at the future I shudder with dread,
For my young are all busy rearing young of their own,
and I think of the years and the love I have known.

I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel,
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body it crumbles, grace and vigour depart,
There now is a stone where once was a heart:

Comment
Age has a crucial bearing on our status and identity. Our culture ‘infantilises’ both the young and the old. They are seen as incapable of controlling their own bodies and thus according to dominant cultural stereotypes, have to be cared for by adult carers. According to Hockey and James (1993) the elderly and the young have stigmatised identities; neither are considered to be completely ‘proper’ individuals due to their dependency on others. These stigmatised (or spoilt) identities are created and reinforced by a culture which infantilises them. Now read the poem by Elaine Bennett and ask yourself similar questions about cultural constructions of disability.
Look Again—Elaine Bennett

I look in the mirror,
What do I see?
The reflection looks back,
That reflection’s not me

I see a twisted figure
Hunch-back and small,
When really I’m curvaceous,
Slim, feminine and tall.

I straighten myself up,
Push my chest out,
Hold my head high.
Lips form a pout.

It’s not that important,
Your body you see,
Whether a page 3 model,
Or disabled like me.

I’m not blessed with a beautiful shell,
But I still feel attractive
And that’s important as well.

You feel good as a whole,
Not just your appearance,
But deep in your soul.

So when people look
And don’t like what they see,
They don’t really ‘look’
Because they are frightened of me.
Afraid that this person,
Disabled and lame,
Could be their reflection,
Because deep down we’re the same.
The organisation of society and cultural constructions of social categories and their associated norms are important in shaping our identities, however many of these structures are changing and some may be renegotiated or challenged.

3. Collective Identities: Change, Challenge and Diversity

Identity and difference are terms in common currency. We hear a great deal about identity at global, national, local and personal levels. Identity is often presented as problematic – for example, the loss of identity which may be seen as accompanying changes in employment and job losses, the search for identity which follows the break up of communities or of personal relationships and even ‘identity crisis’. In the global arena, national identities are contested, and struggles between different communities are represented by conflicting national identities. At the more personal level, familial relationships have changed and, for example, in the West traditional expectations about the nuclear family – defined as male breadwinner, dependent wife and children – have been challenged and new family forms and familial identities have emerged. Sexual identities are contested in the public arena where it seems that, increasingly, sexual identities are the subject of political contestation. In the affluent West, in particular, people turn to therapists and counsellors in pursuit of some solution to the problem expressed in the question ‘Who Am I?’

The picture is that old certainties no longer obtain and that social, political and economic changes, both globally and locally have led to the breakdown of previously stable group membership. Previously existing fixed identities of ‘race’, class, gender and sexuality are being challenged and contested by what are often termed ‘new social movements’ and by the social and cultural transformations which have accompanied what is variously termed ‘post-modern’ or ‘late-modern’ society.

According to some commentators current concerns about identity reflect broad social and cultural uncertainties produced by rapid social change (Woodward 2000). Anthony Giddens (1991) maintains that identities become both more uncertain and more diverse in a rapidly changing globalised culture. A number of reasons for this can be suggested:

- **Structural economic change** has reduced certainties about employment. This has left many men, in particular, struggling to find a ‘new identity’ in the face of high unemployment and labour market change which gives them no obvious alternatives to their previous identity. The increased employment of
married women in paid work has undermined previous certainties about gender identities when the housewife role was dominant. Class and gender identities are interlinked and both have altered in ways which have required the construction of new identities.

- **Family life** has also undergone radical changes including a decline in the rate of marriage and increases in divorce and single parenthood. New technologies for example, IVF treatment, challenge previous certainties and constraints of biology raising questions about ‘who we are’ in situations where once there were no questions.

- **New social movements** have developed such as the women’s movement, movements for gay and lesbian rights, the peace movement, environmental movements, the movement for the rights of the disabled and black civil rights. All of these have encouraged positive identification with new groups or with groups whose identities previously had predominantly negative connotations.

- The growth of **consumer culture** also increases people’s choices about identity. What people buy is becoming an increasingly important source of identity, with people distinguishing themselves from others through their preferences for particular products. This is reflected in an increasing emphasis on consumption relating to the body as a source of identity. People can express identity not just through the way they clothe their body, the jewellery they wear and their hairstyles, but also through cosmetic surgery, working out at the gym or getting tattoos. “In contemporary society the body has become a project. People attempt to alter or improve the appearance, size and shape of their bodies in line with… their own designs” (Woodward 2000).

These issues and concerns illustrate the key point that identities are not fixed; they are fluid and both individuals and social structures are changing. Social changes taking place at global and personal levels can produce uncertainties in relation to who we are and our place in the world, but although change is characterised by uncertainties and insecurities, it also leads to diversity and opportunities for the formation of new identities.

Changes lead us to explore the issue of who we are and what we can now be. In the following exercises we will consider some examples of uncertainties about collective identities which are apparent at this point in history.

**EXERCISE 5 What Do You Do?**

When we meet someone for the first time we are quite likely to ask them what they do in order to find out more about ‘who they are’. A whole set of associated ideas about the person’s identity may follow. The following extract is by John Greaves. John worked at the coal-face at Goldthorpe Pit, South
Yorkshire in the UK for 20 years. Here, in a piece of writing produced at a ‘Return to Learn’ course, run by the trade union UNISON and the Worker’s Education Association for unemployed miners, John describes the contrast between the mining village of Goldthorpe before 1984 and the 1997, 12 years after the pit was closed down.

Read the extract and consider the following questions.

- What does this autobiographical piece of writing tell us about identity?
- How does John identify with the community and place in which he lived and worked?
- How much control is John able to exercise over the identities he might want to adopt?
- How important are social divisions like class and gender in the formation of these identities?
- What are the uncertainties expressed here?

**John Greaves: ‘The walk to work’**

**Pre-1984**

Woken at 4 am by a twin belled wind up alarm clock, placed out of arms’ reach. Boil the kettle while having a wash and brush up. Fill a flask, snatch a quick cup of tea before making off for the day shift at Goldthorpe Colliery. Flask in pocket, acme snap tin under my arm I make my way along Furlong Road, which is busy with similar looking men travelling to their work…. The odd pair of bicycles would creak past, no matter where you worked everyone said good morning or something of the like when passing. Passing the Jungle Club at five to five the odd light would still be burning, with a customer or two still putting the world to rights, or maybe they were piloting a round the clock drinking licence. Crossing the railway bridge on the sound of diesel locomotive pulling coal wagons away from the pit. Turning into Goldthorpe’s Main Street just as the five o’clock buzzer at Hickleton Colliery was sounding. Three out of Goldthorpe’s five butchers’ shops would have been swept and swilled down, and the owners inside cutting and slicing ready for the day’s trading. All three newsagents were brightly lit, with placards outside promising news hot off the press. By far most popular was Barry’s, he had lost his right arm up to the shoulder as a young man. But an artist when it came to folding newspapers, or distributing chewing gum, snuff or cigarettes. All … would soon be discussing Saturday’s match, or who would win the 3.30 at Doncaster, while Barry struggled on manfully with his task. Once served, onward towards the Pit Lane with the mouth watering smell of fresh baked bread drifting from Mr Brown’s
Bakers shop. Past all the well kept shop fronts, then reaching the Goldthorpe Hotel, which was also taking part in the open all hours scheme. Into the Pit Lane, a long concrete road with a swing park, football pitches and rugby pitches on the left and, on the right an allotment site with a shanty town of huts and greenhouses, a few with smoking chimneys. Our first stop in the pit yard was the time office … Then making a move for the pit head baths, this was where the transformation took place from normal human being into a coal miner. Off with jeans and tee shirt and on with bright orange overalls, helmet, knee pads, steel toe capped boots. Fill a large plastic bottle with drinking water before going into the hot acid smelling area known as the lamp cabin. On with a cap lamp and battery and out the other side for a breath of fresh air, before being searched for smoking materials. Boarding the paddy train along with another 120 men to be lowered down the tunnel known as the drift, to where we worked in the black water sodden seam, that was called by people locally ‘The Sludge’. Everybody was happy, hard worked but happy. The NCB recruiting posters used to say ‘A Job for Life’.

1997
Woken by a noisy milk float at 4.10 am, boiled the kettle, made a cup of tea. No need for the flask these days, and the wash and brush up seems less important. Set off for a walk, into Furlong Road towards Goldthorpe, not a soul in sight, not a house light on. Then a sign of life, a postman whistles by on his regulation Royal Mail bicycle on his way to Goldthorpe small sorting office, again I am alone. Reaching the Jungle Club at five to five, paint flaking, all in darkness no more all night sitting, too many empty pockets. Crossing the railway bridge no longer the sound of locomotives pulling coal wagons. Looking over into the cutting is a depressing sight, rails that once shone now rusting, grass growing over the once well maintained sleepers and ballast. Landing on Goldthorpe’s main street at five o’clock the buzzer does not sound anymore, Hickleton Colliery no longer exists. No butcher sweeping and swilling, only one newsagent open. Mick’s News’ has retired, the shop has been extended, brightened but lacks customers. Walking towards the Pit Land passing boarded up shops that once thrived, no longer the smell of fresh baked bread. It seems the only new traders are second hand dealers. Reaching the Goldthorpe Hotel all in darkness, silent. Turning into the pit lane to find grass growing out of every crack and joint in the concrete road. What happened to the dozens of lorries and their drivers, that used to travel this way? The pavement that was once trodden by hundreds of men a day has been lost to the grass verge. Passing the swing park, seats broken the rocking horse on its side dead! Both the football and rugger pitches look in good condition, the council took them over. The shanty
town on the allotment site is thriving, perhaps looked after by people in search of the 'good life'. Into the pit yard, no time office, no canteen, no pit head baths. Just odd bits of rubble left of what was the life blood of the local community. Going down to what was the mouth of the drift, all that's left there is a steel pipe coming up from the ground, to drain away gas from underground workings. It stands like a monument to all the men who worked there, and to some who lost their lives there. The NCB recruiting poster used to say 'A Job for Life'.

Source: John Greaves

EXERCISE 6 Where Do You Come From?

Another everyday question we might ask when we meet someone for the first time is ‘where do you come from?’ The following poem was written by Jackie Kay who was born in Glasgow in 1961. Her mother was a white Scottish woman and her father was a black Nigerian student. She has written extensively about the subject of identity in the context of her own experience.

So You Think I’m a Mule?

‘Where do you come from?’
‘I’m from Glasgow’
‘Glasgow?’
‘Uh huh. Glasgow’
The white face hesitates
the eyebrows raise
the mouth opens
then snaps shut
incredulous
yet too polite to say outright
it’s
she tries another manoeuvre
‘And your parents?’
‘Glasgow and Fife’
‘Oh’
‘Yes. Oh’
Snookered she wonders where she should go from here –
‘Ah, but you’re not pure’
‘Pure? Pure what?’
‘Pure white? Hugh. What a plight
Pure? Sure I’m pure
I’m rare...’
‘Well, that’s not exactly what I mean,'
I mean... you’re a mulatto, just look at...’
‘Listen. My original father was Nigerian
to help with your confusion
But hold on right there
if you Dare mutter mulatto
hover around hybrid
hobble on half-caste
and intellectualize on the
‘mixed race problem’
I have to tell you:
take your heady eyes offa my skin;
don’t concern yourself with
the ‘dialectics of mixtures’;
don’t pull that strange blood crap
on me Great White Mother.
say, I’m no mating of a
she-ass and a stallion
no half of this and half of that
to put it plainly purely
I am Black
My blood flows evenly, powerfully
and when they shout ‘Nigger’
and you shout ‘Shame’
ain’t nobody debating my blackness.
You see that fine African nose of mine,
my lips, my hair. You see lady
I’m not mixed up about it.
So take your questions, your interest,
your patronage. Run along.
just leave me.
I’m going to my Black sisters
to women who nourish each other
on belonging
There’s a lot of us
Black women struggling to define
just who we are
where we belong
and if we know no home
we know one thing:
we are Black
we’re at home with that’.
‘Well, that’s all very well, but..’
‘I know it’s very well.
No But, Good bye’

Source: Kay, 1991

• What is meant by the question ‘Where do you come from?’
• What is the relationship between place and identity here?
• What does Kay mean when she writes ‘I am Black’ and then ‘We are Black’?

Comment

The poem indicates some of the ways in which we link identity to place and the criteria which are used for making those connections. In everyday interactions we interpret the clues which are; given’ and ‘given off’ and classify people accordingly. For many of us it is no longer possible to ‘read off’ identity from the same signals we might have used in the past. This poem represents a contemporary question about identity. In attempting to classify people according to where they come from we may be thrown, when there are contradictory messages given off.

In this situation it is suggested that the white woman is confused by Kay’s claim to be ‘from Glasgow’ because she apparently feels that black people cannot be ‘really’ Scottish (or British). The poem describes how the white woman here ignores the replies (and Kay’s Glaswegian accent presumably) and insists that to be black is to be an outsider.

The poem also highlights the way in which identity is marked by difference. The difference suggests that the white woman defines Kay as an outsider, in an unequal relationship of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Being black or white is only a way of marking difference but is used as a means of asserting superiority.

This poem is also about a search for certainty and disquiet about uncertainty. When thwarted by her earlier questions the white woman resorts to questions about ‘purity’. She is seeking to locate identity in a category which we can mark off as fixed and certain. Kay’s response to the misconceptions of the white woman is to deny any uncertainty on her own part. She gives voice to a collective identity which has meaning for her as an individual. She may be unclear about where she ‘comes from’ but is quite certain about who she is, who she wants to be and with whom she belongs. In her response Kay is offering one possible solution to the uncertainties posed by the question ‘where do you come from?’ in a multicultural and multi-ethnic society.
Multi-ethnicity and cultural diversity arising from the cultural differences in contemporary societies raise a number of questions about uncertainty and diversity and about the ways in which people have the possibility, or not, of constructing their own identities. How can people respond so that they can actively engage with shaping their own identities? One strategy is to assert and celebrate differences as Kay does in her poem, in order to take control of her own identity, but social constraints can operate through racist prejudice and ideas in the same way as economic constraints and unequal power relations were in operation in the John Greaves coal-mining example.

Whilst structures play an important role in the formation of identities many of the previously ‘certain’ structures for example, class, race and gender which lent cohesion to identity, have become more structurally differentiated, fragmented and culturally pluralistic (Castells 1997, Giddens 1991). Old collective identities are being broken down. This is a response to the advent of new social movements and to social, political and economic changes both globally and locally.

New social movements emerged in the West in the 1960’s giving voice to new identities. These movements challenged traditional constraints and sought to celebrate a group’s positive features as well as to challenge oppression. For example, the women’s movement, the black civil rights movement, gay and lesbian rights movements and the peace movement all sought actively to redefine the identities of their members. Campaigns around environmentalism, the politics of HIV and AIDS and for the rights of people with disabilities have challenged the idea that identities are fixed and cannot be reconstructed. The political projects of these group activities asserted collective identities. Some movements have adopted a non-essentialist position stressing that identities are fluid, having different elements which can be reconstructed in new cultural conditions and that they are not fixed essences locked into differences which are permanent for all time. Other movements have tended towards essentialist claims involving appeals to biologically given features of identity. For example, some gay rights activists have argued that their sexual identity is grounded in their biological make-up and is not a product of social processes. Some feminists have argued that women are intrinsically more peace-loving than men and that women have essential, female qualities which are superior to male aggression and should be celebrated as such.

A variety of groups and individuals have sought to challenge social expectations about identity and, through collective action have resisted dominant cultural representations of identity. Thus, while structures may constrain identity, people can and do reshape social structures which restrict them. Stereotypes are challenged and cultural meanings negotiated and changed. The
following extract illustrates the ambiguous nature of identity and disability. It questions the idea of ‘fixed identities’ and challenges dominant cultural representations of disability.

**Disabled People are not ‘Disabled’**

A new study undermines the very idea of a ‘disabled community’ with a common aim, says Michael Morgan.

*Disabled people don’t see themselves as disabled that’s the chief finding of a study by a researcher at the department of nursing studies at the University of Edinburgh.*

*Entitled somewhat intriguingly, ‘Well, I Know This Is Going To Sound Very Strange To You, But I Don’t See Myself As A Disabled Person’, Nick Watson’s study examined the ambiguous nature of identity and disability, and brought up some important if disturbing insights into how disabled people see themselves.*

What the respondents meant was not that they denied their own impairments, but that they refused to see themselves as ‘disabled people’ in the sense usually used by disability radicals and activists they refute the notion of a ‘disabled community’.

Disabled solidarity is one of those things that tends to be assumed by the self-styled radicals in the disability movement, yet here is evidence which suggests that a sense of belonging or common purpose among disabled people is largely missing. And if the ‘glue’ is missing then the whole edifice of disability politics and culture is structurally unsound for all social movements are dependent on the social base of common experience, and if that’s not there then neither is the movement.

I’ve long suspected that the picture of a mass-based movement of radicalised disabled people is more a myth among right-on disability academics than any genuine outpouring of discontent among disabled people in any wider sense beyond Disability Living Allowance rates, the provision of blue badges and other everyday issues.

Watson’s survey consisted of in-depth interviews with 14 disabled men and 14 disabled women, carried out twice over a six-month period. Two things immediately became clear, first, there is little evidence for, and plenty against, the existence of widespread social solidarity among disabled people. According to Watson “Disabled people do not share a common religion, common political beliefs, or common social class. There are also differences along the lines of gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, partnerships and health. All these serve to challenge the idea of the disabled community as a single, united entity.
Second, although the disabled respondents did not deny their impairment in any way, they rejected an identity based on those impairments. They do not see themselves as disabled as opposed to normal, but rather they challenge the whole idea of normality and simply refuse to be categorised on the basis of bodily difference.

Disability is their normality, their impairments are a fact of life, not the primary determinant of their identity. Many of the respondents kept stressing that they were just an ordinary person albeit with a disability included.

Taken together, these findings directly challenge the basis of radical disability politics that a broad-based movement of disabled people has emerged in recent years, and this has provided the dynamic which has stimulated the growth of self-organised, politically radical disability groups.

Such common identity as does exist between disabled people may be limited to specific disability issues rather than commitment to a wider programme of radical social change.

A further erosion of shared disabled experience could be a consequence of the change from institutional life to independent living in the community, the very change most central to the disability movement’s list of successes.

Further reading on Disability, Identity and Difference is provided in Appendix I at the end of this text. This paper look at identity options for disabled people, but also draws parallels with the experiences of women, lesbians and gays and black people. It draws upon the idea that identity is an aspect of the stories we tell to ourselves and to others and argues that traditional narratives are being usurped by a broader and more flexible range of stories in contemporary society. These themes are taken up below in the context of class, occupation and gender.

4. Class, Occupation, and Gender

Social, political and economic changes both globally and locally have also had an impact on identity. Identities rooted in previously stable group memberships are breaking down, becoming more diverse and fragmented. The much of the 20th century class, ethnicity and gender were the cohesive and uniform entities in which identities were rooted. Together with family, kinship and community these were the stable group memberships which afforded certainty and security. Today there is a range of competing sources of identity – sources which may conflict in the construction of identity positions and lead to contradictory fragmented identities. Each of us may experience some struggles
between conflicting identities based on our different positions in the world, as a member of a particular community, ethnicity, social class, religion, as a parent, as a worker or as unemployed.

Return to Exercise 2 for a moment and consider the question of change – ‘have any of your identities changed in recent years’? the ways in which we represent ourselves – as women, as men, as parents, as workers – have been subject to radical change in recent years. As individuals, we may experience fragmentation in relationships and in our working lives, and these experiences are set against historical social changes, such as changes in the labour market and employment patterns. Political identities and allegiances have shifted, with a move away from traditional, class-based loyalties towards ‘lifestyle’ choices and the emergence of ‘identity politics’ where ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, social justice, and environmental concerns produce new identifications. Relationships within the family have changed, especially with the impact of changing patterns of employment. There have also been changes in working practices and the production and consumption of goods and services, as well as the emergence of new patterns of domestic living, such as increasing numbers of lone-parent households, and higher divorce rates. Sexual identities are also shifting, becoming more contested and ambiguous, suggesting changes and fragmentation which could be described in terms of a crisis of identity.

In post-traditional or post-modern society the traditional bases of identity are being constantly challenged. People can no longer gain a sense of security from the ‘old’ sources such as class, gender and community. New ways of gaining a sense of identity are created coming from a much wider variety of sources than was the case in modern society. This provides people with more and diverse opportunities for identity construction but also can create uncertainties over both individual and collective identities.

Recall the autobiography of John Greaves (Exercise 5) and use this as a background to study the following account about changes in contemporary identities.

For much of the 20th century (and before) many aspects of social life were work based. People’s identities and interests were tied to their work and employment conditions through the structure of the labour market and through the work-based communities in which they lived. Aspects of life such as consumption, leisure, politics, education, religion and belief were closely related to work and employment conditions. These conditions gave rise to the characteristic cultural patterns of class-based communities. The mining town, the fishing village, the ship-building town and the cotton district, for example, were characteristic working-class communities. Members of these communities shared similar life experiences and held similar attitudes. Hey lived in similar
houses, went to the same schools, socialised in the same pubs, voted in the same way, went to the same churches, etc.

The most important secondary identity for most people was their occupation. Work roles dominated people’s lives, providing them with their most important sense of social identity. They saw themselves, and were seen by others, as a coal miner, a farm labourer, a fisherman, a steel worker, a cotton spinner and so on. Other secondary identities were largely dependent on their work and employment relations.

Primary identities of gender and ethnicity were also structured in this way. Women, for example, saw themselves in occupational roles or as ‘housewives’ dependent on the family wage earned by the male breadwinner and head of the household. As a result class identity and class consciousness (awareness of class position) were very important. Virtually all other aspects of social life were subordinate to this. Gender differences, for example, could not be understood except in relation to the class situations of men and women. People therefore tended to give primacy to class over gender in defining their identity and sense of self. Working-class women and middle-class women, for example, were so divided by class that their common primary identity as women was submerged in their differences of class. Working-class women and middle-class women in the early to mid 20th century did not see themselves as having much in common with each other because class differences were so great. In the second half of the 20th century this class basis of social life was transformed. Major changes in the economy had brought about what some called a decentering of class identity (Lash and Urry 1987). There are a number of dimensions to this change:

- Traditional jobs in manufacturing have declined and the communities associated with them are disappearing.
- More and more women have entered the labour force.
- Jobs are more diverse today – more types of jobs.
- Many jobs are less secure today. The idea of a ‘job for life’ is disappearing.
- There is a division between a core of secure workers and a periphery of part-time, casual and insecure workers with few prospects for promotion.
- Women, the young and members of ethnic minorities are most likely to be recruited to peripheral jobs.

These changes in the structure and organisation of work mean that the economic basis for class solidarity and cohesion is much weakened. The taken-for-granted supports of class identity have been undermined. Work is no longer so central or so clearly defined in people’s lives.

At the same time societies have come to be more organised around consumption than production. The pattern of production is now shaped much
more than ever before, by advertising and media led demand and by people’s
desires to consume particular kinds of goods.

These consumer desires are tied to the pursuit of particular lifestyles that are
promoted in the media and made available for people to choose. People are more
likely now to identify themselves as a particular type of consumer than as
a particular type of producer. What has become important is the kind of car we
drive, the holidays we take, the clothes we wear, the labels we display, the
electronic equipment we possess, etc. rather than the job we do.

Work itself has come to be seen as instrumental, as a means to the enjoyment
of leisure and consumer goods. Styles of life are no longer tied so directly to our
work and employment, but may be defined by advertising and media images.
Something may well be bought because it has some material significance e.g.
food or clothing, but it also has a symbolic significance for consumers. People
increasingly feel it is important to buy the particular kind of good and clothes
that accord with the lifestyle that they want to enjoy.

The label is, for many people, more important than the product itself.

**EXERCISE 7**

Undertake a short observational study to see if there is evidence of
`conspicuous consumption` among the inhabitants of the place in which you
live. Examine the findings in terms of gender and age.

Some sociologists argue that the once all-embracing class identity has begun
to dissolve or become fragmented. Social identities have become more diverse
and pluralistic. People exercise more choice about the kind of person that they
will be and this is not always directly related to their occupational or class
position. There is no longer a direct link between a person’s class position and
the car, the house, the holiday or the consumer goods they possess. The
weakening of class as a basis of identity has also freed gender and ethnicity from
their close connection with class relations. Gender and ethnicity have become
more important in their own right as bases of social identity, although gender
identities too, i.e. what it means to be masculine or feminine, are also changing.

This is not to say that class relations have disappeared altogether. Class
divisions remain a fundamental feature of contemporary societies. People might
be able to make more choices today than before, but the choices they exercise
are still constrained by things like income, poverty and employment.
Nevertheless class is perhaps no longer so salient as a source of identity and
other identities have been freed from their dependence on class identity. New
identities have emerged as new ways of life have developed.
The sociologist Anthony Giddens (1989) has much to say about the consequences of such changes for our individual lives and for the ways in which identity is constructed. He refers to the way in which the process by which we construct our self-identity becomes a ‘reflexive project’. By this Giddens means that we are able to monitor our progress in achieving the sort of self-image to which we aspire. Individuals can assess how successful they are in creating their desired identity, and if they fall short of it, they may adopt various strategies to tackle this problem, such as dieting, going on a course, buying a new set of clothes, etc.

EXERCISE 8

Consider the extent to which you have consciously established an identity and a lifestyle, rather than have one imposed upon you. To what extent do your cultural values and outlook differ from those of your parents or other generations? Consider issues of dress, leisure, tastes in entertainment and other lifestyle factors.

Then consider some of the major features of society today which remain largely unchanged over time and which impact on identity.

5. Conclusion

Identity is about the question ‘who am I?’ It links the personal and the social. We have multiple identities many of which are typically grounded in social roles or in social and cultural categories. They are collective identities in the sense that we share them with others and they relate us to a group or collectivity. They identify us not only in terms of how we see ourselves, but how others see us and they involve norms, expectations and social responsibilities. Cultural constructions and stereotypes may often be involved in these identities and these too can constrain and limit the choices or agency we have in taking on an identity. Social, economic and political changes also impact on identity. Changes in employment structures for example can deny us access to identities we may once have had or may wish to take up. Cultural constructions of gender, social regulation and even legal categories and classifications may prevent individuals from taking up alternative identities. Social attitudes towards age, ethnic diversity and sexuality can set limits on what it is possible to achieve. Any of the social changes characterising Western societies have led to increasing uncertainty and insecurity. Previous certainties about employment, family life, gender roles and national identity have shifted in the period since the Second
World War. There has been a move away from class-based identities and the security that might have been afforded by particular patterns of employment, the associated gender roles within families and assumptions about what it means to be white. Contemporary concerns with identity can be seen as focusing on presenting ourselves to others, through consuming identities and through lifestyle and developing ourselves as individuals. This can be contrasted with the changing ways in which collective identities have been forged. New social movements have produced a new focus for the politics of collective identities, with their concerns with gender, sexuality and ‘race’. Uncertainties can also be expressed as responses to change and the opportunities for diversity which are offered. In the 21st century there is a greater diversity of forms of domestic living than in the 1950s. Gender stereotypes are challenged by reconstruction and more fluid identities. Change has created new opportunities for redefining ourselves at home and in the workplace and as members of different ethnicities and nations. There is both diversity and uncertainty. Identity is a useful concept for explaining how people cope with change and uncertainty and the opportunities presented by diversity. Identity continues to illustrate the interrelationship between structure and agency.

References

The Interplay Between Personal Identity and the Others. Interaction Partners and Competitors of all Kinds

SHORT DESCRIPTION
This module presents the issues of significant others and their role in constructing and maintaining self concepts of biography incumbent.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
1. Familiarizing students and professionals with the role of significant others in biographies of assistance institutions’ clients.
2. Teaching the ability to identify the influences of significant others in clients’ biographies and to take into consideration these influences and significant persons in creating assistance plans.

1. Introduction: Identity and Others

Our identity as members of society is determined by the socialization processes. Basic frameworks of the child’s identity are created in the primary socialization phase. Identity is transferred onto the child by his/her significant others – people from the closest social environment who are emotionally tied with a child1 – first of all parents or patrons. Referring to the identity interaction model2, we can say that through continuous interactions and mechanisms of role

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1 Such persons are called by Kuhn “orientating others” because they supply an emotionally dependent child with basic cognitive categories. In adult life “orientating others influence the changes in self-concept (Kuhn, after Bokszański, 1988: 92).
2 There are four main theoretical models of identity: 1) identity health model in which the problem of identity is related to the course of life cycle, tasks and crises typical for its particular
taking and taking the roles of others a child learns how to recognize and adopt the interactional partners’ attitudes towards him/her. Consequently, an individual’s identity concept comes from the others, that is, an individual becomes what others consider him/her to be. We need to emphasize that in the phase of primary socialization these others are “imposed” upon a child. The self-concept, whose frameworks were shaped in childhood, are tested in further interactions. The self-concept becomes stabilized in the adolescence phase when an individual is confronted with developmental tasks connected with the choices of social roles and auto-definitions crucial for his or her adult biography.

Still, acquiring more or less stable personal identity in adolescence does not protect an individual against the necessity of confirming his/her self concept during the whole life.

Interactions with others have the key importance for maintaining the individual’s set of auto-definitions. The durability and quality of the ties connecting an individual with other people can be differentiated. From one point of view, everyday, routine contacts with other social actors (like shop assistants, people living in the same district or fellow travellers in public transport means) are very important in the processes of maintaining the self-concept. Seemingly, these people do not play meaningful roles in our lives. We notice their significance only when disturbances in our mutual relations occur. For example, a person whom we know by sight – a fellow-walker in a park – does not answer to our “good morning”. Such a single incident can introduce some feelings of tension – we are considering for a while if he/she is sad or sleepy or perhaps irritated by the fact which took place three days ago – when our dog tried to bite her one. The tension will increase with the increasing number of other people in the park who do not react to our greetings. Then we start to analyse probable reasons of their behaviour – we keep on trying to recall if we have done something wrong, if there has been any rumour about us – that means that we consider maintaining one of our less significant auto-definitions – “a nice person from the park”. We can see then how our everyday contacts with others, who seemingly do not influence our life, give us the sense of safety or “normality” and show us that we have adjusted ourselves to the requirements of social life.

phases, the problem of adaptation to social requirements as well as goals and developmental tasks typical for each phase; 2) identity interaction model where it is assumed that a socialized individual’s existence has origins in interactions; 3) identity world view model in which the main thesis assumes we deal with an abrupt transformation of basic psychosocial circumstances of existence in the contemporary world and this transformation causes identity problems, privatisation and individualization of the processes of identity search and identity acquirement and; 4) the identity egology model which is oriented at the development of research and theory of identity (Robbins R. (1973) Identity Culture and Behaviour, in: Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Honingmann J. J. (eds.) after: Bokszański 1988).
And – on the contrary – noticing disturbances in a “meaningless” interaction can undermine certain elements of the self – concept and self-esteem.

Obviously, interactions with others with whom an individual is tied by special bonds – family members, friends, others from various institutions – fellow pupils, co-workers or headmasters are the most important for the processes of confirmation of an individual self-concept. In adult life we have limited possibilities of choosing our significant others. Mills, claiming that the set of significant others depends partly on the social status and the ongoing phase of life cycle, notices that an individual mainly aims to preserve the relations with others who confirm his/her most valued auto-definitions, and that the relations with so-called intimate others have the basic significance. If an individual cannot gain acceptance for his/her self-concept in different social circles he/she wants to fulfil this need in the primary groups. If an individual and significant others have divergent concept of his/her identity, the person is forced to take over the concept imposed by the others or reject it. The last option leads to conflicts or even breaking up contacts with these people.

In the works of social researchers and practitioners various categories of others, especially significant to an individual’s biography, are described. Empirical materials provide some information on the character and meaning of significant others. It therefore seems that every individual functions in the space of interactions with significant others, the space being indicated by four axes.
The first axis determines social circles from which the significant others come. At one end of this axis close persons from family and friendly circles are located, i.e. intimate others, at the other end – others representing institutional circles. The second axis is indicated by the quality and emotional content of bonds connecting an individual with others. Here good-enough others can be located who influence the course of an individual’s biography in a constructive way, others who enter in varied emotional relations with an individual as well as other destructive significant others setting off trajectorial processes. The third axis represents the durability of relations with significant others, from episodic, though lasting several years or several months, to durable, biographic ones. The fourth axis determines the individual’s attitude towards the significant other – from the totally accepting attitude through an ambivalent one, to a complete negation – and thus refers to the subjective sphere. All the people who form the interactional space may become “orientating others”, strongly influencing the self-concept.

In reality the significance of every other in the life of a given person is determined by the location of the other in space delineated by the above mentioned axes. For example, the continually present, intimate, good enough (or destructive), accepted (or rejected) other may be our mother, brother or life partner. A person with whom we had a short and passionate romance long time ago may influence our self-concept as a man or a woman in such a way that she or he becomes an intimate, episodic, good-enough, accepted significant other. Episodic, institutional, destructive, rejected other may be an examiner who, by giving us a negative mark, prevented us from the realization of our educational plans.

2. The Transformation of the Self-Concept

The self – concept undergoes transformation during the whole life of an individual. The reasons and range of these transformations can be differentiated. Some transformations result from the natural biological processes such as puberty or ageing, other ensue regularized status passages (like entering into the labour market or passing the subsequent educational levels), yet other are caused by unexpected life events or by relations with role models of various kinds. Re-definition of the self-concept can also be forced by macro processes of social, political or economic transformation\(^3\). In such circumstances, an individual is

\(^3\) Obviously, the self-concept depends also on historic época and social structures in which an individual functions. In societies with simple work division the social actors’ identities were
forced to abandon hitherto existing patterns of life and to adapt to rapid changes by taking up new social roles and redefining the self-concepts. The influence of the social environment is very important in these transformations of personal identity. Let us consider an example of industrial workers’ experiences in former socialist countries. In early nineties of 20th century in Łódź (which used to be a textile industry centre), when textile factories were dismissing large numbers of workers, women weavers and spinners – convinced about the temporary character of the situation – were very content with the financial compensations they were receiving and rejoiced over the perspective of holidays. Their following experiences – failures in looking for the job, necessity to apply for family assistance – resulted in settling down in the social role of an unemployed person. Interactions with institutional representatives informing their clients that their skills and abilities were inadequate for the changing labour market, the acts of granting and confirming the status of the unemployed by labour offices, social workers and intimate others resulted in adopting the auto-identification and self-esteem of the unemployed person.

Sometimes in adult people’s biographies we can observe complete changes of the self-concepts which – after Berger and Luckman – are called alternations. An alternation results from re-socialization processes in which people with whom an individual is very closely bound take part. These processes are similar in their features to primary socialization. An alternation can be a result of religious conversion but also of psychotherapy. Obviously in such an institutional treatment social roles of institutionalized significant others are defined explicite and these people become the guides in the way to a new life (Berger, Luckman 1983: 24–247, Bokszański 1988: 135–139).

Biographical interviews supply us with a lot of information about significant others in the client’s life, their role in creating and maintaining the clients’ identity and their importance for biographical processes. The analysis of biographical materials reveals the self-concept of biography incumbent, his or her network of social contacts, opinions and convictions relating to the relationships with others. In the next part of this chapter we will refer to narrative and biographical interviews conducted in 2004 in Poland with people who have experienced unemployment in different phases of their life. First of all defined and imposed upon individuals – they reflected like a mirror uncomplicated social strata. In the industrial society primary groups and the national collective have been very important for identity creation processes. Post-industrialism and postmodernism multiply opportunities of identity choices and the questions “Who am I?” and “Whom should I be?” are the most important existential questions (Bokszański 1988).

4 These interviews were conducted in Łódź, the second biggest city in Poland, with the clients of partner practice institution of University of Łódź in the „Invite” project. The university researchers and vocational counsellors from practice institutions were the interviewers.
we will draw our attention to others from primary groups and from institutional circles and we will consider the importance of these data for the vocational counselling.

3. Personal Identity and Others in Biographical Interviews

3.1. Primary Groups

3.1.1. Intimate Others

We will start the considerations about the others’ influence on an individual’s identity and biography with drawing the picture of an unemployed in his/her primary groups. First of all we will refer to the relationships with the most formative significant others, that is the biography incumbent’s parents and care-takers in childhood and adolescence. In fact, general frames of the biography course are formed by parents and patrons. Their functioning, the essence, quality and quantity of their interactions with the child are crucial for the emotional, social and cultural capital of the individual in her/his future life. They are the source of biographical patterns and the individual has to assume his/her attitudes towards these patterns at the beginning of the adult life – she/he can take them over, modify or reject them. They create the personal identity frames and take part in the processes of maintaining the self-concept of the person. At last, just their presence, substance and range of the mutual relationships between them and the child has the fundamental importance for individual’s functioning in biographical crises and metamorphosis.

A. The first important biographical information that the vocational counsellor looks for during the interview with the client are the client’s formative significant others, their characterization and influence on the client’s biography course. The comparative analysis of the interviews shows us that the relationships with others are very differentiated. The statements about the others are usually very long, a client can even appeal to the biographical significance of his/her parents in the very first minute of the interview:

The most important … in my life, in my life, the most important is my mum, but not in the first place, because the first place is for my daughter (Eve). Further parts of the interview confirm the importance of this introduction. Most of all, data referring to the significance of formative others are revealed by
clients who have experienced psychotherapeutic relationship – it can even happen that the whole interview contains the client’s analysis of the other’s influence on his/her life course. However, in the interviews with the unemployed and low qualified social welfare clients we can find very scant sentences about parents and patrons: *For me, the most important was just this… the grandparents were (…) they took care of us, ver/they were very good people* (Leon). On this basis we can only presume that some important interactions took place in the client’s childhood. These interactions between the client and the significant other supplied him/her with emotional resources but we do not know their exact essence. The content of the interview can also reveal lack of biographical caretakers in childhood and adolescence – their absence is evident in interviews with people who have been brought up in dysfunctional families.

**B. Parents draw general biographical frames.** A child is brought up in the place chosen by his intimate others, so **the first “natural” child’s environment is the environment of his caretakers.** The environmental features – size and type of a town or a village neighbourhood, the access to the educational system, quality of schools, all these factors have an effect on child’s educational and occupational chances. Let’s consider the example of Pola. Pola is almost forty now, she is an unqualified worker, since early nineties she has been experiencing the episodes of unemployment. She obtained her education at an agricultural vocational school. In the 1980s her parents decided to move from the small village to a city. They were offered two flats – the bigger one in Warsaw, and the smaller one in Łódź. Pola’s mother preferred Łódź: *My mum did not want to Warsaw, as she said it was far from the family, this far… We will see them too seldom. So they finally agreed on this Łódź and on this M-4*. Pola’s chances of staying in the labour market are probably limited by the fact of relocation to Łódź, the city in which the textile industry collapsed totally in the nineties. We can only suppose that Pola’s situation would be much better and so would be her chances for maintaining a stable occupation at the absorbing Warsaw labour market. Thus her mother’s decision made up in the past inadvertently limits the present occupational prospects of the daughter. The parents of another interviewee – Alice – deeply rooted in traditional rural culture didn’t have enough cultural resources to support Alice who had very ambitious biographical projects. They did not have (and even did not know that they could have) enough knowledge about the educational system. They were not conscious that Alice did not know the basic rules of the evaluation procedures during the entrance exams to the secondary school. Alice was not aware that she had to check her name on the list of admitted students displayed on the school building. Instead she was

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5 M-4 means 3 rooms flat for 4 family members.
waiting for the information by post. As a result of the confusion, the educational career of Alice – convinced that she did not pass the exams – is very accidental. Even as the adult person, only by chance did Alice get to know that as an extra-student she was entitled to take some days off in her work place.

C. Parents supplied a child with different forms of emotional, social and cultural capital⁶. The issues of emotional capital transferred to a child by his/her parents are broadly described by psychologists. For professionals and ordinary people it is obvious that the quality of emotional bonds between a baby and caretakers decides not only about the personality development but also about the whole future life of an individual. Good-enough significant others supply a child with emotional resources which are indispensable for creation of identity, sense of safety or subjectiveness. These resources influence the type and course of biographical processes. People who have experienced considerable amount of love and support in interactions with others in their childhood are able to plan their life constructively and consciously. Eve who was brought up and supported by her mother and aunt says: *I've been aiming successively at my goals, I finished my studies, first I finished my studies, then I learnt to drive, then I started to look for a job. Now I am truly satisfied, because I kept on aiming at the goal and I manage to do it.* The positive self-concept of this interviewee is evident, too: *I am such a person who, when making plans, I have my goals and I strain after it, slowly, a little bit of patience, and...* The good emotional capital enables setting the biographical action scheme in motion and blocking the trajectory potentials. The experience of the lack of love and interest in the relationship with others can cause an individual to keep on trying to fulfill his or her unsatisfied needs for the rest of her/his life instead of concentrating on own biographical choices. Such activities put the biography incumbent on the trajectory: *My father loved me very, very much. Mum was more/She always said this anyway (xx) that she didn’t like girls [she liked] boys. It hurt me very much ‘cause she repeated it so often. I thought that, and I that is why I tried to do perhaps to as she pleased... That she’d be so happy so that she praised me.* As a result, following her mother’s will Pola finished the vocational school and just after it married a man whom she did not love: *and just after the completion of the vocational school my happiness, as if, in a sense, finished. Once entered such just may be not yet very adult life (...). My mum (...) basically, she talked me into an early marriage, ‘cause ‘What will you do, you

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⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, well known French sociologist has written a lot about different forms of capital. He has differentiated the economic capital (property and economic resources), the cultural capital (knowledge, education, occupational skills and some other forms of cultural abilities), social capital (the network of social contacts) and symbolic capital (power and prestige).
don’t have a job, how will you make your living?’… So I married… a boy there from our village… Under my mum persuasion, I did not love him, but I married him. I was young and stupid… I did not think practically then yet about this is for the whole life, marriage… He may not have been a bad man, but….

In biographies of people who have experienced unemployment we can find the descriptions of relationships with individuals who can be called destructive or even devastating significant others. Their presence causes traumatic trajectories which cannot be fought down by a child or young person. Obviously, the scale of such destructive influences is differentiated. Partly, Pola’s mother, who brought up her daughter without love and refused to acknowledge her subjectiveness was such a devastating other. But narrative interviews can reveal much more devastating interactions. Margaret (now middle-aged)… met a number of destructive others in her childhood. Rejected by her biological father, was maltreated by the mother: she gave me a trashing when I didn’t want to eat (…) she couldn’t stand me crunching, so when I was crunching, I got spanking (…) I couldn’t make any noise because my mum is tired after having come back from the office. Once I started do defend myself.I started to be saucy – it was a tragedy – it came to strangling, pulling the hair out, tearing the ears. Margaret was abused sexually by her step-father: When my bosoms were growing my step-father got interested in me. It was sickening, he demanded more and more from me, when I had revolted my nose started to bleed. The step-father benefited a sadistic pleasure while observing the acts of violence: He had a great fun, my mum hold a brush for sweeping in her hand and she came to me and grabbed my hair and he was sitting, laughing and said: ‘Look how nice mummy and dotty are fighting, two fools’. It was an enormous joy for him’. Margaret could not rely on other intimate others; in a critical situation her grandparents did not support her. These experiences have influence the Margaret’s self-conception. She (like Pola) kept on trying to get mother’s love for example by bringing very good school marks, but the mother persisted in calling Margaret an idiot or an imbecile. Margaret considered herself as a person for nothing. The experiences of sexual abuse resulted in the auto-definition of a trollop: So if I am a trollop, if I am bad, dirty (…), I hated myself, [I was afraid] that is go out, the worst dirt (…). Everything in me was so dirty. Margaret overcame the trajectory with the help of institutionalized others – the teachers from the secondary school. Nevertheless she still has the trouble with ambivalent self-esteem, she defines herself as a person with bad inheritance – and in spite of her successful family life – she still has problems in interactions with her husband and children: I can tell my children such things that, when I am listening myself I hate myself for it (…). I tyrannize my daughter mostly – because she resembles me very much”.
Individuals brought up by destructive others can take up attempts to overcome negative experiences only when they are adult and independent, when they are at some turning points or during psychotherapy. Adult Pola says: I am more rebellious now and don’t permit her at the moment. Simply what have to tell her to saying what hurts me, I tell her what hurts me. But to her, she receives this as insult. I feel that she receives as insult if I do differently than she wants. Very extensive excerpts of Margaret’s interview treat about interactions with her mother and show the trajectory potential which appear in difficult situations.

In the adult phase of an individual’s life we can also meet other intimate destructive others – spouses, parents in low, etc. Yet, adults are able to take up efforts to close the trajectories which have been initiated in the interactions with such people – by ending the relationships or gaining emotional independence.

Biographical interviews reveal to us if the relationship with a destructive other has already come to the end or has been done over. Eve, for example, peacefully talks about her unsuccessful marriage and characterizes her partner in such a way that the reader gets an impression that this story has become a “closed chapter” of her life. When the relationship is still “opened” we can recognize the techniques used by the interviewee in order to cope with the traumatic experiences. In reply to the question in the third phase of the interview Pola “invalidates” him: I didn’t remember him as a child (…) I don’t even know who he was ((longer pause)) I was not really interested in him ((laughter)). In such case we have to do with the rejected significant other.

The patrons also hand dawn the cultural capital to their children. The cultural resources decide about the vocational career of an individual. On the basis of a narrative interview we can say that the parent’s role is crucial for vocational choices, however the scale and essence of these influences depend on external factors such as spatial access to educational institutions, material status, personality traits – like values and convictions of the parents and the features of the parent – child relationship (the degree of mutual dependence of the range of parental authority). Lack of parents educational ambitions together with low income, and inaccessibility to educational network result in low level of education and in an inadequate matching of vocation to individual predispositions. Pola, induced by a friend, took up education in agricultural school which had nothing to do with her inclinations: I was interested in something else”, because “the parents generally didn’t put a stress on this learning too much (…), so there in the country one had to travel from school, just there to this vocational school there was a bus, it was free and elsewhere to school I’d have to pay… to everything has connected so one say with money. Elisabeth gave up to her father’s pressure ain the final year of primary school: Well, as for the choice... In the year / finished primary school (…) it was a first
year of vocational school… a vocational school for the future … office workers, not necessarily economists but secretaries (…). Anyway, my dad (mockingly), ‘What would you do after school?’, and at those times people didn’t earn much in the office’, ‘You should rather go to that textile school, all Łódź, all Zgierz, is textile industry, you wouldn’t have problems with getting a job’ ((a smack)), so I thought perhaps he was right and I went to that school.

The effects of such disastrous educational decisions are obvious. The obligation to learn in a detested school causes the sense of a waste of time, discourages the child from learning, often obstructs further educational career and becomes a trajectorial experience. I didn’t like it, I mean it is not that I didn’t like it ((emphasis)) well /as /I enrolled /attended this school. But didn’t like it. I am afraid of machines but my dad wanted me to go to that school so I did (lower)) but / (Elisabeth). From the perspective of an adult person the decision of taking up such an educational path is evaluated negatively: Today I wouldn’t take this agricultural school but a profession that would … interest me (Pola). Sometimes an interviewee declares directly that the fact of choosing the unwanted school strongly influences the present life and contributing to the appearance of the unemployment trajectory: My girl friends from school who completed that vocational (preparing for the office work) school still work, well, one is a school secretary, another works somewhere else as a secretary, they had different life stories says Elizabeth contrasting her ongoing experiences with the lives of her working friends. Obviously, it happens that in spite of ill educational choices the biography incumbent is successful and satisfied with his or her learnt disliked job in the future life.

We can compare the biographies described above with the life stories of people whose parents aimed at investing in the child’s education. In this case, parental attitudes to the child’s interests and abilities are differentiated. Sometimes the parents are very ambitious about the child’s career but they do not take into account the child’s talents:

I: Then I went to the economic secondary school, it it was my parents’ suggestion, because – in case – I will have a job (…) I have very good memories, everything went fine, then I say, the studies in the High School of Humanities and Economy (…) I was glad too (…). Now from the perspective of time I know one thing – that for let’s say 15 year old person this is a very difficult thing to plan her own life (…).

I: But why the economic profile?

R: It was trendy. There were a lot of further possibilities to management or economic studies. That was why.

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7 The office workers’ salaries in the socialist countries were much lower than the salaries of industrial workers.
I: Were you interested in maths in primary school? More than in other subjects?

R: No, rather in humanities. I say I am still dreaming about studying pedagogy.

The interviewee partly agrees with her parents’ reasons. She is even satisfied with her schools, but the present tense used in the last sentence suggests future educational projects.

Some parents aimed at developing the child’s own interests and supported his/her vocational choices: Childhood, I recall it really nicely aaaa... my very active life as... as a child. I always had a lot of duties, I was in the sport team, that is I practiced different sports, always active ((with pride)) And... and here I am glad because I have versatile interests too, so not only sport but also more thing – such as reading – this from childhood. Then I completed my studies. I gave birth to a child and I work too so I can enjoy my life (Eve). Taking vocational career into account, individuals whose parents have attitudes similar to Eve’s mother’s are in the best position.

D. Behaviour patterns transmitted by intimate significant others are very important for the individual future biography. When we analyze the vocational history of the interviewee, his or her parents and grandparents, we can observe the intergenerational transmission of behavioural occupational patterns. Not only are the behavioural patterns the transmitted, but also aspirations, values and attitudes related to them. For example, Pola’s parents who both completed six classes of primary school did not put much stress on their children’s education and they transmitted this attitude to their children. As a result, neither Pola nor her brothers reached an education level higher than basic vocational. Now all family members have similar trouble on the labour market, episodically depending on social benefits.

Margaret, despite her traumatic experiences with mother, got the same education as her. Elisabeth followed the vocational path of her father, she even worked in the same factory:

I: Tell me, in fact you worked for the whole life in that one factory. Why did you go to work there?

N: Because my dad worked there, too. Besides, just before the final exam ladies from the personnel department come to school and talked to us and (...), as people used to say, they were selling their factory (...) and I thought why not, there worked/ I knew a lot of people as my dad’s colleagues used to come over, I knew them all and so I thought if I went there things wouldn’t be so strange and new/and so I went there, what’s more, I went there and even the same, sol knew people there.

Young generation can also inherit the occupational philosophy and the motivations connected with the occupational sphere: My mum used to tell me to
mind the job, to make sure I always have a job, cause the man’s money, husband’s money is really hard to digest. And she was right. Even if you don’t have much money, but it is your own, you feel more secure, you feel more independent ... than when you wait for others to give you some or (silence). So I would love to work (quieter with regret) (Elisabeth).

Obviously, occupational patterns are not always inherited. Break in the transmission process can result from the individual biographical action scheme or from the cultural transformation. Alice wanted to be independent and to live differently than her parents and broke up with the traditional rural environment. In the background of this break-up are the migration processes from countryside to industrialized cities. Sometimes only one of the children overtakes the parental patterns. Maria, a daughter of a school caretaker, resigned from taking her secondary school final exams and – like her mother – took up hard work as an unqualified worker. But one of her two brothers is now a scientist at a university.

The importance of the transmitted patterns is also evident in the personal life of the interviewees. For example, the patterns of relationship between mother and father seen in childhood can empower an individual and give strength to break up the trajectory of a mistaken marriage. Pregnant Antoinette who was maltreated by her fiancée (from the very day of setting up the wedding date) decided to leave him: In my opinion it is better to live alone than to suffer in any relationship in which there are acts of violence generally, I was shocked – never in my life did my father hit my mother, so it was very abstract for me and I can’t imagine that my child would witness something like that.

E. The last issue connected with the significant intimate others refers to their role in everyday difficulties and turning points. Generally speaking, we can distinguish two kinds of attitudes in the interviews: the relatives either constructively support an individual or the interactions with them are the source of additional traumatic experiences. Good relations with intimate others help to survive difficult moments of unemployment: The most important my wife must be (...) she is a good woman, she has outlook on life, she is so sensitive (...). She’s got a good heart, when someone is hurt she would be the first who’d help ... Other women would be querulous, these, that. She knows that there is no job, she knows that I am looking for one. She understands it, that these aren’t… She knows that if I had [a job] I wouldn’t stay at home (Leon).

The role of intimate others is very important in supporting the jobless individual. They can motivate the unemployed who is defeated by a number of failures to be active: This is funny because (...) truly that was my mum who forced me to this meeting in the place where I work now. I said ‘No, what do you
want, this is nine o’clock in the morning and generally I’m not in the mood, I’m at a dead end’. And she says “Go, go to this meeting!’, ‘But I don’t have a proper dress’, ‘Go, you’ve got to go, maybe it’s just…’. And she encouraged me so that I went there without a proper dress and it must have been distinguishing. So I qualified to the next level (...) so such mobilization was good, such a kick was good for me (Eve). But a relative can also discourage a person: Mum was angry that I went to that course ‘You have been already and nothing’s come out of it, and nothing will come out of this one (Pola).

Biographical interviews show us that individuals deprived of intimate others’ ‘support’ have more difficulties in releasing themselves from the trajectories. We can notice that in the stories of women who were bound with devastating partners. Eve and Antoinette, supported by the relatives, were able to leave the wrong men quite quickly. This process took Alice more time, as she was lacked constructive interactions with others. Elisabeth – whose father did not help her when she decided to move out – still maintains her alcoholic ex-husband.

3.1.2. Peer Groups/Circles

Biographical analyses can also show the individual’s social network – significant others from outside the family appearing in different life phases as well as present friends and colleagues. We can see if a biography incumbent is rooted in his or her environment (people whom he or she meets and how often), or, on the contrary, if he or she isolates himself/herself from others (it is evident in biographies of poor social services clients, who are forced to limit their social contacts due to the lack of money). Such observations can become a very important element of a work plan with a client. For example, growing social isolation in the course of an individual’s life may be a sign of emotional problems (such as depression) – in such a case psychotherapeutic or even psychiatric intervention is needed. Non-related significant others also influence the interviewee’s educational and occupational career. As we remember, Pola chose the agricultural school not only because of the low costs of learning but also due to her friend’s pressure. We find such a pattern of making educational decisions in other interviews, too. Mary (following her friends) went to the mathematics class – although she did not have any predispositions toward the scientific subjects. She completed the secondary school without passing the final exams because she knew that she “wouldn’t cope for sure”. She had to take up manual job and she still feels ashamed of the lack of the secondary school certificate. The histories of Mary and Pola show that the fact of functioning in a peer group can be more important than making educational choices in consistence with one’s abilities and future occupational plans.
The informal circles are important for activities connected with looking for a job. Many of the interviewees share the experiences of finding a job with the help of friends, colleagues and relatives: To this factory, if my friend hadn’t helped me I wouldn’t have got into (Leon), first of all I have asked everybody for help (…) I asked friends that if they knew something, I was ready and a colleague who works as a dentist assistant [helped me] (Antoinette who work now at the same place). Polish interviewees prefer to profit from the help of more or less significant others than from the services of institutions like labour offices. Thus, the question arises – if this situation results from the weaknesses of institutions or is it connected with the traits of the Polish culture or both these factors are involved.

Let us pay attention to the fact, that co-workers – thanks to years of mutual interactions – can become friends and/or significant others of the individual, too. They acquire access to the person’s personal world and become the source of support in biographical crises.

3.2. Institutional Circles – School, Work, and Social Support Institutions

Throughout the whole life an individual meets others representing different social institutions. Three kinds of these institutions seem to be the most important for the people who have experienced unemployment. They are: schools, enterprises and organizations which offer services for the unemployed. Since one of the following chapters treats about frameworks and constraints in the functioning of social assistance institutions, in this chapter we will concentrate on the importance of school and institutional others from the educational and labour spheres for the individual’s identity and her/his educational and occupational career.

3.2.1. Teachers as Significant Others

The content of the interaction between the student and the teacher is crucial for the child’s educational career. In biographical interviews we come upon the examples of both obstructing and activating start educational potentials. The circumstances of mass education – large classes in large schools, changing teachers – just by definition disable the individualization of teaching programmes. The school often contributes to the deepening of educational deficiencies instead of equalization of educational chances of children coming from marginalized families. A pupil with school difficulties the victim of labelling processes in interactions with teachers and fellow-students, which
deepens his or her reluctance to the educational system. Pola mentions the following experiences: *Even, frankly speaking, I did better in Russian, than in Polish... I even remember still at primary school it happened that I got four [a good mark] in a test and the teacher told me that I’d cheated. This hurt me very much, as if simply was impossible for me to get four. If I had bad marks in other subject it was impossible that I get a better mark then (longer pause)*. Negative experiences from the school past still influence Pola’s biography: *To go to the school, maybe, they say, that is never too late, but I’ve never had such abilities for learning (...). I get stressed out very simply. For example as I was going to that baking course [organized by The Labour Office] all was okay during these lectures, at home everything got into my head too, but when it came to the exam, I was so jittery that I forgot half of the things (laughter), they helped us a bit and I passed somehow*. At present Pola considers the possibility of attending an extra-mural secondary school, yet she is afraid that she will not pass the final exams and that the money invested in education will be wasted. Thus, the interactions with teachers have influenced Pola’s self concept of a person incapable of learning and have blocked her educational prospects even in her adult life. But the interview with Alice shows us how the teacher’s positive reaction can activate the potential of an average pupil’s: *I at school always kept my head down (...). I was such a mediocrity. I never volunteered, no, no... When I had to do something I did it. But in the fifth grade we had declinations. And I learnt it. And she [the teacher says] ‘Alice – declination!’ And I forgot everything. Nothing, I didn’t know anything. (...) All my class was standing without knowing anything. [One of the girls – the teacher’s daughter at last recited the declination cases]. Everybody had to repeat after her but I decided to do my best. And I repeated it for her. Nobody did but I did. And she somehow than praised me for it. So, after she praised me, I kept putting my hand up (demonstrates this). All the time I felt more secure and already in the fifth grade I got a prize for good marks (...) and then I was promoted, I became the class leader, I was the chief editor of a school board newspaper, so I was so active then. I felt secure, self-confident*. We can find examples of very constructive teachers’ intervention also in the interview with Margaret who was maltreated by her family members. She was, in fact, emotionally adopted by her class’ tutor. The relationship with this teacher – who from the institutional other has turned into the intimate one – has helped Margaret to reconstruct the self-esteem and put the biographical action scheme into motion. The life story of this interviewee includes also an example of successful psychiatric intervention. Eight-year-old Margaret was sent to a psychiatric institution – a resting house for children – due to her aggressive behaviour toward children at school. In her case the stay in such an institution blocked the labelling processes: *Anyway, I was sent back from this centre with a diagnosis that the only thing I had were
pinworms otherwise I was a very calm child, with average intelligence but with an outstanding memory and sensitivity and the only thing I needed was family warmth. We can only speculate that a different diagnosis which would confirm Margaret’s status as a socially inadequate person with emotional problems and would have set off the trajectory of a chronic psychiatric patient which would have prevented that respondent from normal functioning in society.

### 3.2.2. Others From Work Places

The significance of others from (potential) work places appear in biographical interviews in three dimensions. First of all maintaining of a stable work post in early adulthood is the key factor for creating vocational – and not only vocational – identity of an individual formed in the interactions with co-workers: I had such a nice job (…) I was all the time with people (…), so they shaped my personality, oh yes, now I can say that more mature became more mature due to my men, I was so lucky to meet very nice people there. Maybe because they were men (thoughtfully), I don’t know, but in any case I think they brought me up, they shaped me, the views that I have till now, when I talked with other women sometimes it seems to me that I think a bit differently, a bit in a mannish way (laughter), well I worked with great people really says Elizabeth who after having completed the unwanted school got a post in the same factory in which her father was working (although we can suppose that in her case the job done for many years was the result of incident rather than the conscious choice.

Secondly, the interactions with potential employers are very important for the individual’s self-concept and self-esteem. Even reading daily press advertisements given by employers in which bloody young are needed can result in re-definition of the self-concept. Healthy, energetic 40-, 50-year-old people come to a conclusion that they are too old to work (Leon). The very fact of being dismissed from work can provoke doubts about one’s vocational identity: I say it was a shock for me, I felt bitterness (…) ’cause I think I was (…) a good worker after all, well I proved good at what I was doing. The string of unsuccessful job interviews undermines one’s image of one’s abilities and self-esteem. This is why Elisabeth uses the past tense when describing herself: I didn’t think that it would be so hard, frankly speaking, because I thought that I was quite an energetic person, such a good…, easy-going with people. So I thought that I would manage to find a new job quite quickly. Failures in looking for the job trials also result in the lowering of the level of individual aspirations: I do not have any demands (Maria).
Thirdly, the essence of interactions with actual employers is very important, too. High rates of unemployment, certain cultural aspects and the defective law lead to numerous abuses. Very often employers set up high demands for low-paid workers and change the rules or employment against the formal regulations. Quite rightly, therefore, employees treated in such a way have a strong feeling of injustice and exploitation. These assumptions, when confirmed in the string of interactions, may lead the unemployed to form the stereotypical view of others as greedy employers and themselves as passive victims.

4. Vocational Counselling and the Interplay between Personal Identity and Others

The analysis of the influences of significant others on individual’s identity formation seems to be very important for vocational counselling. First of all, the narrative interviews contain rich diagnostic data which can be useful for elaborating the scheme of work with the client. Thanks to such interviews the vocational counsellor can find out:

1. If the self-concept presented by the client is confirmed in his/her life story.
2. In what way the client lives his/her life, what failures the client has experienced in his/her educational and occupational careers and what were the reasons of these failures.
3. What structural biographic processes (action schemes, institutionalized schedules, trajectories or metamorphoses) occur in the present life of the client and what kind of support is thus needed.
4. What patterns of educational and occupational career exist/ed in the client’s family and what influence they have on the client’s occupational life.
5. What occupational activities/jobs are suitable for the client’s personality profile and his/her abilities.
6. What skills of the client should be developed so that he/she could obtain such a job.
7. What kind of support the client needs in the process of job-searching.

Information given by young interviewees in the narration interviews has the crucial meaning for a vocational counsellor: “On the one hand the choice of vocation helps in the process of creating one’s identity, on the other hand this process influences the occupational decisions”. There is thus a relationship between the individual identity and the vocational choices. The adequate self-
concept means that a person is able to recognize his/her skills, predispositions, talents, limitations and deficits. “The less the young person understands his or her own separateness, the more support from the vocational counsellor she/he needs” (B. Borucka, own materials). The vocational counsellor may help to correct educational choices and to overcome the stress experienced by a young person who enters a new social world.

The second issue concerns the occupational role of a vocational counsellor. The question arises if and to what extent a vocational counsellor should become a significant other to a client. Obviously, the creation of a mutual relationship depends on the personality profile and the problems of the client. The deep relationship between the client and the counsellor gives the latter one an opportunity to influence the client’s functioning but causes the danger of over-involvement. Thus, the counsellor’s activities should be carefully supervised and subject to team consultancy.

EXERCISES FOR THE STUDENTS:

1. Two groups of students will read two different autobiographies of famous people (actors, politicians, scientists, etc.) one group “the autobiography of success” and another one “the autobiography of defeat”. Each group prepares the presentation about significant others in the author’s life and about the other’s influences on the author’s identity and occupational career.

2. Students make the narrative interviews with unemployed persons. They prepare the rehabilitation programme for “the clients” taking into account “clients” occupational identity and their present significant others with their constructive and destructive influences.

References:


SHORT DESCRIPTION

This text deals with issues of the life course and the interrelationship between external, social conditions and the free will in forming identity, with special emphasis on the vocational aspects. The construction of mastery and autonomy is discussed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To know and understand some basic concepts in the discussion about social constraints, the free will and mastery.

2. To develop an understanding of the interplay between the social constraints in a person's life and the person's possibilities to shape his or her own life, with special emphasis on the vocational career.

3. To be able to identify the interplay between social constraints and free will in an autobiography.

1. Introduction

In human cultural tradition it has always been common to divide life into different stages and, based on the divisions, to divide people into different groups with different characteristics, and to have different expectations of people depending on which group they belong to. The life stages are constructed as part of the social order, but since they often coincide with biological changes in the individual, there may be an illusion that the life stages are part of the natural...
order, i.e. part of human natural development. What you can and should do at a certain age relates to age but is not a consequence of age (Tuomi 2001: 13).

Different metaphors have been used to describe the life course, for example, a circle, a bow or a line. Sometimes the life course has been described as a tree, a path or a river. Variations of the circle metaphor are a wheel and a van, and of the bow metaphor a bridge, an arch, a staircase, and a rainbow. From the 16th to the 19th century the life stages were often described as stairs rising on the left and descending on the right; in the bow metaphor the different life stages are not seen as equally important. From the 18th century on it has been common to think that society is continuously developing, and this analogy has been applied to the individual as well. Nowadays, the line metaphor is by far the strongest and the discussion is mainly about whether the line is continuously rising and hierarchical, or different for different individuals (Tuomi 2001: 13–16). Different philosophers have distinguished between three and twelve phases in the life course. The general way the life course is viewed may decide how people of different ages are treated in society; for example, old people may be considered less valuable than the young (Tuomi 2001: 18–34).

Lopata & Levy (2003: 4–5) have identified five central themes of the life course paradigm:

1) *The interplay of human lives and historical times that give rise to “cohort effects” in which social change differentiates the life patterns of successive groups of people born within a socially defined and bounded period of years.* Different generations can thus have very different life experiences.

2) *The social meaning of age, age-norms, and age-graded roles and events.* Different norms apply to people of a certain age at different periods of time.

3) *The timing, sequencing, and duration of life events including scheduling of multiple trajectories and their synchrony or asynchrony.* There are often expectations of what order certain life events should take place in. For example, you are usually expected to marry before having children. What is “the right age” for a life event is being discussed and may change. For instance, in western culture it is nowadays seldom seen as a catastrophe to have a child before getting married or without ever marrying at all.

4) *The linking and interdependence of lives.* Through social relationships our lives are linked to the lives of other people, for instance family, friends, neighbours, etc. A divorced couple may find that, through their children, their lives are interlinked long after they have divorced.

5) *The human agency in choice making.* We plan our lives within the limits of the social and the physical world. For instance, some university students may plan to continue studies after a bachelor degree, while others plan to enter working life. Differences in plans may come from personal preferences or they
may reflect differences in how the students view what is possible and available to them.

Life course theories are based on the assumption that people experience certain events, transitions and turning points in their life. Many of these transitions are set by the institutional system of society, which sets requirements of age for certain actions. There is a set age, or age expectations, for when you start school, get your driver's license, do your military service, vote, buy spirits, retire from work, etc. But in reality people's lives seldom turn out like the “ideal” life. Many unexpected events may happen during the life course (Lopata & Levy 2003: 5).

2. Social Constraints

Everybody is born into a social context of some kind; certain social conditions determine the life opportunities of that particular group of people to which the person belongs. In a class society these opportunities are very strictly regulated, but also in less class-divided societies there are different kinds of social constraints inside of which people shape their lives. Our life is affected by the family we grow up in, the schools we attend, the friends we have, the economy of our parents and later of our own economy, our own and our family's health status and so on. Moreover, many kinds of unexpected events occur during the life course, both positive and negative. Some of the negative events can be neutralized, some not. Some of the unexpected events pertain to health and childhood experiences. Health problems may cause a need for vocational rehabilitation, and childhood experiences may affect the choice of vocation. Two concepts, which can serve as examples of social constraints in a person's life, are ‘social determinants of health’ and ‘adverse childhood experiences’. These concepts will be described briefly.

The World Health Organisation describes social determinants of health (SDOH) in the following way: Even in the most affluent countries, people who are less well off have substantially shorter life expectancies and more illnesses than the rich. Not only are these differences in health an important social injustice, they have also drawn scientific attention to some of the most powerful determinants of health standards in modern societies. They have led in particular to a growing understanding of the remarkable sensitivity of health to the social environment and to what have become known as the social determinants of health (Social Determinants of Health... 2003: 5).
Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are experiences of long-term abuse and dysfunction in the home that a child may experience while growing up, and which may have a harmful impact in adult life. These experiences have been studied among others by a group of American researchers who define adverse childhood experiences in the following way: Growing up (prior to age 18) in a household with: recurrent physical abuse, recurrent emotional abuse, sexual abuse, an alcohol or drug abuser, an incarcerated household member, someone who is chronically depressed, suicidal, institutionalized or mentally ill, mother being treated violently, one or no biological parents, emotional or physical neglect (The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study 2003–2004). Many studies (e.g. Dube et al. 2003) suggest that childhood abuse can lead to negative health outcomes and health behaviour. Many, although not all, clients of social work have these kind of experiences, which may come up later in vocational rehabilitation.

3. Between Social Constraints and the Free Will

The relationship between the individual and society has been described in different ways depending on whether the focus is on the individual or on society. Thus there are different theories on the extent to which people can plan their own life, i.e. exercise their “free will”, and to what degree they are victims of the social conditions they were born into and grew up in (social determinism).

‘Identity’ is often seen as a sociological concept that refers to how the individual builds up a story about him- or herself, where social and cultural factors have a great impact. Johansson (2002) uses the psychological concept ‘self’ to stress the importance of a persons inner experiences while at the same time emphasizing that analyses of self can and should be contextualized in a certain social and cultural environment (Johansson 2002: 25–29). He identifies four dimensions of self: the private self, the split self, the disciplined self, and the extended self. Research on the “private self” focuses on the space of the individual to think and act freely in society. Researchers disagree on how large this space is, and whether the space for autonomy is growing or diminishing in society today. Another interesting question is how the private and the public sphere intertwine. The self was earlier seen as given and as being threatened by the surrounding environment. Nowadays the private and the public spheres are seen as intertwining and as forming each other. We talk about the reflexive individual in the postmodern society. In the constant flow of information people seek tools that can help them better understand themselves and the society they live in. People pick frames for understanding and perspectives wherever they
can, anywhere from mass media to scientific knowledge. Not everybody is able to understand and use all this information. The well-educated and well-off have more opportunities and can use them to strengthen their own positions (ibid: 42–48). The second dimension of self, the ‘split self’, has to do with the discussion about ontological insecurity, a true and a false self, the pathology of society etc (ibid: 73). The ‘disciplined self’ again refers to the discussion about the individual being disciplined into a cultural being and the questioning of the idea of individuals as unique and acting subjects (ibid: 87). Finally, the ‘extended self’ refers to the changes of individuals and society which make it possible for a person to be in (virtual) contact with the whole world without having to go out of the house. The borders between self and the rest of the world dissolve (ibid: 91). According to Johansson self should be studied at four levels: in relation to the structural changes in society (e.g. industrialization, postmodernization, information society), in relation to the positional changes in people's economic and material conditions (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity), in relation to the concrete social and cultural contexts people live in (personal networks, material circumstances, power relations), and in relation to the informal 'institutions' of everyday life (family, friendship, colleagues, work, media) (ibid: 106–107).

Work is still very important in our culture. A lot of identity work is done in the work sphere and at some point it may be difficult to separate paid work from the rest of everyday life (Johansson 2002: 153). Working life has changed a lot, but there is a difference between normative changes and real changes. A flexible, free and constructive way of relating to work is highly valued in society of today, but this is not possible for everyone (Johansson 2002: 156). Working life may be seen both as itself a social constraint and as the result of social constraints earlier in life.

A problem for social scientists in the study of sociological phenomena has been how to take into account both objective life conditions and subjective will and personal experience. In his theoretical construction of the habitus theory the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1980: 43) has tried to reconcile the differences between objectivism and subjectivism. A person’s habitus is abstractly defined as the system of internalised dispositions which link together social structures with practical activity (Brubaker 1985: 758). Habitus is a system of dispositions, which makes it possible for people to act, think and orient themselves in the social world (Broady 1990: 228). Habitus is formed by the social conditions in which the individual grows up, i.e. the individual is from earliest childhood imprinted by his or her social environment, in particular the family and the way in which social constraints manifest themselves in the life of the family. The dispositions are adapted to certain social conditions, the same that prevailed when the dispositions were produced, and therefore they are also adapted to the possibilities and impossibilities, the freedoms and necessities that
these conditions contain. This means that habitus gives people a certain freedom to act and to take a certain outlook, a kind of conditioned freedom where certain acts, thoughts and aspirations are perceived as impossible from the very start. But within a given spectre the individual has the possibility to think, perceive and act. By this Bourdieu wants to say that people’s behaviour is neither the result of a totally free will nor a mechanical reproduction of the original conditions in a deterministic sense (Bourdieu 1980: 90–92).

Bourdieu sees habitus as the explaining link between social conditions and the behaviour of individuals. He uses the terms “embodied” or “incorporated” instead of “internalised” in order to show that habitus is not a question of directly transferring norms from society to the individual but that the dispositions have been engraved in people’s bodies by the social experiences they have had (Broady 1990: 231–232). The idea of embodiment can also be found in recent discussions on the embodiment of social class (see e.g. Krieger 2001 and Rose 2006).

Habitus is thus the product of an individuals’ whole biographical experience. Therefore there are as many different habituses as there are individuals (Bourdieu 1985: 82). The theory of habitus can help us understand why people do not necessarily act in a way that helps them to a better life or why changes happen so slowly. People do act out of an ‘interest’, but this interest is not always intentional and rational. Habitus is not unable to change, but the change is slow. In fact, habitus is constantly changing, but when habitus is unable to adapt quickly enough to changes in the environment, intentionality and rationality come into function (Bourdieu 1988: 43–44). Habitus may help us understand why a person’s vocational career has developed in a certain way. The discussion about habitus can be viewed in relation to the new concept of ‘biographical work’, which is defined in E.Sundman, J.Björkenheim’s.

4. Life Course and Vocational Career

Participating in working life and having a vocational career is important to most people, although it may not be the only important content of a person’s life project. The working age in Finland is generally considered to be 15–64 years, but today this is no longer the case. At 15 years of age no more than 10% of the age group is working, at 20 only 40% and at 25 about 70%. Not until after 35 years of age does the proportion of the employed rise to more than 80% of the age group (according to statistics from 1999 of the Ministry of labour and the Ministry of social affairs and health). Compared to many other Western countries the actual retirement age is low, which is a general concern particularly
with regards to the economy and maintaining the welfare society. When the large age groups retire, there will be a shortage of labour while, at the same time, the expected life span is increasing (Ilmarinen 2001: 173; 188). Steps to raise the age of retirement have being taken.

Young people get into the labour market later than before, because education lasts longer and because many young people are not able to find a job. Long-term unemployment has many negative consequences for the physical, mental and social health of a young person. Health behaviour in turn affects working capacity and employment opportunities. A strong sense of mastery in young age has been found to correlate with experienced good health, healthy living habits, low stress levels and a good economy and education as an adult. Working capacity has a great impact on a person’s life course. It is determined by health and functioning, education and know-how, values and attitudes as well as by motivation and work satisfaction. Both working capacity and work done will change during a persons’ vocational career. Adapting working capacity and work to each other is an ongoing process (Ilmarinen 2001: 173–174).

The health of employees generally changes during their vocational career. Health problems occur even among younger employees. More than 25% of people in Finland aged 25–34 have a chronic illness or a handicap. In the age group of 45–54 the figure is about 50% and in the age group of 55–64 about 70%. More important than the morbidity of different age groups is how individual experiences of illness affect working capacity. About 40–50% of the chronically ill say their illness has a negative effect on their working capacity. The discussion about how work could be better adapted to employees' health is very weak in Finland: compared to other countries in the EU working life is very hard. In Finland, Austria and Germany almost one third of men over 45 feel that chronic illness has a negative effect on their working capacity. In Sweden and Denmark the figure is only 10% (Ilmarinen 2001: 180–182).

Entering working life is one of the biggest changes in a person’s life, even if this nowadays seldom happens just once and permanently. The young person gains greater autonomy and there is a new life rhythm. Learning the job, getting new skills and cooperating in the world of adults, demands time and perseverance. It is estimated to take several years for a young person to become integrated and a full-bodied member of a workplace. Learning new things and succeeding in the job enhances self-confidence, disappointments and mistakes enhance self-knowledge. Research shows that there will be a great demand for young people in the labour market in the future. Young people in Finland are found to be strongly work-oriented and the content of the work is more important for them than the salary and relationships in the workplace. The future good position of the young in the labour market will make it easier for them to
change between employments, but expectations on them will also grow. This may mean new opportunities but also considerable demands, which may be hard to manage. Young people cannot always judge their own strengths, but psychophysiological limits pertain to them, too. The youngest ‘burn-out’ cases in Finland have been 28 years old, and the process has sometimes taken only six months (Ilmarinen 2001: 175–176).

When young people enter working life, their living habits and health behaviour change considerably. There may not be time for exercise, and physical condition may deteriorate quickly. Another big change, often occurring at the beginning of the vocational career, has to do with establishing a relationship and forming a family. The position in the labour market at this point is often still rather insecure. Just like older age groups, young employees, too, need greater flexibility in their work, although for different reasons (Ilmarinen 2001: 176–178).

Even for those who are what one would call ‘integrated’ into the labour market, working life is hardly calm and stable. Employments today are often linked to projects or in temporary, part-time or distance jobs, etc., which makes the vocational career more fragmented. Work tasks are also changing, becoming more demanding and diversified with growing demands for efficiency and quality. Demands on organisations have also changed, and these changes affect the performance of employees. Values have changed: the new type of organisation stresses the resources of the individual, life skills, good mental health and working capacity as well as good communication skills. New production methods, new techniques and new work contents may offer interesting challenges, but on the other hand badly organized work and weak leadership may affect the health and the working capacity of employees. Uncertainty of employment and quick changes in working life may make employees feel a pressure to continuously improve their professional skills. Life-long learning has become not just a challenge but also a necessity (Ilmarinen 2001: 178–180).

One factor which improves with age is mental maturity. Many cognitive skills improve, such as strategic thinking, smartness, caution, wisdom, reflective and arguing skills, ability to grasp complex systems, and mastering a multifaceted language. Older employees may also be strongly motivated for further studies, if they view them as useful for their work. Employees over 45 have been found to be absent from work less often than younger employees. Younger employees are less often absent because of sickness but more often for other reasons (e.g. sick children). Other factors that may favour older employees are a longer working experience and a better control of their daily life. In spite of this, after 45 years of age there is a polarisation of the labour force into those
whose working capacity is weak and those whose working capacity is good. Older employees need more individual solutions in their work (Ilmarinen 2001: 182–185).

In leadership education there is now a growing understanding of life course issues. Employees of different ages and in different phases of life need different types of management in order to be able to use their working capacity in an optimal way. Leaders in general need more knowledge about aging and about supervising aging employees (Ilmarinen 2001: 185).

The need for vocational rehabilitation may become a fact for even larger groups of people as retirement age rises and the changes in working life become even more rapid.

**Exercises**

1. Read an autobiography or a biographical novel, or watch a film or a play telling about a person's life (fictive or real). Try to identify the interplay between social constraints and moments when the main character is exercising or trying to exercise his or her “free will”.

2. Think of your own life: What made you choose to become a social worker (or your present vocation)? Was it your own choice? Did you have other options?


4. Draw a picture of your life (e.g. a life line) putting in the social context and ‘constraints’ during different periods.

**References**


Biography, Narrative, and Rehabilitation

SHORT DESCRIPTION
This module deals with theoretical frameworks of biography and a narrative approach to rehabilitation. It introduces some basic concepts and makes the connection to vocational rehabilitation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1. To understand some of the basic concepts in the discussion about biographies and narratives.
2. To understand the importance of confirming and working with clients’ biographies and biographical narratives in vocational rehabilitation.
3. To be able to identify “biographical work” and possible “trajectories of suffering” in a biography.

1. Introduction

1.1. The History of Narratives

Narratives are thought to be a very old cultural tool in human history. Storytelling was probably used as early as prehistoric times for sharing important information in hunter-gathering communities. The stories helped people to survive in practical life and were also used for transmitting, forming and strengthening the morale of the community, necessary for survival. Stories were useful in imagining possible courses of events, necessary when making plans for the future, and presumably, listening to stories helped in acquiring skills to
gauge the intentions and frames of mind of other human beings. Stories probably had an “entertaining” and uniting function in the communities as well (Hänninen 2000:37–38).

In the cultural history of narratives there is first a period of oral narratives and then a period of written narratives. In the oral culture stories were stored in the story-tellers’ minds, and narratives were often presented in a singing, poetic form. The story-teller was seldom the producer of the story, he/she only functioned as an intermediary. Later, with the literate culture, stories could be written down and the story-tellers could create new stories themselves. Written stories could also be interpreted, analysed and assessed in different ways. Stories are told through acting in theatre, as films, and on television, too. The difference between truth and fiction here becomes vague: the characters of a TV serial seem real whereas a real war can be watched as a TV program (Hänninen 2000: 39).

The recipient’s relation to narratives has become a more private matter compared to when, in the oral culture, listening to stories was a social event. As regards the content of stories, three historical lines can be seen: a shift from picturing people’s acts and activities to describing awareness, thoughts and feelings; a shift from presenting stories with one “truth” to telling stories in a dialectic way presenting several different perspectives, and a shift from presenting stories with one plot to presenting stories with several main themes or even completely abandoning the conventions of story-telling (Hänninen 2000: 40).

The biographical literature has created a mediating category between the fictive story and real life. A biography tells about the life of the writer from his or her subjective perspective. Although biographies have been written since classical antiquity, “Confessions” by Father Augustine, who lived in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., is regarded as the pioneer work of modern biographies. From the 17th century on, writing biographies became more common, and now biographies are written not only by well-known and prominent persons but also by “ordinary” people, especially people with dramatic life experiences. (Hänninen 2000: 40–41).

The significance of stories as mediators of morals has changed. Children used to be brought up with models and warning examples in stories with a moral. Modern children’s literature attempts to break, rather than to strengthen traditional moral conceptions. Also in stories for adults reflection on moral questions has become more common. The moral of today’s stories often is that there is no one set moral (Hänninen 2000: 41).

The place of narratives in culture has changed. In pre-modern societies narratives were a tool for making the world understandable and meaningful. In
modern society, the goal being to find the “truth” to serve rationality, narratives were not seen as so important, even though modern culture itself is grounded in a narrative, i.e. the myth of progress. Today in postmodern society, the view is that events can be interpreted in different ways, and that different stories can be told about the same event (Hänninen 2000: 41).

1.2. Narrative Research

The core of narrative research is the analysis of stories. Narrative research has spread during the last decades from research of literature, sociolinguistics, history, and philosophy to other sciences, such as the social sciences and psychology. Narrative research does not have one unified and clearly defined theoretical-methodological structure but is rather an open net of discussion with the term ‘narrative’ in common (Hänninen 2000: 16–19).

The study of autobiographies started out with reading them as accounts of the lived life. During the last decades researchers’ interest in biographies has focused not only on the contents, i.e. “what really happened”, but also on the way in which the story is told. For example, Schütze (see Riemann 2003) found that systematic study of how a story was told could help in better understanding what really happened, i.e. the experiences of the narrator and the social processes in which he or she had been involved.

The data in narrative research usually consists of stories told in interviews or in writing. Oral interviews, i.e. extempore narratives, are usually very different from written stories in that they have not been constructed in advance (Riemann 2003).

2. Biography and Narratives – Theoretical Frameworks

2.1. “The Narrative Flow”

In order to clarify the concept of ‘narrative’ Vilma Hänninen proposes a model she calls “the theory of narrative flow” (figure 1), which distinguishes between the different dimensions of narrative and shows how they relate to each other (Hänninen 2000: 106–109).
‘The inner narrative’ is defined as “a mental process by which people make sense of their lives and their situation”. It presumes that a person lives his or her life as if it were a story, in which he/she is the main character. The inner narrative can, but does not have to, be made explicit in told narratives. The inner narrative operates on three levels, i.e. as original, reflective and metareflective narrative. The original, unreflected narrative is working, when a person’s life projects proceed without major changes. The reflective narrative is the narrative a person tells himself or herself e.g. when trying to make sense of a problem situation. And the metareflective narrative refers to the conscious reflecting on the inner narrative, knowing that it is a narrative (Hänninen 2000: 19–22).

The ‘lived narrative’ (drama) in this theory is the activity whereby a person tries to realize his or her narrative projects formed in the inner narrative. The term ‘lived narrative’ is used instead of ‘life itself’ to emphasize that people’s actions, decisions, and intentions are guided by the narratives they live by. The lived narrative is subject to social constraints and also unfolds as an interplay with the lived narratives of other people. The narrative flow is thus shaped by and shapes the cultural and socio-material conditions. The consequences of the lived narrative will change the inner narrative (Hänninen 2000: 20–22).

The ‘told narrative’, finally, is the story a person chooses to tell others about himself or herself. The form and content of a told narrative may vary in different contexts. It is in itself a social act, which can have social effects. There is a socio-cultural stock of stories from which the inner narrative can draw its models and where the told narrative is included. The theory of narrative flow describes the process whereby a person relates at the same time to the socio-material reality and to the discursive reality (Hänninen 2000: 20–22).
2.2. Narratives and Culture, Class, and Gender

The way people narrate their life stories is not the same all over the world. It differs depending on culture, class, gender, etc. The construction of an individual self is seen as typical for Western culture, where an autobiography is supposed to reveal the psychological depths of the individual narrator. In other cultures it may be seen as quite irrelevant to narrate a story where the individual self is at the centre of the story. The story may rather be about the role the narrator has in the tribe, and the appreciation this gives him (Johansson 2005: 229–231). Even within Western culture ways of narrating differ between groups. For instance the oral narrating tradition of the working class differs from the written narrating of the bourgeoisie (Johansson 2005: 239).

Anni Vilkko, who has studied mainly written autobiographies of Finnish women, points out that there is no life story without a gender, and the narrated gender connects cultural and personal issues and ideas in the narrative of the self. The recipient of the story is an embodied reader or listener, the other, who in interpreting the narrative uses elements that refer to lived gender, cultural gender and the gendered reader’s/listener’s perception of the narrative (Järviluoma et al 2003: 46).

In the autobiographies of Finnish women Vilkko identified three types of metaphors for life, one of which describes the activity of bringing shape and order to disparate and confusing elements (threads in a fabric, a cloth on the loom, a rag rug, a patchwork quilt, a jigsaw puzzle). The activities and products connected to this type of metaphor are traditionally typical of women and can be seen as producing a gender-specific autobiographical language (Järviluoma et al 2003: 51).

Feminist writers argue that the norms for writing autobiographies established through the autobiographies of men like Augustine, Montaigne, Rousseau, Goethe, and Darwin tend to marginalize women as writers of their lives. The female self in autobiography has been described as “self-effacing, oriented to private life, sensitive to others’ needs, relational and subjective, anecdotal and fragmentary in composition”, whereas male self-narratives are read as “self-centred, self-assured and independent, linearly organized, and oriented towards public life, and socially notable personal achievements” (Järviluoma et al 2003: 54).

Just like autobiographies in general, women’s autobiographies were first read as accounts of the life lived. Normative events, life transitions and social relations were found to be important in women’s lives. Men and women were seen to interpret the world differently and thus living in separate life worlds. Women’s world was seen to be that of the private and personal, whereas men’s
world had to do with acting and achieving in public domains. Women’s self-narratives were found to be fragmentary, incoherent and non-linear compared to men’s coherent and linear self-narratives. Women’s different way of narrating was thought to stem from their subordinate social status and from defining themselves through addressing the needs of others. Even women who had achieved a high position in society often narrated their lives as passive objects and in relation to someone else’s life events, often their husband’s or their father’s, rather than as active subjects (Järviluoma et al 2003: 55–56). In the mid80s many feminist researchers thought that there was a difference between men’s and women’s self-representations disregarding locality. Others thought that underlying social practices which produce differences in gender identities should not be ignored. Narrative research was promoted by the idea of self-narratives functioning as emancipatory, giving a voice to the silenced, including women, and communicating their experience of life (Ibid: 60).

At some point, researchers realized that language is not just a tool for telling about real life events. While telling others about our life we are constructing our identity. With the move into the postmodern era and the conception of an identity that consists of many different, disconnected identities the view on how self-representations should be done also changed. It became accepted for men as well as for women to tell their stories in a fragmented incoherent way. In fact, it was seen as impossible to create a coherent life story through autobiographical reflection. It was also acknowledged that women from different ethnic groups and sexual minorities do not necessarily tell their stories in the same way (Järviluoma et al 2003: 61–62).

Life histories are no longer seen as just documentaries of ‘real’ life but also as a constructive act of reflection, where factors as culture, class, gender, etc. are always present. What Vilkko says about gender could be said about culture and class, too: There is no life story without culture, class or gender.

2.3. Biographical Trajectories

In a biography it is possible to distinguish certain structural processes. There are the institutional expectation patterns/careers of the life course, the metamorphoses of the biographical identity, (e.g. the flourishing creativity of an artist), and the biographical action schemes (the plans a person makes for his or her future) (Riemann & Schütze 1991: 348).

The concept of ‘trajectory’ has been used to discuss suffering and disorderly social processes, although the word in general speech tends to be more neutral signifying an event such as the course a ball takes when it is thrown. The
concept of ‘trajectory’ was used by Glaser and Strauss (1968; see Riemann & Schütze 1991) in their research on the course of serious illness and dying to provide a theoretical framework for discussing the relationship between the course of an illness and the work the sick person and those around him/her do to “manage” that illness. The concept takes into account the constant dynamics between inner and outer aspects of a person’s situation. Riemann and Schütze broadened the concept in order to find out whether it could be used in a more general sense, for instance by professionals who work with persons in complicated life situations, e.g. social workers.

They developed the concept of ‘trajectory of suffering’ and defined it as “the conceptually generalized natural history of disorder and suffering in social processes”. This concept is viewed as a promising tool for professionals in seeing and understanding the trajectory potential and the destruction it may lead to (Riemann & Schütze 1991: 333–334, 336, 352).

According to Riemann and Schütze processes of severe suffering can and should be analyzed as biographical phenomena, i.e. as phenomena that affect for example, work and interaction in a context of socio-biographical changes in the life course and life situations of a person and his or her family. Severe suffering touches the personal identity of those personally involved in the trajectory, and changes of identity affect the interaction, communication and work processes. The biographical processes consist of a person's life history experiences, which are produced, or at least interpreted and stored, in social interaction. A person's identity changes during the life course and so does his or her relationship to the present, to personal history and to the future. The change in a person's relationship to him/herself takes place through biographical work, i.e. work of recalling, interpreting, and redefining, which is done in communication with other people, especially with significant others. Biographical processes, which by definition have to do with changes of personal identity, are more difficult to study than social processes, because many aspects consist of ‘inner events’, which are not easily accessible to empirical observation. However, they can be studied through oral and written autobiographical narratives (Riemann & Schütze 1991: 338–339).

The order of a person's everyday life is upheld by institutional expectation patterns (the normative principle) and by biographical action schemes (the intentional principle).

Trajectory processes are seen as processes that disturb the social order, and they can have detrimental effects on a person's life. Riemann and Schütze have described the cumulative disorder of a biographical trajectory as consisting of six chronological stages:
1. **Build-up of trajectory potential.** A trajectory may sometimes start suddenly, for example through an accident, but usually it starts slowly, e.g. a chronic illness. Strong outer forces gradually build up a so-called trajectory potential in a person’s life situation, as when dark clouds start to gather in the sky before a thunderstorm. The person notices that something fatal may be happening and either prepares to fight or tries to actively “forget” the hidden signs of trajectory. The person’s own actions and reactions can add to the trajectory potential, for instance, the person goes ahead with his or her plans, which in that situation will only make things worse.

2. **Crossing the border from an intentional to a conditional state of mind.** The person realizes that he or she is now driven by outer forces and that the usual action strategies are of no use. Every day the person has to take into account that outer forces may overthrow his/her plans, as when a person with a serious illness receiving an invitation has to answer: “If I am well enough on Friday, I will come.”

3. **Precarious new balance of everyday life.** After the person has overcome the first shock of not being able to make plans as usual, there is a new, although unstable, balance in his/her everyday life. However, the constant work of trying to balance what he/she can and should do and what he/she cannot do is very exhausting. Actions to diminish the trajectory potential are therefore not always adequate. Strauss et al talked of the ‘cumulative mess’, meaning that the process is aggravated by attempts to solve some of the problems whilst at the same time worsening others. Different sets of problems can have a worsening effect on each other.

4. **Breakdown of self-orientation.** As new events occur and the person makes more irrational attempts to stop things from becoming worse (like drinking excessively), the situation is getting even more critical.

5. **Attempts of theoretically coming to terms with the trajectory.** Being at a total loss is a shock. The person knows that something terrible has come into his/her life but does not understand what it is and how it came there. He/she realizes that the situation cannot be handled with the usual resources and that the life situation needs to be completely redefined. The person’s new definition of the situation aims at describing the suffering, how it works and the reasons for it, at tackling the question of dealing with an unjust fate, accepting or rejecting the trajectory, and at fighting the impact of the trajectory on the life course.

6. **Practical working on the trajectory or escaping from it.** Depending on how the person has defined the new life situation he/she starts to act systematically to either control or escape from the trajectory. Three types of action schemes are possible in handling the trajectory:
• To flee the present life situation, which usually does not help, because the person is still defining himself through the trajectory.
• To reorganise the life situation in such a way that it will be possible to live with the trajectory. This may mean that new biographical action schemes are possible, and that processes of so-called creative metamorphosis get started, i.e. completely new resources for self-realization emerge.
• To work systematically on eliminating the trajectory potential, if possible. This is done by reorganizing the life situation completely and by doing biographical work. (Riemann & Schütze 1991: 339, 348–352).

Connecting to the discussion on habitus in the Björkenheim, Karvinen-Niinikoski’s module we can say that at the start of the trajectory the person’s acts are determined by habitus, which may produce inadequate behaviour. As the process goes on, the person is at best able to act more rationally. In this process of biographical work social workers and other professional caretakers can have an important role in helping the person to reorganize his/her life situation either living with the trajectory or planning for a life where the trajectory can be avoided.

3. Narratives and Rehabilitation

3.1. Life Course and Working Life

As mentioned earlier (in the module by Björkenheim, Karvinen-Niinikoski), age is an important factor in making plans for the future: At what age will I do what? Institutional schedules for the life course refer to the societal expectations as to which life events should occur at what age (although what age is ‘suitable’ for what event may vary from culture to culture and over time). There are certain age-norms related to activities such as taking your driver’s license, finishing school, getting married, having children, having your finances in order, having grand-children, etc. If, for some reason, the expected life events do not occur when they are “due”, or occur when they “should not”, this is considered more or less deviant from the normal pattern.

Such institutional schedules also apply to working life. In Western society people are ‘supposed’ to have finished their studies and have a profession at a certain age, have made a career at a certain age and retire from work by a certain age. Adults are generally expected to do work of some kind, at home taking care of their small children or as self-employed or employed by someone else. Most women nowadays want to have a vocational career of some sort, even
if they take care of their children at home for a period of time. The time spent at work (or thinking of work matters) makes up quite a large part of peoples lives, and so the future vocational career is something many young people think about a lot.

During the life course many life events take place. Often the sequence of events is seen as important and there may be several different so-called socio-biographical processes going on at the same time. These may sometimes collide and compete, for example the vocational career may be difficult to combine with family life, or processes with different groups of people and friends may collide with the process of getting a profession.

3.2. A definition of Rehabilitation

Mastering your life is one of the most important values in our culture. People try in different ways to gain control over their life or parts of it. Even death is something people try to control. It has become more common to explain human activity by the goals and initiatives of the individual rather than by the outer conditions of the person’s life situation. Nowadays, for instance, we think that it is not possible to gain control over an illness without your own will and efforts, even if rehabilitation and other experts may have an important role in the process. Mastery can be seen as a resource essential to reach the goals of rehabilitation interventions. It may also, however, be seen as a goal in itself, where the individual’s self-confidence and possibilities for self-realization are seen as a central aspect of being human (Järvikoski 1994: 98–99).

Rehabilitation as activity has changed with the changes in society. After World War II it was important to rehabilitate disabled war veterans into the labour force to rebuild society (Järvikoski 1994: 130). Restoring working capacity is still important in rehabilitation, but now there are other important aspects as well. The goal of rehabilitation may be to improve functioning in general and to enhance social integration (Järvikoski & Härkäpää 1995: 15–20).

Järvikoski & Härkäpää (1995: 21) have defined the concept of rehabilitation as supporting mastery of daily life in the following way:

“Rehabilitation is a planned and multisectorial activity which

• has as its general goal to help rehabilitees carry out their own life projects and maintain mastery in situations where their possibilities to manage and to be integrated into social life are threatened or weakened due to illness or for other reasons,
• is based on a plan made by the rehabilitee and the rehabilitation worker in collaboration and is subject to continuous process evaluation also performed jointly by the two parties,

• consists of interventions aimed at increasing the individual's resources, functioning and mastery, as well as interventions aiming to improve the conditions for better functioning in the society where the person lives, and

• can be based on work with individuals as well as with groups and can make use of social networks in the community”.

When a person's working capacity for one reason or other has changed so much that it is difficult or impossible for him or her to continue in the same work as before or to perform the same tasks as before, the rehabilitation work needed to help this person carry out his or her life project may have to consider the person’s life history and biography. How can this be done in a meaningful and successful way?

### 3.3. The Narrative Approach in Rehabilitation

Narratives have been used to gain a better understanding of people’s experiences of their illness and their life situation. They have also been used in rehabilitation. From a narrative perspective people try to make sense of their own life by seeing it as an intelligible narrative with a “plot”, looking back, looking at the present, and into the future. Events, experiences, thoughts, and feelings during the life course are linked together by the meaning the person gives to them. A life story (narrative) is thus the person’s own interpretation of his/her life. In principle, it is possible to interpret a situation in different ways. Certain events and episodes, seen as particularly significant, are selected for the life story while others are forgotten or put aside. A person may, for example, remember only the injustices and failures in his/her past and see only threats in the future (i.e. life is interpreted as a tragedy). The story, both the interpretations of the past and the projects for the future, is transformed over time and with changes in the life situation. When a person starts to reflect on his/her story and realises that the interpretation of previous life events can be changed, this may liberate him/her to seek a new perspective for life (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 3–4).

In a narrative perspective rehabilitation can be viewed in part as the work of supporting the rehabilitees’ efforts to create narratives that are meaningful to them, and to help them realize these narratives. An important task in planning and developing rehabilitation services is reflecting on the presumptions and model narratives established in the rehabilitation workers’ own ways of acting
and talking. Is there room for alternative narratives or are the experiences of the rehabilitees pushed into one form? (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 10–11).

In narrative rehabilitation the language is important: is the focus on problems and deficiencies or on the goals and the strengths of the client? The paradox is that in applying for rehabilitation services the person (at least in Finland) has to prove a deficiency or a deviance, which is a negative starting point for rehabilitation. At the same time the client is required to concentrate on his/her resources and strengths, which are the positive basis for rehabilitation (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 11–12).

In rehabilitation it is nowadays stressed that the rehabilitee should be the subject and not the object. In narrative terms this means that the rehabilitation should strengthen the person’s experience of being the main character in his/her own life including their rehabilitation. This may not always be easy, especially if the client has accepted a passive sick role. The role of the subject in rehabilitation should be strengthened by bringing the rehabilitee into the planning work of the team (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 12).

The traditional task of rehabilitation to improve functioning can, in a narrative perspective, be understood as helping people to realize their own stories. This means improving the functions that are necessary for realizing the goals of the particular client.

Someone may want to write a book, another to take care of his or her grandchild, or to be politically active. These different goals imply different needs for improved functioning. The personal goals meet social reality. The possibilities of realizing social roles may, as a consequence of the illness or handicap, be diminished. In that case the challenge for rehabilitation may be to raise new types of narrative projects, and to make them possible and valued. The new narratives will have to be accepted and respected by the rehabilitee as well as by persons or communities significant to him/her. According to Hänninen and Valkonen, it is not necessary to encourage the rehabilitee to create a logical and coherent story with clear goals, often it is better to support him/her to accept a story that is complex and open, and to encourage him/her to enter a world of more vague, inexplicable, and irrational stories. One central dimension of narrative rehabilitative work could be to set aside the individual model stories and get closer to more general and basic meta-stories instead (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 12–15).

Research shows that it is essential for people in rehabilitation to hear the stories of other people with similar experiences and to tell others about their own experiences. This is a way for people to see that they are not alone with their problems and that others have the same kind of experiences. Hearing other people’s stories can give support and strengthen a person’s own identity. In
a group of rehabilitees a normative model story may be created, which strengthens the solidarity between group members. Alcoholics Anonymous is a good example of this. However, a person whose experiences do not fit with the model story may feel excluded from the group. It is therefore important that the group will allow different stories to be told. Hearing stories that are different from your own may be useful in that it opens up new perspectives (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 13–14).

3.4. Diversifying the Socio-Cultural Stock of Narratives

The cultural stock of narratives offers people in a society a shared frame for understanding life experiences and events. Model stories about illness offer interpretations for example about the responsibility for illness and rehabilitation and about the direction rehabilitation should take. Model stories can be labelling and oppressive, or they can be encouraging and supporting. However, one or two formulas can never capture the complexity of real experiences. In a study of laymen’s model stories about myocardial infarction (which they themselves had not had), five story types were found: the most common one was about health behaviour and the most important value of rehabilitation was to promote a healthy way of living. The metaphor of the second story type was a fight, where illness was seen as a threat towards a dignified life, and rehabilitation was seen as bringing the person back to a life of dignity. The third story type held a metaphor of emancipation: illness was seen as a consequence of the demands of society, and rehabilitation meant liberation from the demands. The fourth metaphor described the illness and the rehabilitation as the decree of fate, and the fifth one described both the illness and the rehabilitation as just due to coincidence. These cultural stories may limit the ways in which a person with myocardial infarction understands his/her situation. In order to be able to live a story that is different from the common ones, the rehabilitee needs to gain understanding and social confirmation from others. It is not easy to carry out an optimistic story, if everybody around you regards your illness as an unavoidable tragedy. It is not easy to accept your illness, if your social environment demands you to fight it actively. And it is easier to accept your sadness and rage, if there are other kinds of stories available than those about how sick people bear their illness with calm dignity. Narrative rehabilitation, i.e. the creating, forming, telling and realizing of life stories, would be much easier, if different kinds of narratives were presented in public. Besides helping other people suffering from illnesses, stories of people’s own experiences of illness and rehabilitation can point at new existential dimensions (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 16–17).
Narrative rehabilitation means not only that former rehabilitees can tell other people their life stories in a new way, but that they themselves may interpret their lives in the light of a new narrative. In the end, rehabilitation is a question of getting the opportunity to live a meaningful life and to realize your own life goals in real life. The limits of the stories of real life are set not only by imagination, but also by very complex social, cultural and physical structures. In the case of an illness or handicap these limitations can be extremely narrow. In order for people to have a choice and be able to realize not just one type of life story, there needs to be more equal access to work, education, leisure, and other fields of everyday life. Rehabilitation workers cannot renounce the responsibility for the work of creating these kinds of opportunities. In a narrative perspective, rehabilitation has often worked with the goal to return the rehabilitee back to a “normal” life, to a certain type of “good life story”. Hänninen and Valkonen ask whether a task for rehabilitation should not instead be to work for a more differentiated supply of life stories? (Hänninen & Valkonen 1998: 17).

Exercises for Students
1. What institutional patterns can you see in your own culture?
2. What types of “model narratives” for a person being ill with cancer can you think of?

References


Institutional Frameworks and Constraints for Occupational Counselling in Work Rehabilitation. Between the Office and the Counselling Service

SHORT DESCRIPTION
This module presents institutional frameworks and constraints in vocational counsellors’ professional activities. The authors describe macrosocial, local, and institutional conditionings of occupational counselling considering the example of counselling profession in Poland.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
1. Familiarizing students with the conditionings of functioning of counselling institutions as well as constraints and organizational barriers in this type of organizations.
2. Showing the influence of existing constraints and institutional barriers on the functioning of occupational counsellors.
3. Inspiring reflection on the possibilities of introducing changes facilitating the functioning of occupational counsellors in institutional conditions.

The functioning of every modern society is based on the mechanisms of institutionalization. Also human biographies are subject to institutionalization. The task of educational institutions is equipping the man in life competences. Taming the ontology of life, supporting individuals in taking life decisions and appeasement of their various after-effects are the responsibilities of therapeutic and counselling institutions. They both have a common reference point. It is the pattern of biography or pattern of life course. It is the most general sign-post that society holds out for the man.

M. Malewski (2003)
1. Introduction

Assistance institutions of public and non-governmental sector, including occupational counselling institutions differ quite significantly from other formal institutions, primarily manufacturing enterprises. Assistance institutions are not profit-oriented; their aim is to make certain individual, environmental or social changes. They are in a sense value-oriented organizations (Hudson 1997: 10–11). The range and quality of actions carried out by an institution depend, to a large extent, on the non-financial motivation of workers, their orientation at helping others and self-fulfilment. Occupational counsellors, like social workers, doctors, guardians or teachers are considered to be a professional group which “works with people”. This notion – originating from the language of practical psychology – concerns the profession which aims at formation and “processing” of human attitudes and characters. The actions undertaken professionally depend not only on professional and life knowledge of a professional but also on his or her interpersonal skills, personal features and attitudes (Golczyńska-Grondas 2001: 149).

The present chapter takes up the problem of institutional frameworks and limitations of occupational counselling; we do not deal in it with the aforementioned essential matters of occupational counsellors’ personal skills, but we focus on the analysis of barriers existing at different levels of social world and on the consequences of these barriers for counselling work.

The results of the study on judgment of institutional barriers and constraints in counselling work conducted among the occupational counsellors employed in labour offices and psychological counselling clinics provide the empirical basis for the analyses. In group and open-ended interviews with a set list of questions there participated twenty-three occupational counsellors: sociologists, psychologists and pedagogues.

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1 Obviously organisations of the third sector, unlike other public institutions, are to a much smaller degree exposed to various kinds of political pressures, however they often struggle with the problem of economic instability, staff fluctuation, etc.

2 The study was conducted in November 2004. The participants were occupational consultants from psychological and pedagogic counselling clinics and poviat labour offices located in Łódź, the second most populated (app. 750 thousand) Polish city, located 120 km to the South-West off Warsaw.
2. Two Types of Institutions

The departure point in a discussion on institutional conditionings and constraints in occupational counselling were the two different “ideal types” of state institutions: The Office for Unemployed and the Centre of Psychological Assistance. The model versions of these institutions differ in structure, organizational culture, philosophy of work and forms of services provided.

The Office for Unemployed is a bureaucratic organization, based – similarly to industrial factories – on mechanistic philosophy, oriented at processing definite products (documents and individuals). This philosophy is visible in the very appearance of the office which consists of numerous rooms with a number of people working in them, rooms equipped with standard, nondescript pieces of furniture, with instructions and notices covering the walls. The office is expected to work in a routine-like, unfailing and foreseeable way. The work organization of the office is based on stiff professional hierarchy whereas superiors – most often chosen by the authorities supervising the organization – fulfil first of all administrative and controlling functions. Workers are evaluated on the basis of quantitative criteria – statistics illustrating the quantity and content of services provided. Organizations of this type are attributed negative features such as lack of elasticity in adaptation to changes in surroundings, thoughtlessness and ruthlessness of bureaucracy, dehumanization of work at lower levels, lack of possibility of personal development of workers and their resulting inertia as well as lack of ambitions, dependence on external experts in case of problems. It is underlined simultaneously that this type of organization acts effectively when tasks are simple, external surroundings are stable, the same products are produced and workers are submissive (Morgan 1997: 11–12, 20). Occupational counsellors are among many workers of the office. They are obliged first of all to following formal procedures, which makes their role clerical (and this is not in the conditions of Weberian bureaucracy, unfortunately).

Assistance centre’s organization refers to the systemic and humanistic psychology concepts (work is treated as a source of such values and features as self-fulfilment, respect, autonomy, identity and security) as bases for action (Morgan 1997: 46). The concept of work is elastic and takes into account the changeability of external surroundings. Rooms are adapted to the requirements of individualized work with the client, aesthetical needs are taken into account, as well as workers' individualities. Assistance centre acts according to the rules of democratically functioning team. Positions (if they exist) serve coordination of work; individual workers have a considerable range of liberty in their work. The formal head of the team is a professional in the field of services provided by the centre. Except for managerial functions he or she performs regular
professional work on a part-time basis. Basic problems that may appear in this type of organization have interpersonal and personal character, realization of tasks may be influenced by a net of informal connections among workers – friendships and antagonisms appearing in conditions of democratically existing team.

It can be assumed in the Polish conditions that the functioning the Labour Offices is approximate to the ideal type of office, while psychological and pedagogical counselling clinics are approximate to the ideal type of assistance centre. Though clear differences in the work of both kinds of institutions exist, first of all in the age and expectations of clients, and also partly due to the range of services provided, the workers’ statements reveal how institutional conditions influence the process of counselling.

3. Institutions versus Environment

3.1. Macrosocial Conditionings of Occupational Counselling

The discussion on institutional frameworks and constraints in the practice of occupational counselling should be preceded by the analysis of a wider social, cultural and economic context of functioning of organizations dealing with occupational counselling.

From the most general point of view the frameworks of activity of professionals working with people are marked by the incredibly dynamic civilization transformations occurring for several decades. The notions of globalisation, reflective modernisation, postmodernism, postmodernity, the society of risk, uncertainty and discontinuity reflect the range, dynamics and psychological meaning of these changes. Authors such as Bauman, Beck, Castells and Giddens write about the consequences of transformation for the course of individuals' biographies – the break-up of traditional forms of social

3 Psychological and pedagogical counselling clinics, subject to the Ministry of Education, serve children and youth, while specialist occupational counselling clinics, of which there are only 5 in Poland, focus on services in the field of educational and occupational counselling. Other counselling clinics provide different forms of psychological and pedagogical help. Labour Offices are subject to the Ministry of Economy and Labour. They deal with registration and services for the unemployed. In both labour offices and counselling clinics occupational counsellors are employed. There are certain similarities in the forms of counsellors’ work in both kinds of institutions, e.g. conducting individual consultations for clients and organising workshops for groups of young people (labour offices also organize workshops for groups of adults).
bonds and replacing them with secondary institutions and authorities, individualization of biography, the necessity of its planning and difficulties in this field, about atomization of society, pluralism, division of human communities into rich “tourists” and marginalised “tramps”, their loneliness and uncertainty experienced by both of them day by day.

As regards labour markets, they are subject to dynamic transformations the most important of which – from the perspective of processes of occupational counselling – seem to be transformations in three spheres:

1. **Transformation of the word “work”**

   In industrial society this word meant first of all realization of a stable occupational career starting at the moment of completion of school education and ending in retirement. At present work undergoes flexibilisation and decentralisation, “new forms of changing, pluralistic, part-time employment” (Beck, Polish edition, 2002: 195–196) emerge, which means multi-task activity, part-time work, with less social protection.

2. **Transformation of the labour market from the point of view of the structure of labour supply and demand**

   The shift from employment in the sphere of production to employment in the sphere of services occurred and inequality between labour supply and demand grew. European societies nowadays struggle with subsequent waves of unemployment. The European Union programme documents such as the European Employment Strategy, the basic pillars of which are: employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunity, discuss the fundamental meaning of employment for the functioning of both the state and the members of social life. One of the important, though unreal as it seems, aims of the strategy is achievement of 70-per-cent employment in the year 2010 in the EU member states. Let us however notice that unemployment is produced to a large extent by the progressing processes of modernization and globalisation whereas the fall in employment is equivalent with the growth of competitiveness on the labour market, which means that an individual has to face higher and higher requirements set by employers.

3. **Civilisation acceleration marks the appearing of many new, earlier unknown occupations**.

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4 Some prognoses assume that 20% of economically active population is enough to maintain and support the rest of society, therefore 80% may remain without work (Wojtasik 2003: 29).

5 Obviously, these transformations have a different meaning for different generations. For a part of people brought up in industrial societies losing stability of employment and the necessity to change qualifications are the causes of a serious existential crisis. However, as studies conducted in Great Britain show young Englishmen do not dream about a stable occupational
The social and occupational structure of societies undergoes changes and these transformations are accompanied (or should be accompanied) by the reforms of the educational system.

One of the more important phenomena is formation of the European labour market as a result of integration processes and the growth of spatial motility of EU citizens. It is not only the choice of an occupation and a place of work but also skills of adaptation to changes relating to migration to a different country that are essential to function on this market. Counselling institutions should therefore help not only with the choice of an occupation and a place of work but they should also prepare their clients to important life changes and shape skills indispensable to function in a foreign culture.

The discussed matters have a great meaning for the practice of occupational counselling as one of the fundamental problems becomes the question about the professional role of the counsellor in conditions of a rapidly changing reality. First of all, the aims of counselling undergo change. In many countries, e.g. in Poland, until the end of the 1980s, the aim of occupational counselling was first of all help for youth in selecting schools of higher level and occupation.

However, in industrial Western European societies the activities of occupational counsellors were oriented at adults who, due to deficit of competences, had difficulties with fulfilling professional roles, while the role of a counsellor in this case was diagnosing deficits and indicating ways of reducing them (Malewski 2003: 19). Using the services of an occupational counsellor should nowadays be a process while counselling should “accompany man throughout the whole course of occupational (‘life’) development” (Wojtasik 2003: 24). One of the aims of counselling becomes helping the client in economically post-productive age in managing his or her own biography or helping in improving his or her skills of adaptation to functioning on the labour market in the period of liquid postmodernity.

Some of the authors underlining that the demand for counselling in postmodern societies will be systematically growing, pay attention to duality in clients’ expectations in the range of counselling services. Some of the clients seek experts offering ready-made, effective solutions while others need a counsellor to be an empathic therapist, ready to give answers to existential questions, help in overcoming fears and even accompany the client trying to survive in a world devoid of meaning (Giddens, after Malewski 2003: 19; career, instead they are aware of the necessity to change jobs and qualifications throughout their life and they do desire this diversity (after Wojtasik, 2003: 24–25).

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6 Which can be proved by the fact that almost all authors of texts contained in the volume published after the World Occupational Counseling Congress in 2002 refer just to the above mentioned authors – Beck, Bauman, Giddens.
Malewski 2003: 21; Wojtasik 2003: 26). According to Mieczysław Malewski, providing biographic counselling for the clients struggling with their own lives, showing “the traps behind the market identity patterns”, empathic accompanying the clients as well as showing them “emotional solidarity” are possible (Malewski 2003: 19).

The above mentioned macrosocial factors influence the change definition and function of personal counselling and the role of counsellor. The matter of assistance institutions’ functioning in conditions of fast and radical civilization changes becomes essential. The question of adaptive abilities of these institutions seems essential too, beginning with the matter of infrastructure, technology (e.g. purchase of suitable equipment, updating of applied diagnostic tools) and finishing with capacity of adapting the quantity and “quality” of staff (increasing employment, training) to the requirements of reality. Workers of counselling institutions have to face the necessity of introducing changes in procedures applied so far. As far as dealing with the client is concerned, in traditional counselling in industrial society it was extremely probable that the use of procedure A in will cause effect B, in the present, dynamic societies the use of procedure A can result in many different effects: B, C, D or E.

3.2. State System and National Culture as Frameworks of Counselling Institutions

The frameworks of occupational counsellors’ activities are also marked by political system of a country. Solutions proposed by particular governments differ depending on political views of ruling elites. For example, anti-etatists opt for withdrawing the majority of social transfers, introducing a linear tax and establishing private pension funds, while the spokesmen for the welfare state want to provide citizens with the maximum range of social services. The followers of the so-called third way believe that it is possible to maintain the majority of achievements of the social state with simultaneous strengthening of the market mechanisms, improvement of effectiveness of market mechanisms and of the economic system (Gabrysiak 2003: 5). Except the general concept of the role of the state in helping the deprived [endangered with exclusion and excluded from the labour market], it is important to locate the issue of unemployment and unemployment prevention in the structure of priorities of social policy, placing the responsibility for solving the problem of unemployment on various sectors of civil society, the state⁷ and particular legal

⁷ One of the group interview participants – psychological and pedagogical clinic counsellor – pointed out that the role of educational institutions in unemployment prevention is underestimated.
The economic situation of the state is also not without meaning, especially its stability and development tendencies which guarantee the possibility of devoting definite material means to realization of occupational counselling tasks. In the European countries funding occupational counselling is diverse, both in relation to the scale as well as the structure of transfers to this aim. It should be clearly stated that the large part of solutions proposed in the social sphere do not have an obligatory character, but are a kind of guidelines or directives for particular states.

Cultural factors also have meaning for the course of counselling processes. According to A. Kargulowa, high material status allows satisfying basic needs and contributes to the development of the cultural society. This development may mean growth of social life participants' reflexivity, strengthening tendency to perceive own problems and growth of tolerance for individual choices. An individual in such conditions experiences personal freedom aims at understanding the self, at personal development, which causes that he or she feels the need of contact and support of professional counsellors. The above factors contribute to the development of institutionalized life counselling (Kargulowa 2004: 51). Also the work ethos in a definite cultural system and attitude to work, not only of the clients themselves but the counsellors too, have an essential meaning for the course of counselling processes.

3.3. Local Environment

In the process of occupational counselling decisions and solutions characteristic for lower levels of the state and society organization also have a great meaning. Counselling institutions act in a specific geographical and cultural space, on a specific labour market, with specific material supplies, network of schools and other institutions and are administered by particular local

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8 The concept in Poland is such that counseling is a type of ideology, it is to be associated with unemployment while schools are to teach. This education is in turn in my opinion underestimated. In comparison to other countries [in which actions for unemployment prevention are started as early as in the nursery school] it is a strategic mistake of state management (group interview no 2).

9 There is legal chaos in this field in Poland. Permanent changes in legal acts and executive regulations in counsellors' opinions obstruct work and limit clients' chances of employment. E.g. as a result of the recent changes in the regulations on employing the handicapped, employers stopped forming new workplaces for this group of people.

9 We can consider here the very value of occupational work in a given culture, the issue of the needs which are to be fulfilled by work and values which are ascribed to it. For example we can read about the interplay between religion, economic system and occupational activity in classical Max Weber's works.
authorities realizing the social policy tasks in different ways. Counsellors’ work should thus allow for specific local conditions, which in constitute the environment for the realisation of individual life goals in the field of education as well as define the profile of local work positions. In spite of intensifying processes of social mobility people mainly orient themselves in their decisions at the closest socio – economical environment. The counsellor should therefore have information about the directions of local and regional development (the capacities of local labour market) as well as know the educational system including changes expected in this field.

In occupational counselling organisation the lack of financial means in the budget of regions, communes or towns is a very serious problem. Economic shortages may hamper introducing and realisation of assistance programmes, prevent creation of new workplaces for counsellors, they also mean worse material work conditions (the problems of work conditions of occupational counsellors are the object of analysis in the further part of the chapter).

3.4. Occupational Counselling Institutions in Assistance System

Various institutions which deal with occupational counselling together with other assistance agencies should create an effectively functioning system on a given area. Among the counselling institutions for people entering the labour market and the unemployed, beside former, rooted in traditional counselling organizations, today there also function new structures dealing with occupational counselling. There are among them agencies providing psychological help and providing services for the unemployed in the range of job searching as well as institutions of occupational pre-orientation (such as the Polish counselling clinics) and institutions for adults entering the labour market or falling out of it.

Ideally, various institutions of the system of occupational counselling should accompany the client throughout the whole course of his/her life, at least from that level of education at which decisions about the choice of occupational education are taken until retirement. Clients should have full access to information about the system. Institutions making up the system should co-operate closely with one another. Co-operation of institutions within the system

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10 Studies conducted in Poland show that counsellors are overburdened with work. At present there are over 7000 unemployed per one counsellor and in Łódź the number goes up to 11 000. Labour offices fund a semi-solution to his problem – employing as counsellors young university graduates as part of the public works programme. These people have a feeling that their work is temporary, in some office they are even related as second-class employees who are not worth to be invested in – e.g. they are not qualified to take part in trainings.
means that communication between workers of different organisations as well as between professionals and clients is facilitated, while assistance services are fully accessible. Institutional co-operation improves the efficiency of actions undertaken in particular agencies of the system, extends the possibilities of development of each of them as well as the possibilities of professional development of their employees, and rationalises the distribution of material and human resources existing within the system.

The lack of a well functioning system contributes to occurring of many negative phenomena. In an individual perspective it means that the matter of professional pre-orientation appears in people’s biographies too late or – even worse – the choice of an occupation and the course of professional career are not the objects of a conscious reflection at all. Integration of practitioners – such as school educator, occupational counsellor, social worker, judicial guardian – could introduce chaos in the client's life since each of the professionals mentioned may have his or her own concept of work and certain expectations toward the client and at the same time may know the client's biography and life situation only fragmentarily. In an institutional perspective, the lack of a system means difficulty in access to information. E.g. lack of knowledge of services provided by particular agencies may create excessive expectations towards clients and cause duplication of actions. A good example may be a situation revealed by the Polish studies. Counselling workshops for school youth are organised in Poland by labour offices, psychological counselling clinics and counselling centres for teachers. The lack of a system may also lead to the isolation of particular institutions, start tendencies to compete, which contributes to blocking of counsellors' professional learning11.

Researchers with a positivist orientation point to the significance of the system in the practice of occupational counselling and think that extending of the counselling system understood as a network of institutions, associations and people co-operating with one another is an ideal solution to “treat” disorders in relationships between an individual and family, individual and the system of work as well as between an individual and the environment (Ries, Kargulowa, Szajek, after Kargulowa 2004: 73–74). Let us add that counselling may be treated as a subsystem of many wider systems: system of education, economic system, system of social help and healthcare system (ibid: 74).

11 An example of such a barrier can be the break-up of an informal self-educating group existing in Łódź until recently, which was focused around the methodology counsellor, whose members – occupational counselors from psychological and pedagogic counseling clinics taught one another new methods. The group ceased to exist when the methodology counsellor changed the job and his follower was not interested in continuing this type of activity.
4. Limitations Within an Institution

Institutionalised occupational counselling means that the place of natural, though slightly chaotic, processes of providing support to people in need are replaced by actions of organised counselling assistance. Institutionalisation means work planning, assigning certain professional actions to relevant professionals, division of functions among people remaining in formalised relations, introducing the timetable of clients’ sessions, formalising diagnostic procedures, procedures of assistance and reporting to particular professionals and reporting on actions realised in a given institution. A counselling institution is thus, on the one hand, a structured organisation having a relevant material equipment, and on the other hand, it may appear as a dynamic changeable form whose frameworks are indicated by mutual interactions between clients and personnel (Kargulowa 2004: 51, Siarkiewicz 2001: 75–76).

Researchers of counselling activity sometimes use in their analyses’ a scheme portraying three basic dimensions of activity in the range of counselling: (1) aims (e.g. correcting, prevention, facilitating development), (2) object of intervention (individual, natural group, organised group, institutions or communities), (3) methods of intervention (direct influence – media, consultations and training, personal influence) (Gladding after Kargulowa 2004: 27). In the present study the object of analysis are the following features and factors indicating the frameworks of an institution’s activity: aims, institution’s offer, including relevant methods, tools and procedures, personnel, technical conditions of work, access to information and finally clients’ expectations. The empirical examples illustrating the above issues are the opinions of occupational counsellors working in psychological counselling clinics and labour offices who participated in group interviews.

4.1. Aims of the Institution

Generally, the aim of counselling, not only occupational one is helping the clients in solving their problems through encouraging their reflexivity over their own life, teaching perception of changes occurring in their surroundings as well as making clients sensitive to consequences of these changes (Kargulowa 2004: 153). Each institution has a set of aims contained in official documents (in the forms of statutes), which include not only the legal aims contained in relevant legal acts or guidelines of supervising bodies but also the specific character of a given institution’s functioning (environment in which it operates, its clients’ problems, possibilities of personnel, etc.).
The analysis of official documents which regulate the activities of the two types of institutions under discussion (in the case of the assistance centre – the statute of psychological clinic and in the case of the labour office – the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions Act) discloses some differences. The assistance centre has a clearly defined fundamental aim, that is providing psychological and pedagogical help to the youth, parents, guardians and teachers in the sphere of:

1) solving adolescence period problems;
2) choosing a path and form of professional career;
3) prevention (including addictions), as well as
4) supporting family in the sphere of its educational function.

To so defined aims, only one of which refers to occupational counselling, specific tasks are assigned.

In the Act on Employment Promotion, the aims of labour offices activities are not specified, the readers being referred to the National Action Plan. In the Act 17 tasks are listed including e.g. registration of unemployed, helping unemployed in searching for a job, granting unemployment benefits, leading analyses regarding the labour market and unemployment, activities for activation of unemployed, co-operation of institutions in the range of promotion of employment as well fundraising for activation of local labour market (the Act on Employment Promotion, 2004: art. 9).

The content and range of aims, their operationalisation, employees’ knowledge of aims and the degree of their identification with those aims have a significant meaning for the functioning of every institution, including occupational counselling agencies. For example, during interviews, occupational counsellors from labour offices did not refer directly to the valid acts or regulations but they stated that their work was to help unemployed in obtaining employment, to indicate ways in which this aim could be obtained as well as to reduce the unemployed person's deficits (if there are such).

It is possible to analyse the aims of counselling institutions from the perspective of an individual or from a wider perspective. These institutions are also to serve a larger community or even the whole society. A. Kargulowa, referring to Z. Bauman’s discussion, shows that the aims of occupational counselling clinics are selecting / adjusting people to jobs and positions as well as supporting their active participation in social life. Therefore, counselling is a form of institutionalized activity strengthening social order through placing individuals in controlled conditions, subjecting them to planned and organized pressures, which is to serve larger predictability of their behaviours. Counselling may not only be a kind of professional and/or noble activity but it can also be
Institutional Frameworks and Constraints for Occupational...

a means of concealed repressions\textsuperscript{12} and manipulation while the occupational counsellor himself / herself may become an official indirectly ensuring social order (Kargulowa 2004: 78, 158, 162). Occupational counselling institution through the activities of its workers who do not necessarily have to be aware of the above mentioned manipulative aims, implements its covert programme. A covert programme can also be connected to a different set of aims relating to providing workplaces to the staff of an institution (e.g. considerable decreasing of the number of unemployed does not lie in the interests of labour offices’ workers because the reduction of the number of clients means the necessity to reduce workplaces).

4.2. Institution’s Offer – Methods, Procedures, and Work Tools

In occupational counselling the verbal method involving direct contact with clients is considered to be the fundamental one (Kargulowa 2004: 45). This contact may have an individual character. Counsellors in assistance centres and labour offices provide occupational information to clients on the character of a job, school, enterprise, potential employers, conduct individual projects, the aim of which is to plan and give instruction, quite often of psychological character. Psychologists – counsellors and other specialists also formulate opinions regarding inappropriateness to performing a given job. One of the respondents evaluated the range of counsels given in a following way: (…) there is a huge variety of individual situations from a simple question – what exams are there at a given faculty and “thank you” to philosophical questions about the meaning of life (group interview no 1, counsellor from a counselling clinic).

In case of work with an individual client the boundaries between counselling and psychotherapy may fade away. Such a situation concerns first of all counsellors with psychological education, in conditions of inefficiency of other assistance institutions\textsuperscript{13}, to which a person needing therapy could be directed.: I am a psychologist (…) though I don’t hold a position of a psychologist in the office, cause there is no such position (…), but when a person with psychological

\textsuperscript{12} Representatives of emancipation-critical direction of research on counselling distinguish three kinds of violence characteristic for his field: 1/ „diagnostic imperialism” (according to I. Illich’s term – Kargulowa 2004: 78), i.e. instrumental treatment of clients in test studies to estimate social value of the client; 2/ creating a catalogue of requirements relating to performing various occupations, especially those which are highly ranked in society; 3/ imposing the norms and definitions in the field of developing human resources by a small group of specialists onto society (Kargulowa 2004: 78).

\textsuperscript{13} E.g. poor, unemployed client, who urgently needs psychological help must wait three moths for an appointment to a specialist.
problems comes (...), I have to take care of this (...) so these roles are mixed up, psychologist – occupational counsellor in my case this boundary is blurred (group interview no. 2, labour office counsellor).

In the work with an individual client occupational counsellors use various types of tests. The reasons for using tests to determine clients’ preference and predispositions being obviously justified, but some researchers criticize tendencies of some professionals to overuse test methods. A. Kargulowa writes: „At present, the counsellor reaches out for computer calculations, statistic data, and modern technology to increase people’s trust for himself / herself. All these efforts mentioned apparently seem to prove counsellors’ keeping up with modern times and civilisation changes. However, very often they testify to (...) professional helplessness, superficial treatment of phenomena, (...) lack of trust of a counsellor for himself/herself and fear that the position guaranteed by directive, dialogue or even liberal counselling is threatened” (Kargulowa 2004: 154). Quite contrary to critical opinions of some researchers, Polish occupational counsellors point to difficulties resulting from a limited access to modern diagnostic methods. They claim unanimously that the majority of accessible test tools were created in the USA and Western Europe which causes problems related to the lack of means for extending a license and purchase of updated tests, problems with their adaptation to Polish conditions and rapidly changing conditions on the labour market. As an example the problem of adaptation of Holland’s test to newly emerged jobs was mentioned. Procedures used in an organisation are also very important. They should be regular and constant to an extent which would allow efficient professional activity and at the same time flexible to allow for exceptionality of each client and possibilities of work individualisation. There obviously exist organisations, where the matter of procedures is marginal and workers have very large freedom of acting. Organisational chaos can be a negative effect of such situation. In other institutions procedures happen to be highly bureaucratised, which is most often related to impersonal, uninvolved attitude to customers.

Occupational counsellors use different methods of team work. The clients of workshops conducted by them are mostly pupils and secondary schools graduates, teachers, unemployed and people entering the labour market. Work Clubs are a specific form of team work – these are 3-week classes for unemployed people over 27 years old.

A method which more and more often appears in advisory work is called “mass work” (Kargulowa 2004: 45). It relies on informative and educational actions, targeted at clients though media such as television, press, or the Internet. The Polish Internet pages contain a full set of information relating to the assistance offer of labour offices for unemployed. One of the studied assistance
centres also uses the Internet – its workers keep e-mail correspondence with the clients. This kind of work is treated as a form of preliminary contact or the form of work with handicapped people who have difficulties with moving around.

The analysis of statements of occupational counsellors participating in group interviews and individual interviews show that although occupational counselling is only one of the aims of the assistance centre, counselling in this organization more often has a thorough, individualised character while actions undertaken by counsellors in labour offices whose tasks refer to helping the unemployed more often have informative and formal character.

4.3. Personnel

Another factor determining the frames of institution’s activity is personnel, its size and competences. Team interviews reveal that both the assistance centres and labour offices have personnel shortages. Psychological counselling makes up only a (small) part of psychological counselling clinics’ duties while counsellors in labour offices are in turn burdened with a large number of clients, which to a great extent prevents them from providing thorough counselling. Personnel shortages cause – except for other difficulties – dilemmas relating to the priority of tasks: Counsellor’s work is clerical work too (…). [If] clients queue outside the door, training opinions to be done and you have such a dilemma now, if I want to provide counsel to someone I must fill in a registration card for counselling services, if I have 15 of these registration cards to fill in than I begin to think perhaps I can change this into professional information in order to have fewer papers and to concentrate more on a client (…). We’ve got to somehow (…) make choices but it turns out that specific documentation is needed. Great, I could do some more psychological tests but it turns out that there are loan forms which need to be done (group interview no. 2, labour office counsellor). Polish labour offices solve personnel problems by using temporary forms of employment, organisation of work placement for graduates or public works.

14 In EU founding countries there is one counsellor or job agent per 300 unemployed people, in Poland in 2000 in 2000 there were 5665 unemployed people per one “statistical” counsellor and in 2002 this number grew to 7101 unemployed (interview with W. Drabek-Polak). There are however offices where there are about 11 thousand unemployed per one counsellor, e.g. in the Poviat Labour Office in Łódź. Some programmes funded by the EU in which selected groups of clients participate give possibilities of work individualisation. Since such programmes are a part of regular work of counsellors there is even less time left to deal with the rest of clients.

15 Studies show that there are offices where 80% of counselling personnel are employed on this basis (Bednarski 2002).
which beside discontinuity of work caused by matters related to procedures and legislation leads to the feeling of a lack of stability and security in workers.

Knowledge and professional skills have a great meaning, too. Polish counsellors criticise university studies, especially postgraduate studies which do not prepare them to practical performing of the occupation: Frankly speaking, "I had such an impression during studies that I could already take the place of the teacher (...). This is theory, once again theory, there are very few practical cases, which are / this is just a basic thing in the occupational counsellor's job" (group interview no. 1, counsellor from a counselling clinic). The offer of practical trainings is, according to interviewees too small, and information conveyed by teachers was evaluated as unessential and “repeated” from training to training. Moreover, the counsellors' access to trainings is limited due to financial issues – trainees alone have to pay for participation in courses which constitutes a barrier especially for younger and temporarily employed workers. In this place it should also be underlined that in Poland there are not any mechanisms motivating counsellors to improving professional qualifications. Improving professional qualifications in state assistance centres is not effective as it is not awarded in the form of pay rises. In offices counsellors are obliged to applying for licences, but temporarily employed workers (who have the same the range of duties as regular workers) are not sent to trainings: People hired for public works do not have any rights really. I tried at some point to obtain, I mean do a training which would authorise me to carry out Holland’s tests and I got information that at public work they do not train workers like I (group interview no. 2, counsellor from labour office). Professional competences are thus obtained partly through one’s own professional practice and/or through imitating more experienced colleagues. Let us add that counsellors – to be able to deal with civilisation transformations, clients’ needs and expectations should permanently raise their professional competences.

Another element relating to counselling institutions' personnel is the philosophy or ideology of work. Here the matters such as the realised models of professional roles – e.g. expert, informant, consultant, laissez-faire\(^{16}\), possibilities of creating an effectively functioning team, matters of open or closed communication in a workers' group would be the most essential ones. Work in an open communication group gives a possibility of constructive

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\(^{16}\) Generally, three types of counselling could be distinguished: 1/ directive counselling, based on behaviorist psychology assumptions, which corresponds to the role of an expert; 2/ dialogue counselling referring to the concept of cognitive and ontogenetic psychology (the role of a consultant) and 3/ liberal counseling referring to humanist psychology, where the client is stimulated by a counselor to solve his/her problems on his/her own (the role of a trustworthy guardian, laissez-faire) (Kargulowa 2004: 40).
solving of interpersonal conflicts, mutual learning, constructing assistance programmes and diagnoses as well as providing support in real situations. The above mentioned management and staff's orientation at real help or at bureaucratic aims (e.g. accumulating statistical data relating to the number of counselling services provided) is very essential, too. It is possible to suppose that ideology or philosophy of staff – conditioned very strongly by the workers’ as well as managers’ attitudes – decides about the quality of work and in part about the clients' fates, too.

4.4. Technical Conditions of Work

Institutional limitations and barriers in counselling can be the result of technical conditions of work too – housing, equipment as well as possessed financial means. It is natural that occupational counsellor's meetings with a client should be held in conditions assuring the feeling of intimacy and security. Assistance centres assure their clients the possibility of meeting “face to face” with a counsellor, however labour offices do not guarantee such intimacy and directness. In my work I deal with occupational counselling and trainings for handicapped people – states one of the interviewees – and all this in one room, together with a friend so there is no say about creating an atmosphere to talk with a client, deal with him in a special way (group interview no. 2, labour office counsellor).

Both centres and labour offices have difficulties with technical equipment of the place of work. Computers, access to Internet (a pencil and a notebook are still basic tools of work in centres), photocopiers, voice recorders, etc. are generally lacking. There isn’t enough computers for example and time is short and apart from our basic duties we get additional ones, and we’ve got to literally pull others out from the computers and everyone has to finish on time, cause there’s deadline and this is where the problem is. One of the respondents mentions humiliation caused by the lack of suitable furniture (in the building from which the workers fortunately moved out): There were three desks, five workers, small room and this was just a little humiliating for us because we had to chase each other away from one place to another because sometimes my friend had her customers (…), sometimes I had mine. Sometimes a client came in and he wanted to talk to me only and I did not even had a place to sit down (interview no. 2, labour office counsellor).

17 Generally, team work involves more advantages than threats. Potential dangers are e.g. forming a closed, non-flexible group, requiring unanimous decisions and exerting a very strong pressure on an individual.
The lack of financial means causes not only housing and equipment problems but also limits the possibility of realisation of certain tasks, e.g. blocks taking part in projects, in which granting institution requires own contribution. This also causes frustration of low-paid workers, which in turn creates the danger of negative selection on existing positions.

4.5. Access to Information

Professional counsellor in conditions of “liquid postmodernity” should have a full supply of information which will enable him/her to enter the role of a “client’s guide”. As interviews with counsellors show, there are many problems in Poland with access to information. There is no system of inter-institutional co-operation, which results in the fact that information about places of education and places of work is given in an incomplete and accidental way. Lack of analyses of regional markets of work is also striking, counsellors complain on problems with gaining up-to-date information about the system of schools and paths of education. Another already mentioned barrier is the lack of access to the Internet as a potential source of data. All these factors cause informative chaos: We as counsellors have devoted a lot of time throughout recent years to gathering information, reading all that is available, arranging information and than we should of course give much more time to individual counselling, to diagnoses (group interview no. 1, clinic counsellor). In respondents’ opinion guide books for pupils are published too late and contain mistakes.

4.6. Clients’ Expectations

The activity of an institution should answer the needs and expectations of clients – these expectations indicate in a sense (and should indicate) the frameworks of functioning of an institution. It seems that the clients of labour offices and psychological counselling clinics differ in their expectations and motivation. Counsellors from labour offices mention the so-called “obligatory customers”, who were told to come here (e.g. were directed to counsellors by other workers of the office). Such people do not know what they came for and what occupational counselling is for. The very name “counsellor” brings to them associations with a legal counsellor18 or on the contrary they expect to meet somebody who is to advise them on all life matters. Many people expect very

18 In Polish “doradca” means the person giving counsel and “radca” means a legal adviser.
specific services from office counsellors – giving work offers or ready made prescriptions to find a job, fulfilling their application documents, writing a CV, presenting them with training offers. There are clients who need to talk themselves out or “take it out” or expect psychological help in a new situation of unemployment.

The matter presents itself somewhat differently in the case of assistance centres. E.g., pupils using the services of psychological and pedagogic counselling clinics expect help in choosing a secondary school or want to make sure that their choice was accurate or they seek self-cognition. Handicapped children and their parents expect from counsellors emotional support in struggling through the following stages of education, which is related to a considerably higher level of fear in such families than in the case of healthy pupils. Some young people seek information about various professions and the educational system. A small group of occupational counsellors’ clients constitute parents of small children asking for help in the choice of a primary school and even a nursery\textsuperscript{19} for their offspring. Counselling services nowadays start to embrace earlier and earlier stages of human biographies while the growth of interest in counselling services is simultaneously observed.

It seems that this differentiation of expectations cannot only result from the specific character of clients’ needs but also from institutional practices and procedures. Opinions gathered in biographic interviews often testify to frustration of labour offices clients’, though we do not know to what degree this frustration results from contacts with counsellors and to what degree from contacts with other people in the institution. At present we do not have a sufficient comparative material, that is psychological clinics' biographic stories. However, orientation at giving concrete information instead strictly at counselling work is visible in statements of some office counsellors: I would divide clients into those, there are fewer of them I think and it is better to work with them, who come for specific things, who know what they want and expect short information. Even if it is advice from the range of labour law, occupational counsellor can to some degree help. They come for an example of a curriculum vitae, application letter, list of job agencies and this is such short, factual information (group interview no. 2, office counsellor)

\textsuperscript{19} Perhaps the fact of emerging of such clients testifies to the emerging of higher classes’ awareness relating to the necessity of biography planning from early childhood and to the best possible ways preparation of a child to living in a difficult postmodern reality.
5. Conclusion

Factors described in the chapter, of diverse nature and meaning, determine the frameworks of the institutions' activity and influence counsellors’ everyday work. It should be presumed that the results of existing conditions are concrete adaptive reactions of professionals. Unfavourable work conditions among which the most vivid are: excessive a number of clients, insufficient funding of activities, administrative constraints, dissonance between ambitions and results of counselling work contribute to going professionally stale (Edelwich, Brodsky 1980). Burnt out, or discouraged workers apply different kinds of strategies allowing solving technically and emotionally difficult situations, such as techniques of stretching out time, avoiding challenges and difficult duties, creating supplementary rituals, simulating work (Siarkiewicz, 2001: 82). The result of impact of the described factors are the non-theoretical professional models implemented by workers. A. Kargulowa (2004: 174–184) distinguishes the following types of present-day counsellors:

1) A mystic convinced about the existence of good will whose mission is to help others in thorough understanding of the sense of their life. Such a person is oriented at dialogue, takes care of subjective relations, aims at authentic meeting with a client, penetrates his or her inner experiences, gives spiritual support, and the effect of the relation is client's more valuable, noble way of life.

2) An optimistic tolerant to human weaknesses, concentrated on good sides of life, oriented at suppression of clients' fears and assuring them psychical comfort.

3) A pragmatic making practical and cool observations of surrounding reality, oriented at uncovering mechanisms disturbing human activities. Pragmatic is focused on thorough diagnostic examination, classifying and solving problems.

4) A negotiator aware of social disarray, whose aim is agreement with internal and external reality. Oriented at dialogue, focuses on problems not on people.

5) An educator socially qualified / devoted to teaching others, oriented at not only individual work but also team, environmental and mass work. Thinks that people are able to solve their problems rationally or to get accustomed to them.

6) A connector wants to strengthen local social capital, involved in field work, when he conducts partner dialogue with clients.

7) Unmoral cynic who makes use of marketisation of risk, fishes for clients and makes them addicted to himself / herself. Does not believe in effectiveness
of help but is oriented at obtaining various kinds of personal advantages (e.g. satisfaction from being “better than clients”).

It can therefore be supposed that the effects of the activity of specific institutions to a considerable extent depend on the human factor. Even in unfavourable institutional conditions involvement and psychological and pedagogic help are possible. Institutional barriers however cause ineffective spending of energy, contribute to wasting potential and staff's strengths and – as it was mentioned before – may lead to professional burning out.

Professionals’ work influences also the mood, everyday functioning, and in consequence clients' fates in various ways. The counsellor’s attitude has a great meaning for the feeling of security, value, independence and subjectivity of a client. Unfortunately, in Polish biographic investigations poor and unemployed people often complain about labour offices' workers, who treat them in an indifferent, humiliating way, visits in an office are treated as a kind of trauma. In effect, Polish unemployed treat offices as a place of registration and collecting financial benefits while they tend to look for help in informal contacts.

SUGGESTED EXERCISE FOR STUDENTS:

1. Work in small groups and fill in the chart below. Use the text analysis or an analysis of a real institution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers/Obligations</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Possible solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Homework: Design specific strategies for the best solutions suggested.

2. Conduct client’s need analysis (on the basis of a biographic interview) and design a model of a counselling institution to satisfy these needs.

References:


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Biography Analysis on the Empirical Base of Autobiographical Narratives: How to Analyse Autobiographical Narrative Interviews – Part one

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In the first part, this text explains why autobiographical interviewing is an open avenue to the analysis of deep suffering and its biographical meaning, as well as to the analysis of all types of biographical identity developments and infringements. The epistemic power of extempore autobiographical narration to reveal biographical processes (such as trajectories of suffering and metamorphosis processes) is demonstrated. The general features of autobiographical narrative texts are explicated and related to the social and biographical processes they express. The general analytical stance (pragmatic refraction) is explained of how to use these features for biographical research in a non-naive way.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To sensitize for the epistemic power of autobiographical story telling to reveal biographical and social processes.

2. To provide for the understanding that autobiographical interviewing is an enabling arrangement for letting clients of vocational counselling tell their life histories.

3. To convey an understanding of the powerful representational mechanisms of autobiographical story telling: narrative constraints and the cognitive figures of autobiographical narratives.

4. To inculcate the capability to delineate the formal structures of textual expressions of biographical and social processes (especially demonstration markers) and to make the latter empirically analyzable through the medium of the former.
1. The Rationale for Biography Analysis on the Empirical Base of Autobiographical Renderings by Extempore Story Telling

The incapacity to work in one’s learnt occupation and rehabilitation situations are mostly disastrous or at least critical in the life of afflicted persons. Quite often there even is a “cumulative mess”, to put it into the words of Anselm Strauss. (Strauss et al. 1985; Corbin and Strauss 1988) There might be the simultaneous impact of a chronic illness, of the loss of work and of social relationships (even of the life partner) as well as psychosomatic and psychiatric problems, resulting in the incapacity to think of oneself as being able to perform an active life ever again. This predicament might still be worse if the inability to work in one’s learnt and accustomed occupational position or even in one’s vocation in general is connected to a disastrous disease, which not only wiped out the former occupational live one was used to but furthermore destroyed important realms of private life (e.g. doing sports, playing music).

Of course, individuals in such a predicament react differently. Some try hard to return to an active attitude to life and attempt to take any imaginable road in order to find a new work position; others, on the contrary, feel totally paralysed and not able to take any initiative. The individual answer to the question whether at all and how to work with this predicament is very much influenced by the biographical preconditions of the life history of the individual. Many persons afflicted by chronic illness that results in unemployment and related problems did not learn how to deal with such a crisis situation. They might even have learnt not to deal with it at all, since in their childhood they had been discouraged to trust in themselves. They might not believe that they are capable of handling problems and conflicts in the family, with peers and in school or, later in life, to trust that they are able to handle difficult social relationships, work situations and depressing material conditions. But exactly this is the most important task in a rehabilitation situation: to activate oneself in order to become capable to shape one’s own life. The central precondition of this is to do biographical work.

Let’s look into one episode rendered by the narrative interview with 25 year old Mr. Bernd Funke in order to understand

a) That his notorious unemployment situation is linked with several other biographical problems and with a severe disease;

b) That this piling up of problems undermines his positive self image and his personal strength., so that he becomes biographically and socially paralysed;

c) And that after important “first aid” by his family and by his health insurance company and with the decisive professional help of a vocational re-training institution he starts to work on himself, i.e. do biographical work to gain
Biography Analysis on the Empirical Base of Autobiographical...

insight and strength towards actively overcoming the vicious circle of the simultaneous enforcement of illness, unemployment, social isolation, as well as psychic depression and lack of energy.

The interview excerpts are taken from an autobiographical narrative interview in which the informant Bernd Funke is asked to tell his life history in an unrestricted, free way. The two excerpts of the interview are quoted together, since they address the same difficult life situation of the informant, referring to points (a) and (b) just mentioned above.

Interview excerpts:
(M: informant; I: interviewer)
4 M and eh. the casual work
5 was going on and eh. I did find a company where I continued
6 to work as a plumber (‘)
7 I mhm
8 M :that: was then(-) . after four years
9 finished(‘)
10 I mhm
11 M and again unemployment(-). again jobbing around(-). I was
12 driving cars here(-) and was doing something there(-). and so forth(,): and
13 ehm: I then(-) . because of pure coincidence(-) via a relative(-)
14 ((slower till+)) slipped into in my original area+ metalworking industry
15 again (-) in a small business & that was a (-) let me a call it a shackle (-)
16 . I have worked there hard as well physically hard (-) . and eh . ((slower till+))
17 to that time my former girl-friend left me (‘)
18 I mhm
19 M and ((faster till+))
20 things of great importance which I had there (,). and there
21 that were then I have lost a lot of weight (,)
22 I yes
23 M yes (?) ((quieter till+)) because
24 before that time/ I’ve gained a lot (‘)+ . and there I lost a lot (-) . and eh
25 and there it suddenly started with my . pains in my back (,). I had
26 very strong pains in my back (-) . went to the doctor (-) nobody could
27 for a very long time/. nobody could find out what it is and so forth(-) and ehm had
28 then/. :<couldn’t>: actually work in my profession at all (,)
29 I mhm
30 M and ehm . that
31 continued further and further (-) more and more medical examinations till
32 somebody/till I found a doctor (-) . who found out that it wasn’t
33 a simple blockage so something simple which can be
I mhm

or so forth/ or with, with some kind of therapy

can be fixed (') but it is a real progressive illness (') . Morbus

Bechterew (') that is an inflexibility of the spinal column (-)

I mhm

I mhm

and

eh . there it was very clear (-) . not to pick up heavy stuff (-)

I mhm

physical work is actually . not possible any longer yes (?) . and eh . have then

> to that time < that ((faster till+)) broken up the contract of employment in that

metalworking company (')+

I mhm

by mutual eh . agreement (-) . and eh &

where the job centre wasn’t happy about that (') . is understandable (-) . but well

when getting the cash and then what was following ('). ((louder till+))

I slipped then into financial problems too (-) & well all of a sudden it was

a really huge lump which came/ . which came onto me (,)

well I couldn’t (-) . pay anything anymore (-) . he he . where I have worked in that

metalworking shackle let me say it like that (-) . he couldn’t pay

I mhm

that was

really a very small business (-) . and ehm . everything came out of the blue (,)

I couldn’t pay my rent anymore (-) were unemployed (')

I mhm

and eh . was alone (-) .

well that was actually a really deep low point let me say that like that (,)

I mhm

yes

I mhm

yes

right (?) . a lot of alcohol came to that (') . well practically . really (-) . well how

should I say (-) just so . hanging/

I mhm

hanging around (,)

I mhm

and ehm .

I mhm

and ehm .

I mhm

a lot of things are

coming together then (-)

M some things come together right (?) . that was going on up
The first quotation is a passage from the first part of the interview, from the main narrative of the informant “M” (Mr. Funke) in which he is telling his life history without any essential intervention of the interviewer (i.e., without any suggestions of new topics). The central narrative kernel statement of this passage is: “that was actually a really deep low point let me say that like that (,), yes (?) there I was actually really deep down (,), and eh . my life looked like that actually, right?” (page 2, line 9 to 13). The second quotation is a passage from the second part, i.e. the questioning part, of the interview. The interviewer “I” refers to the informant’s kernel statement within the first interview part just quoted, to the vague general predicate as an awkward attempt to characterize that difficult crisis phase in his earlier life: “really deep down”. The interviewer
would like to get a clearer picture about what the informant meant by that higher predicate “really deep down”. Let us look at this more explicitly:

In the first interview excerpt, the following features of the former difficult life situation of the informant become obvious:

- The informant gets into occupational difficulties: he loses the work position in his learnt vocation as a heavy machinery plumber, doing casual work without a stable position and finding work again in his learnt craft only under the condition of not getting paid properly (and later on not at all);
- He has been abandoned by his girlfriend and became socially isolated;
- He gets into such disastrous financial difficulties that he is on the brink of being thrown out of his flat;
- He became severely ill from a progressively unfolding chronic disease without any chance of getting healthy again, with this disease excluding further work in his learnt craft or in any other blue colour occupation, as well as that
- He sinks into a dangerous depression, becomes an alcoholic and is almost paralyzed regarding the handling of his daily life.

The first excerpt of the interview transcript from the main narrative in the first part of the interview addresses the phenomenon, however crudely and does not deal very much with the inner (“psychic”) state of the informant, which he himself characterizes with quite vague general predicates such as “really deep down” and “really deep low point”. In the first excerpt it is only explained that the informant becomes socially isolated, is often intoxicated by alcohol, is out of work and in a disastrous financial situation, and that all of these negative “outer” features of his life come together in a cumulative mess with the effect to put him down. In the second excerpt of the interview transcript, in the questioning part of the interview, the interviewer retrospectively focuses on the informant’s former vague general statement from the first interview part towards his psychic inner state connected to the reported central crisis situation of his life. The informant is now expected by the questioning interviewer to make the characterization of his inner state more explicit. But contrary to the probable expectation of the interviewer that the informant would now really describe his inner state, he additionally mentions about his central crisis situation in life:

- That he became strange to himself; his friends and relatives had to tell him that he was in a deplorable, dangerous psychic situation;
- That he was in danger of becoming a notorious de-socialized vagabond without any ability to manage an orderly and independent daily life.

In the actually ongoing interview situation, confronted with the task of recollection and formulation of the psychic “inner” state and psychic “inner” change connected with the central crisis situation of his life, Mr. Funke, who has
before just laconically reported its “outer” events and its “outer” social features, remarkably abandons the usual mundane perspective by means of which one normally deals with the “inner” changes of oneself in an autobiographical narrative. This would normally be by telling in a lively, subjective and emotional ways about one’s own “inner room” of experiences, where “I have personally encountered myself”. We can observe a remarkable abandonment of the normal experiential (and re-collective) perspective of mundane interactional and biographical attention in the second excerpt. Regarding his “being deep down”, the informant Mr. Funke is not able to talk about himself directly, he can only manage to talk of and about himself from the observational perspective of his former everyday interaction partners; in this former disastrous life situation he had lost the capacity to directly relate to himself by himself. (And even in the actually ongoing conversation of the interview he is only able to recollect the psychic situation in that former central crisis situation of life from the point of view of his friends and relatives as well as of his former supporters and bystanders, since he can only recollect his inner strangeness to himself but not any concrete, differentiated and circumscribed feelings and thoughts in that former crisis situation of his life.) Both excerpts together show the structural features of a sudden and overwhelming multiple convergence of several destabilizing conditions of life, i.e. the features of “cumulative mess”, as Anselm Strauss named it, and of a striking self-alienation. (Later on we will learn that these two structural features of cumulative mess and self-alienation are central aspects of the biographical trajectory of suffering.)

To put it short, the two excerpts of the narrative interview show clearly that Mr. Funke is in a state of multi-featured biographical disaster (in a state of “cumulative mess”) to the extent that he has totally lost his self-esteem. He is paralysed and hindered even to do the simplest mundane things for organising his everyday life and he is fading out the disastrous state of his identity formation and life situation from his awareness (especially by heavy drinking). It is clear from the transcript excerpts that Mr. Funke urgently needs a biographical reorientation and that means: the necessity for biographical work.

It is not common to envision a reflective reconsidering of one’s inner states and one’s overall personal identity as work as such, i.e. as strenuous and time consuming tasks that have to be done. But it is exactly that what it is: it is a type of work that consists of shaping one’s own personal identity by referring to oneself in the following dimensions:

- Understanding oneself as a positively developing, unfolding, unique identity;
- Finding out what are the potentials and mechanisms of this unfolding; and in its most elementary form that means: recollecting one’s own life history;
• Finding out the impediments and dead ends of that unfolding – including one’s own incapacities and misconceptions of oneself;
• Finding out whether or not there are alternative modes of understanding the unfolding of personal identity and how to assess those alternative understandings;
• Finding out in which direction the unfolding of one’s own unique identity should go and what would be feasible ways of supporting that development (e.g. choosing a biographically appropriate occupation or a biographically appropriate study course); as well as
• Deciding about the next steps for realizing and accomplishing that development (e.g., going to school a second time in adult life in order to learn and get into a new, more appropriate occupation or undergoing vocational rehabilitation training).

Biographical work (Corbin and Strauss 1988: chapters 4 and 5) is done by autobiographical recollection, reflection about alternative interpretations of one’s life course tendencies, self critical attempts of understanding one’s own misconceptions of oneself and self-chosen or self-erected impediments, a circumspect assessment of impediments superimposed by others and by structural conditions, imagining future courses of life that support the overall “gestalt” of the unfolding biographical identity as essentially one’s own, deciding on the next concrete steps of that unfolding and permanently evaluating the outcomes in terms of the overall distinguished gestalt worked out by recollection, analysis and imagination. However, most important is the insight that one’s own personal identity is something unique with its own overall gestalt, which matters and is essentially valuable and worthwhile to develop. This includes that it is pivotal to support one’s own personal identity by one’s own coordinated and perseverant activities (e.g., gaining clarity about the enormous difficulties in one’s individual past, on the one hand, and about the enormous thematic potentials and basic thematic lines, on the other, and combining both aspects to a basic biographical form or gestalt as well as, later on, following up a certain path of filling in the still missing parts and links of that overall biographical form or gestalt.) Biographical work consists of narrative recollection; reflection of symbolic, “deeper” meanings revealing self historical gestalts of life; an analytical comparison of alternative understandings; imagining a personal future that harmoniously or contrastively fits to one’s personal past; reflective decision making and evaluating the probable outcomes. Biographical work is basically an inner activity of mind and emotional psyche, and this inner activity is essentially constituted by conversation with significant others and oneself. In life situations of biographical crisis, biographical work can become the explicit and central action scheme of cognitively and emotionally
ordering one’s own life; in smoothly ongoing life situations it may be just a quick deliberation and recollection connected to the focus on other activities, or it may even be subliminal.

The capacity as well as the incapacity of doing biographical work is very much conditioned by the course of the former life history and its involved learning processes as well as by the respective accidental and structural barriers for learning processes. Of course, even the brute predicament of being incapacitated to do one’s learnt occupational work can – at least partially – be conditioned by the lack of biographical work in former life. As an example, let us take the case of Mr. Funke again: Mr. Funke was forced to undergo his second vocational training (if one takes the elite sports school as his first) in an occupation that he did not choose himself. His first career line had been that of GDR professional competitive sports athlete. He had been educated in a high school for elite sports. But then the administrators of that GDR elite sports school decided that the sports capacities of Bernd Funke, as an adolescentscent student, wouldn’t be promising enough. And therefore he was displaced and “dumped” into a specialised plumber apprenticeship for the establishment and fitting of heavy industrial machinery. Bernd Funke’s undergoing of this apprenticeship was not imbued by any personal sense making activities – at least not in the beginning of his apprenticeship. Soon after the breakdown of the GDR, the East German sites for the production of heavy industrial machinery were almost totally dismantled. Therefore Bernd Funke was then, without any imaginable alternatives, forced to do several menial short-term jobs and to work as an ordinary plumber in an economically unsound small company.

Looking at the life history of Mr. Funke we can learn:

a) That the imposed apprenticeship of becoming a specialized plumber was – at least in the beginning – not imbued by any biographical sense, and this is normally a deep-seated precondition for the incapacity to develop mastery in one’s occupation; as well as

b) That the superimposed occupation, in addition, was a dead end lane, since – what nobody could know in advance – the East German heavy machinery industry would soon be almost totally dismantled after the breakdown of the GDR. Not only the very fact of losing the work place in one’s learnt occupation but, in addition, the imposition of the structural incapacity to work in the latter at all, can be personally experienced as a hideous trap of a malevolent structural mind that paralyses all individual activities for the development and realization of sound biographical plans. The person affected could come to the conclusion: it doesn’t make sense to plan one’s further occupational life at all and to put any personal energy into another job training.
From looking into the autobiographical narrative interview with Mr. Funke we could learn that it is a very important precondition for doing successful rehabilitation counselling with him and for him that a vocational rehabilitation counsellor studies the life history or biography of a person who is in a critical rehabilitation situation. Through practical biography analysis the counsellor can find out what kind of biographical work the client did not finish yet and still must do. Connected with this, the counsellor is capable to find out what is the informant’s subliminal interpretation and his or her unreflected overall meaning of the painful experiences of systematic unemployment and structural incapacity to work in one’s learnt vocation.

All of this, which is almost unconscious, should normally be conveyed by the counsellor to the unemployed and therefore depressed client in a cautious and indirect way, in order that she herself or he himself can find out by herself or himself what were the biographical problems and potentials in previous phases of life and what they are in the present life situation. Through this self-exploration the client can start or recommence her or his conscious biographical work. However, most important is the plain insight (which is lost in the life of so many sufferers of unemployment), that one’s own biographical history and identity count at all and, that they constitute, in addition, unique and extremely valuable assets. Step by step Mr. Funke learns in cooperation with his rehabilitation counsellor Mrs. Brühl that it is important to see one’s own existence and development as valuable. At the very end of the interview he focuses on his success in the employing firm (a public convention centre hall) that took him in as apprentice and later promoted him to a permanent higher work position. He assesses that “I don’t know whether I am something special here… but it is possible that it could have developed into the wrong direction” (page 26, line 5 to 7). By this he wants to say: ‘Although I was not exorbitant as a person and as a learning apprentice, I was valuable as a person and successful in learning my new occupational work and in realizing my biographical development’. Mr. Funke is very modest in his final assessment, but it shines through that he has finally learnt to see himself as valuable and developing into a felicitous direction. In addition, he has realized that he is not alone and that the intervention of family, friends, institutional practitioners and especially his rehabilitation counsellor Mrs. Brühl brought about a great success, which todays morally obliges him and makes him responsible for the shaping of his future life: “and eh(-). As I said (’), if that retraining wouldn’t have come up (-), ...the eh... I believe I still would be down there ...” (page 21, line 30 and 31).

Studying the life history of a client of a rehabilitation institution means two tasks for professional counsellors:
a) To collect an autobiographical rendering from the client in order to get close insights into the history of her or his occupational and other life experiences, in order to grasp the personal point of view of the client as a central precondition for supporting and counselling her or him to do biographical work and occupational planning; as well as

b) To study the personal narrative of the client regarding her or his personal life in such a way that the “rubber fence” established by the fading-out practices of the client can be cut through. This is important, since many clients have banned hurting and humiliating experiences from their awareness, and therefore cannot come to terms with their predicament. Without deeper insights into their biographies they cannot do their own biographical work.

The client’s collection and analytical structuring of her or his autobiographical materials assisted by the help of a vocational counsellor can be suitably supported and deepened through the counsellor’s sociological biography analysis on the empirical base of an autobiographical narrative interview with her or his client. But, of course, there have to be provisions for shortcut strategies in favour of downsizing the quite elaborate sociological research steps in the documentation and analysis of autobiographical interviews. Professional counsellors don’t have the time of social scientists for elaborate research; they are forced to come to terms with the pressures of their “here and now” work situation of supporting the clients in their actual trajectory predicament of severe suffering and their actual rehabilitation situation.

2. Life History as a Narrative Topic

There is a very deep relationship between the identity development of an individual and her or his narrative renderings of life historical experiences. It was already mentioned that autobiographical narration is the most elementary activity of biographical work. By recollecting one’s own past in autobiographical story telling of certain phases and episodes of life or in narrating the life history as a whole, the narrating individual conveys a basic order and identity structure to her or his life that is lived and experienced up to now and is expanding into the future still to come. Narrative rendering of one’s own life deals not just with the outer events occurring to the individual but also with the inner changes she or he has to undergo in experiencing, reacting to, and shaping (and partially even producing) those outer events. And realizing by autobiographical story telling, how one felt when undergoing the experience of outer events, is a first step of coming to terms with the continual built-up and change of inner states and how this amounts to the evolving life historical
identity structure of the individual. Therefore we can say that the autobiographical narrator or "autobiographer" is retrospectively shaping her or his own biographical identity; but the task of the meaningful ordering of pieces of biography originally evolves from life historical experiences. She or he is the biography incumbent or the carrier of the history (or story) of her or his own life, and by telling it, or at least episodes of it, she or he is bestowing it with an elementary and systematic layer of meaningful order – offering a partial integration of chunks of meanings originally stemming from the formerly actually ongoing involvements within the concatenation of life-historical events themselves. The meaningful order of one’s own life history has at its centre the unfolding of one’s own biographical identity in relationship to the overall “gestalt” of concatenated and coexisting life historical processes.

We can demonstrate the complex relationship between the identity development of the individual and the narrative rendering of life historical experiences by using the case of Mr. Funke as an example. Mr. Funke undergoes vocational rehabilitation training. In selfexperience groups, in group therapy sessions and in counselling conversations with professionals (especially with his social pedagogue and counsellor Mrs. Brühl) he learns to address himself by autobiographical story telling. Through activities of autobiographical story telling – and even through and within the autobiographical narrative interview conducted with him – he realizes that

• In his earlier life he did not learn to address his own identity development and his own unique life history: he was put into an elite sports school without personal considerations of his own; he was later on thrown out of that school when he had proven not to be able to fulfil its achievement expectations any more; and he was then put or even “dumped” into a plumber apprenticeship – again without having been asked for his own personal considerations or decision. Just by his autobiographical story telling activities in several situations of his rehabilitation training he finally realizes the lack of his own thematization of topics of relevance for building up his personal identity in later childhood (which would normally be conversationally and practically supported by parents and other significant others, but Mr. Funke’s father died very early in his life, and by his removal from the elite sports school he was very painfully disconnected from his former peers and friends). There was a lack of his own engagement in biographical work in adolescence and adulthood, which is normally very much grounded in topically focussed activities of autobiographical story telling (e.g., regarding moving experiences with music, literature or friends as well as regarding central biographical difficulties like losing a loved person, having difficulties in school, becoming severely ill, having had a dangerous accident, etc.). At the same time he learns that
Through searching in his past life and thinking about himself, he must develop his own identity structure. On the one hand, this means finding out what are wrong assumptions about himself acquired in former life (e.g. that he would “just” be a blue collar worker and, therefore, wouldn’t have the ability to do mental work at all). On the other hand, this means to learn from former (contrary and/or encouraging) experiences to believe in his own powerful identity development and its value, by trusting in his various learning abilities, etc.

Two central features of the overall gestalt of the life history of Mr. Funke, then, are firstly, up to the time of the beginning of rehabilitation, its lack of personal identity thematization (in a certain sense withholding from Mr. Funke an awareness of his own biographical overall structuring and of his own developing personal identity structure), and secondly, starting with the rehabilitation process, his later search for personal identity and for biographical work on its development. The implied central reversal of Mr. Funke’s life history takes part in the very course of his vocational rehabilitation process. There are several professionally established situations in the institutionalised rehabilitation process that induce him to recollect his life by autobiographical story telling (what he certainly did not do in former times). – Admittedly, the close relationship of identity development on the one hand and autobiographical narration on the other is overwhelmingly obvious in the case of Mr. Funke; but in other life histories, too, almost no pathway of autobiographical identity development would be possible without activities of autobiographical narration in diverse life situations.

Pre-adolescent children are normally not able to tell their life history in terms of the unfolding of their own personal identity gestalt; they can only address their growth of personal competencies and potentials for future personal development – and this attention, in addition, must be assisted by their significant others and central peers. Later, in adolescence and adulthood, these features of learning about oneself will, then, become a topic for focussed autobiographical considerations in the context of explicit activities of autobiographical story telling. (In consequence, in the case of Mr. Funke the deprivation of, or the disconnection from autobiographical considerations and the lack of biographical work might even start in pre-adolescence. E.g., he does not remember discussions at home about the question whether or not he should attend the elite school for professional athletes.) But notwithstanding latent preparations for the ontogenetically later acquisition of the competency for autobiographical narration and for biographical work: generally speaking, only in adolescence genuine autobiographical narration and reflexive autobiographical selfthematization become possible.
Just as an aside I would now like to allude to a nagging terminological question that is a difficult basic theoretical problem at the same time. A conceptual differentiation could be pursued between life course, life history or biography as an overall concatenation and competition of biographical processes as social processes – comparable to processes of ongoing interaction with sequences and competitions of social actions, but in contrast to interaction and action mostly consuming much more time –, on the one hand, and life history or biography as the retrospective narrative rendering of such a life course, on the other. In addition, a conceptual differentiation could be pursued between a life history or biography told by the biography incumbent himself and a life history or biography told by somebody else, e.g. by a historian telling the life of an important politico-historical figure. The former is normally called “autobiography” and the latter “biography”.

Regarding the first conceptual differentiation, we could be drawn into elementary epistemological and basic theoretical difficulties. We could be confronted with the irritating question whether or not life course, life history or biography is something real at all: something really existing as autonomous configuration (consisting of sequences, competitions and/or relationships of simultaneous mutual support) of personal social processes changing one’s life. I personally assume that there is much empirical evidence that there is such a level of lifechanging personal social processes sui generis, but these personal social processes are very deeply linked with the autobiographical narrative rendering devices. (The latter reveal and obfuscate at the same time. They reveal, since they express biographical processes by formal text structures, by elementary categorizations as well as by self-theoretical reflections of the informant. They obfuscate, since the narrative language activities are just the medium for the expression of biographical processes and not those processes themselves; in addition, language mechanisms of fading out and of harmonization and rationalization step in-between.) I would like to state again – as I did above – that there is a close relationship between social biographical processes proper and their narrative rendering. And out of that reason, for the limited purpose of this text, I would like to skip the term life course as basic term and just use the term “life history” or “biography” referring by these terms both to the sequence and configuration of the socio-biographical processes of life course, on the one hand, and to narrative renderings of these processes, on the other. This simplification of terminology seems legitimate because the life course processes are very much shaped by the ordering devices of autobiographical narration that structure personal experiences of life changing relevance conceptually, both in a sequential as well as in an alternative (supportive or competitive) vain. Therefore, a (circumscribed, linguistically marked) narrative unit of an autobiographical extempore narrative as ordering
device for personal experiences normally represents and expresses a circumscribed phase in a life course or life-historical or biographical process. (But under certain conditions it can deviate from this type of representation and expression.)

With regard to the second terminological differentiation between autobiographical narratives proper and biographical narratives told by somebody else, in this text I would like to focus on autobiographical narratives exclusively and would like to use – just confined to this text – the term “life history” (or “biography”) only for them. Of course, biographical narratives told by somebody else are life histories themselves in the sense of products of verbal recollection and recapitulation, and they have important functions in our society – especially as part of the construction of collective history (when a historian is reconstructing the life of an important figure of history) and as model for the personal historical life orientation of readers impressed by them. But normally – if we put aside special phenomena of the construction of public identity and celebrity, questions of assisting adopted children to develop their personal identity as well as certain activities of psychiatric and psychotherapeutic treatment – they are not so much involved in personal identity constructions as such of biography incumbents in question. Hence, just for the sake of simplification, on the following pages the term “life history” (or “biography” always refers to autobiographical narratives as well as to overall socio-biographical processes that are seen through autobiographical narrative renderings. There is a deeper rationale for this terminological simplification, which was already mentioned above: life course processes and the identity of the biography incumbent are much more directly – and mostly much more deeply, too – shaped by autobiographical story telling activities than by biographical ones told by somebody else. (Of course, even beyond the construction of collective history, biographical story telling done by others can be important, too, for the construction of personal identities: e. g., if social parents tell their adopted children their life course histories – Hoffmann-Riem (1990). But the latter is something extremely special, and it even underlines the basic-theoretical proposition of the preponderance of autobiographical story telling for personal identity construction: The biographical recapitulation by others of what had happened to these adopted children in early childhood is so important for them exactly out of the reason, that it will become an integral part of their own autobiographical narrative and reconstruction.) – In addition, in most topical fields of research, life histories told by others are not the most direct methodological approach in qualitative social research for reaching life courses or life histories of the biography incumbents, and the most direct approach to social phenomena (including the biographical ones) is normally the most authentic one (Hoffman-Riem 1980).
Life history is a narrative “gestalt” that must be envisioned as an ordered sequence of personal experiences, and that orderliness implies the inner identity development of the biography incumbent. The most important ordering principles of life history are biographical process structures. We can differentiate between four elementary biographical process structures:

- Biographical action schemes, by which a person attempts to actively shape the course of his life (this happens in the life history of Mr. Funke, when in the course of his rehabilitation re-training process he learns to transform and model his apprenticeship of secretarial and administrative work within a complex public service institution into his own biographical project in order to finish his rehabilitation re-training successfully and to start a new active occupational life);

- Trajectories of suffering, in which persons are not capable of actively shaping their own life anymore, since they can only react to overwhelming outer events; in the course of their suffering they become strange to themselves (this then starts in the life of Mr. Funke, when he is kicked out of the elite sports school, and it then becomes devastating, when he gets severely chronically ill, is out of work, drinks alcohol all day, etc.);

- Institutional expectation patterns, in which persons are following up institutionally shaped and normatively defined courses of life, e.g. careers in organizations or the family life cycle that opens up family life in the first part of adulthood (Mr. Funke undergoes several institutional expectation patterns: being a student in the elite sports school, an apprentice in the specialized plumbing craft of establishing heavy machinery or an apprentice in a public administration organization while following up a course of vocational rehabilitation training); as well as

- Creative metamorphoses of biographical identity by which a new important inner development is starting in one’s own biography, that might be miraculous and irritating in the beginning since it is new and that initially prohibits pertinent competencies of the biography incumbent, and towards which she or he must find out what the very quality of it might be (Mr. Funke’s experience of the puzzling problem – a problem of understanding he is confronted with, when he starts his apprenticeship in the course of his vocational rehabilitation training –, that and why mental work and paper work might be work at all, could be a topical experience of a still disguised biographical metamorphosis process, during that former period of life).

Biographical process structures normally follow each other in their biographical dominance; the life history of a person can normally be seen as a sequential combination of biographical process structures. But, in addition, there also have to be taken into account phenomena of actual simultaneity, e.g.
competition as well as one-sided or mutual support of biographical process structures through one another. (A competition of biographical process structures in the life history of Mr. Funke would be the simultaneity of career and trajectory developments during his elite sports school education; a mutual strengthening of Mr. Funke’s biographical process structures through each other would be the mutually ongoing interface of his career of vocational rehabilitation re-training, his biographical action scheme to develop a new occupational life and his metamorphosis search for rational meaning and functional value of mental or paper work.)

3. Against two Common Assumptions of Autobiographical Story Telling

In order to adequately understand the pivotal epistemic power of autobiographical story telling (and especially autobiographical interviewing) as empirical data base for biography analysis and biographical counselling, one should consider and fight in advance two quite common and powerful misconceptions regarding autographical story telling that cause lots of misunderstandings regarding the empirical grounding of narrative text analysis in the social sciences. Oddly enough, those two assumptions very much contrast each other. The first assumption states that autobiographical formulations would simply depict social and personal reality like a mirror and could be just taken for granted and at face value, since they would perfectly express the authentic experiences of the autobiographical informant and her or his subjective perspective. The second assumption states that autobiographical narratives could be freely made up as well as suitably changed for requirements of actually ongoing situations of presentation – and would be fictitious in this sense – in order to smoothly serve social functions of self presentation (e.g., making oneself trustworthy, making oneself attractive or at least agreeable, aggrandizing oneself, etc.) and other social functions (like legitimating, rationalisation, dramatization, etc.) in actually ongoing social situations of interaction.

a) Against the assumption of unproblematic “mirror” depiction of reality through autobiographical narrative renderings

As I conveyed already, autobiographical narration is not just an unproblematic mirror-like one-to-one depiction of biographical process structures and of the overall development of a person’s life history; instead, it is part and parcel of the production of biographical process structures and the overall structuring of life histories. This implies that one cannot take the formulations of the narrator just for granted and at face value. Instead, they
should be envisioned as constitutive part of the work or action they are facilitating: they are a necessary ingredient and instrument of biographical work, whose basic step is to get clearance about one’s life by autobiographical narration (which, of course, could be intermingled with the work of self-presentation to an audience up to a certain degree). And this work starts with (a) situational elicited preliminary mental activities of focussing on naturally occurring segmentations of life time (e.g., falling severely ill, coming out of hospital after the impact of a severe disease has been brought under control, finishing one’s school education, coming back home from a long journey, etc.) and/or of focussing on one’s involvements within life-historically important episodes or discrete concatenations of events, that were connected with circumscribed, naturally occurring chunks of personal experiences. (b) Biographical work goes on through telling about these experiences in a rudimentary autobiographical vein (telling a good friend about it and/or telling oneself about it in an inner conversation), which is connected with an initial assessment and attempt to understand the experiences in terms of life historical meaning (e.g. what was the felicitous development in it, what was the leap of learning connected with it, what was the mistake involved in it and what one could do better next time, what was the unlucky fate of it, etc.). And (c) biographical work finally ends with the embedding of those chunks of experiences and preliminary first results of understanding accomplished by means of past narratives about them into a longer autobiographical account in order to grasp their systematic relevance within the overall structuring of life history, which might be elicited through a conversational situation of telling an old friend or a counsellor about future plans and/or about a biographical crisis situation and its pre-history. (There can be several types of conversational situations of eliciting explicit autobiographical story telling, although conversational situations of telling the whole life history are quite rare.)

Therefore, biographical work meaningfully comes out from, and/or has an ordering impact on, five types of embedding contexts:

- Firstly, the social frames and situations in which the original concatenation of life events was experienced,
- Secondly, the social situations in which these recently made experiences were originally, i.e. for the first time, told to life partners, friends or other significant others,
- Thirdly, the biographical process structure(s) that was (were) dominant (or competing) during the experienced concatenation of life events,
- Fourthly, the (permanently changing) overall biographical structuring of one’s life history that, in any ongoing life situation and in its then actual form, was or is shaping the general attitude and overall perspective of one’s life as
well as of one’s biographical identity in a partially thematized, but partly also non-reflected or even non-conscious way, and

- Fifthly and finally, the social expectations and social conditions of telling (parts of) one’s life history to a significant other (a friend, a love partner, a counsellor, an interviewer, etc.).

The linguistic formulations are part and parcel as well as the instrument of central focussing of biographical work, and they should be seen in their work function of expression and presentation within the five types of embedding contexts just mentioned. (I.e. they are produced in order to focus on biographically remarkable chunks of experiences, in order to understand and interpret these experiences situationally as well as in terms of the dominant biographical social structures during the time of their occurrence, in order to grasp their systematic biographical relevance as well as to present them in a certain “biographically sensitised” social situation with its interactive, normative and perhaps even institutional expectations.) Especially through consideration of their fivefold contextualization it is possible – at least partially – to substitute for their typical shortcomings in terms of giving information and providing understanding in their capacity as verbal expressions of mostly quite complex multi-aspectual social, life historical and inner psychic phenomena. Linguistic presentation activities quite often express complicated, difficult, subtle sociobiographical experiences only quite indirectly, symptomatically and incompletely, since the latter might be ambivalent, cognitively or emotionally too complex, hurting, shameful or just non-understood. And linguistic presentation activities can even be the expression and instrument of rationalization, of legitimating, of fading out, etc. Through taking into account their fivefold contextualization it will be possible to reach at their deeper meaning and function as condition, essential part and/or outcome of biographical work.

Instead of taking the autobiographical linguistic presentation activities at face value, they should be pragmatically refracted (the first term stemming from the Greek word “to pragma” = “action”, “activity”, which here is generally understood as all sorts of human activities of any kind – so, for example, biographical work, too –; the latter term metaphorically understood in analogy to the refraction of light through a prism), in order to use a general methodological term of qualitative research. “Pragmatic refraction” (Schütze 2005; Perleberg, Schütze, Heine 2006) means that naturally occurring verbal formulations should be analytically related to their contexts of experiential background, their contexts of production and use as well as to their contexts of later application, social function and meaningful overall (biographical or actional) structure. By consideration of the fivefold analytical embedding, i.e. pragmatic refraction,
a more circumspect understanding of biographical work and grounding of autobiographical rendering becomes possible; even the understanding of experiences, which the autobiographical informant her- or himself recollects only dimly, does not understand correctly or doesn’t understand at all, becomes possible.

**b) Against the assumption of the freewheeling and suitable making up of autobiographical stories according to functional requirements of social situations**

Autobiographical story telling should not be seen just as a freewheeling and flexible course of textual invention of the narrator; instead, there is the serious intention and urgent drive of the narrator to express life-historical experiences, which very powerfully induce her or him *what* to tell and *how* to tell it. This is true at least for *oral extempore* autobiographical narration to the extent that it has not been preformed and not been ritualised (as it could have been accomplished by the presenter or client for some public or institutional presentation contexts like radio shows as well as for some therapeutic contexts such as those for the treatment of alcoholics). But even in literary autobiographies that are written for publication, the writer normally tries to formulate her or his own experiences as authentically as possible; quite often in written autobiographical texts the constraint, the drive and the power, too, to express even unhappy or shameful experiences can very easily be seen on the level of textual surface. (Some literary autobiographies reveal extremely high text validity, since the will to be as authentic as possible and the aesthetic power of artistic formulation converge and influence each other.)

Of course, there can be deviations from authenticity in autobiographical storytelling: some narrators do not know or do not understand what happened in certain situations they had to encounter. Others feel that some experiences are too hurting or too shameful to be able to focus on them or even to recollect them at all. But exactly those passages of not knowing, of not understanding and/or of fading-out in autobiographical story telling are very much identifiable: i.e. in normal situations of narrative presentation informants openly express their not-knowing, their non-understanding, their fading-out. – It must also be admitted that dispositions and strategies of faking, of lying, of intended misrepresentation could have an impact on autobiographical story telling. But they occur quite rarely and are normally reserved for special presentation contexts (as court room interrogation and confessions, legitimising self-reports on addiction careers by alcoholics in institutional treatment centres or presentations of prominent figures in public media shows). And normally it is quite easy to detect these endeavours of misrepresentation on the textual surface, since it is observable formulation work that the misrepresentsers must accomplish, and this formulation work
characteristically deviates from the normal course of autobiographical presentation activities.

Of course, the intention and the drive to reach authenticity of the expression of life historical experiences and thus to start and to realize biographical work must be empirically grounded on an adequate language instrument for the expression and presentation of personal experiences. The adequate language instrument of this task is the communicative scheme of (oral) extempore narration of one’s experiences of having personally been involved in the concatenations of events within the mundane world of social existence. The communicative scheme of extempore narration is the most elementary means to focus on, to present and to understand the flow of events making up the smaller and greater changes of one’s (everyday and biographical) life, and these changes are very deeply connected with – sometimes more and sometimes less decisive – historical changes of one’s social surroundings. – There are two other elementary communicative schemes of representing life and world: those of description and of argumentation. (Kallmeyer and Schütze 1977; Schütze 1987, 1988) The communicative scheme of description deals with social frames (routines, institutions, social units and their relationships to each other, etc.) within which the flow of social, biographical and historical events is taking part (or has been taking part). The communicative scheme of argumentation deals with possible explanations for the quite often questionable or even miraculous flow of events within the mundane world of social existence, for the establishment and realization of social frames, and for the power of facilitating conditions as well as of impeding restrictions exerted by them. In addition, the scheme of argumentation searches for explicates and discusses the reasons for decisions between alternative projects of action one was planning or one is presently planning for the management of future developments.

For the endeavour of pursuing and realizing biographical work, the scheme of narration is the most important and dominant one amongst the three elementary communicative schemes for representing life and world. But subdominant activities of the scheme of description are built into the unfolding of the scheme of narration in order to deal with (i.e. to focus and to clarify) social frames of involvements of the narrator and other dramatis personae within biographically and socially pivotal events. And, in addition, autobiographical narration is interspersed with subdominant activities of the scheme of argumentation in order to answer questions such as: why certain life historical events would have happened at all and why they would be that important in terms of biographical unfolding, why social frames were established and why they exerted certain social forces on the flow of events and on biographical process structures and what should be considerations and reasons for future biographical developments. The communicative scheme of extempore narration
The capability for extempore narration starts to develop and grow very early in childhood parallel to the development of speech abilities in general, but up to the beginning of adolescence it still doesn’t allow a specific self-reflective consideration that the narration of personal experiences also has to deal with, involved within the experienced events of the mundane world of social existence. That means, a preadolescent child can beautifully tell about a discrete concatenation of personally experienced events and her or his personal involvements in them, and this amounts to first steps of hidden biographical work. But up to the commencement of adolescence the child is not able to focus and present personal experiences and personal involvements in an explicitly autobiographical vein, i.e. taking into account one’s own smaller and more decisive changes of personal identity.

The communicative scheme of extempore narration induces the narrator not just to a short topical and generalised recollection of one’s personal experiences, but, to the contrary, drives her or him into a time-consuming recollection and presentation process of their detailed (although at the same time meaningfully ordered and condensed) re-staging and re-enlivening. The process of undergoing the dynamics of extempore story telling of personal experiences “liquefies” and details the respective contents of memory which are normally categorized and stored in quite abstract higher predicates. After the start of extempore story telling, the recollected flow of personally experienced events is – broadly speaking – permanently steering the line of recapitulation in the evolving narrative; in extempore narration (contrary to written, especially literary, autobiographies with their typical flashbacks and anticipations) the flow of personally experienced events and the flow of the evolving activity line of story telling are mostly congruous.

The main reasons for this are the three constraints of extempore narration (Schütze 1981, 1992, 2001) of personal experiences: (1) the constraint to condense, (2) the constraint to go into details, (3) and the constraint to close the textual forms. The narrative constraint to condense entails the narrator’s being driven to tell only what is relevant in terms of central “knots” of the overall happenings in the story to be told. Single events and situations have to be evaluated and weighed permanently in terms of the announced overall thematic meaning and moral of the story to be told. The narrative constraint to go into details has the following effect: if the narrator has told event A, then he or she has to go on and must also tell event B related to event A as the next link in the
chain of experienced events – these events are formally concatenated by links of temporal succession, causality, finality, etc. In cases of implausibility of the envisaged narrative proceeding from the recollection of event A to the recollection of event B, there has to be a “background inquiry”, a checking of the details of the supposed – but initially not clearly seen, not focussed or not grasped – link between events A and B. The narrative constraint to close the forms (“gestalts”) exerts the following impact: the narrator is driven to finish the depiction of an experiential pattern (such as an episode in the unfolding of events, an interaction situation, a chapter in one’s own life history, etc.). This implies closing up the embedded patterns of experience and presentation, too. – In extempore storytelling there is always an open and undecided competition between these three narrative constraints, whereas in written storytelling the competition between the constraints quite often becomes re-harmonized and disguised under the polished surface of a literary make-up.

4. The „Grammar” of Extempore Autobiographical Narration

Extempore narration makes use of basic presentation procedures and related typical language forms generally in order to remember and express social experiences. The presentation procedures and language forms operate on three levels:

a) On the level of the global story line;

b) On the level of the intermediate cognitive figures of autobiographical story telling; as well as

c) On the level of single narrative units and of partial concatenations of narrative units.

4.1. The Global Storyline of Autobiographical Narration

The narrator is oriented by the cognitive overall gestalt (Schütze 1976, 1987; Kallmeyer and Schütze 1977) of the ongoing narrative expressing her or his own life history up to now. There are two special demonstration markers for this: the introduction or preamble of the autobiographical narrative and the conclusion or coda (Labov and Waletzky 1967) of it.

In producing a narrative preamble the narrator realizes that she or he is now focussing on her or his own life as overall gestalt, and the first feature of that gestalt might be an answer to the question when life started, how it commenced.
to be her or his own unique life history and what would be its basic mode. So the narrator could start: “I was born in the last year of World War One”, implying that life started in a difficult socio-historical global situation that had a severe impact on family and self. The next sentences could then be:

“My father was a soldier, he was severely mutilated in combat and he came back into the family as a stranger”, and this second sentence of the preamble would express the mode of estrangement between father and son, which would then have had a primordial impact on childhood, adolescence and early adulthood of the latter. Or another narrator could start his autobiographical narrative with the sentence: “I will now start. Yes, and I think, one starts, I think, with one’s birth. I was born as a late child…” In this case the female narrator is alluding to later obstacles in her family to be taken seriously regarding her occupational life plans, since she was envisioned to be the baby of the family. Still another narrator – in this case Mr. Funke himself – could start with: “Yes (-). It started /start/ where I would start the story now that was actually the normal vocational school”. (Funke, p. 1, lines 6, 7), and by this introduction of his autobiographical narrative Mr. Funke is implying that certain features of his life history are very much connected to the unlucky fate of his school career and vocational education.

The three quoted examples of preambles of autobiographical narrative interviews are all quite implicit and laconic. This might be caused by the subliminal or even unconscious character of the overall gestalt of one’s life history at the beginning of extempore narration, since the informant within the social arrangement of autobiographical narrative interviewing would normally tell her or his life history in total the first time, and that means: just by telling her or his life history the first time she or he has to find out, how to formulate its basic features that could be depicted by abstract higher predicates; the narrator becomes much more aware of the overall biographical gestalt of her or his life history during the course of the ongoing autobiographical story telling. Such an implicit preamble as we can observe in the three quoted (empirically collected) examples is typical for extempore autobiographical narratives. It might be different with the extempore narration of personally experienced episodes of the day just lived through as is the case in the following example, in which a husband tells his wife: “Today something very funny happened”. The adjective “funny” is a higher predicate announcing the overall character of the following episodic story. Of course, in the beginning of written autobiographical texts we find elaborate preambles, since the author could numerously re-read what she or he had written in first and earlier drafts and could think about it and thereby find out about basic features of one’s life. The autobiographical preamble, then, would be a later and finally written preface to the autobiographical text written earlier. – In autobiographical narrative interviews the relatively rare cases of
elaborate preambles would normally be a sign of extended rethinking and reassessment work as it could have been accomplished in reflective mental reaction to a severe life crisis and, connected to it, through intensive communication with a significant other about it or with a professional in a biographical counselling situation or even in the context of a psychotherapeutic setting and treatment relationship.

The coda of the extempore narrative of one’s own life as it has been produced in an autobiographical narrative interview is normally much more explicit than its preamble. Just to take the example of Mr. Funke’s finishing his main life historical story line in the first part of his autobiographical narrative interview:

1. M so well I a at this time except of the work which I have now and that
2. night school (-) . in my private life this are going well ((faster till+))
3. actually I am a happy person I can’t say/ I have no grounds for
4. complaint+ I earn good money (-) and . well I am . ((louder till+))
5. satisfied and eh every step I have done to that time (‘)+ . ehm in the direction
6. of re-training (-) . that was when I see that now/ everything was correct (‘)
7. and everything was great(,)
8. I yeah yeah
9. M right (?)and I am well (-) . can only get/
10. well can’t get better (-) & of course it can get better that’s clear
11. but it is/ great as it is (-) .
12. I yes
14. I mhm
15. M I hope that’s what you wanted to hear (-)
16. I Nay
17. that is correct . well . that is was I . eh . wanted to hear as a story I think
18. you have in a very . very illustrative and visual way have told me (‘)
19. well I got ( a) picture . ehm how this developped (‘).

We are here confronted with the last segment of the main story line that is officially and explicitly brought to a close through the sentence “I hope that’s what you wanted to hear (-)” and the following official and explicit appreciation of the interviewer as the answer to this half-stating and half-questioning expression of hope of Mr. Funke that the autobiographical rendering would be adequate (line 15–19). But the last segment of the main story line starts some bit earlier: with (a) the abstract description that although he has much work in the
firm and in evening classes (in order to go on with his learning on top of his apprenticeship), his private life is in good shape (line 1 and 2) as well as with (b) the argumentative evaluation of the present outer and inner state of the informant, i.e. that Mr. Funke now earns enough money (line 4) and is now a happy man (line 3). Of course this is not just understood by the informant as the characterization and assessment of a delimited life situation but as the permanently focussed end and goal of his life history reached at in the present life situation: a happy closure of a difficult life course.

Here we can get a first glimpse on the overall gestalt of the life history as experienced and seen by Mr. Funke. And it is typical for coda parts of the main story line of autobiographical narrative interviews that such general descriptions and evaluations are combined with questions of the overall fate of the narrator’s life history and to questions of assessing the narrator’s own biographical work, i.e. her or his decisions regarding one’s life course and its crossroads. Thus, Mr. Funke states that he has no complaints regarding his present life situation and, a fortiori, regarding the overall course of his life history. He reflects that he has no grounds for complaints (lines 3 and 4) and that he would be satisfied with the assessment of his own biographical work, i.e. with the decisions and the steps he did since he got into contact with the re-training programme (lines 4 to 6). And this argumentative abstraction and assessment process, this inner talk and argumentation with oneself ends up with the delineation of the central turning point of his life: undergoing the career of the re-training programme in the vocational re-training institution which changed his life in a positive direction to the extent that he could finally escape the chaotic and estranging biographical trajectory process of suffering (“and everything was great” – line 7).

Now it is clear that the informant Mr. Funke is really addressing the overall shape of his life history. He is not able to do this in the beginning but at the end of the main story line, since then he has accomplished biographical work in recapitulating his life historical experiences, in looking very closely at them and in thinking about them. Formulation activities of abstract description and of self-theoretical argumentation are involved in such a narrative rendering. By these activities the narrator is able to address the abstract feature of his life historical overall gestalt. Connected to this ability is also the capacity to look very seriously into one’s biographical future in terms of the long run. The narrator, looking at the overall gestalt of his life history, asks himself the question: Can I go on with the dominant biographical process(es) that I am in right now or should I work for a decisive change? In such a context of biographical work Mr. Funke states to himself: “and I am well (-) , can only get/ well can’t get better (-) & of course it can get better that’s clear, but it is/ great as it is (-) “. (lines 9–11) Mr. Funke can imagine a further positive development of the present biographical process structures of a biographical action scheme of establishing
his occupational position in his employer firm, i.e. the convention centre hall complex, and of a (possible) metamorphosis process of ongoing intensive general and occupational learning. Generally speaking: Dealing with one’s future life as a pivotal part of biographical work is only feasible on the ground of having gained clarity about the overall shape of the life history up to now and its central general features, especially the biographical process structures involved.

Looking at the coda part of Mr. Funke’s narrative interview, which is quite typical for the coda segment of autobiographical narrative interviews in general, we can now risk the following general statement: The coda element of extemore narrative story telling – similar to the short narratives of personal experiences that Labov and Waletzky (1967) dealt with – have two parts:

(a) One part is dealing with the closing up of the content of the autobiographical story, i.e. with bringing the flux of recalled lifetime and its experiences to an end. And this activity encloses intensive biographical work of characterizing the general features of the overall biographical gestalt.
(b) Another part (mostly a sequentially second part) is dealing with the activity of refocusing the communicative attention from the time of the life story contents, i.e. the autobiographical experiences, to the time of the actually “here and now” ongoing communication and situation of the interview setting – in the case of Mr. Funke’s interview: ”I hope that’s what you wanted to hear (-)” (line 15). The first part of the coda that closes up the content (the lived-through experiences) of the life history normally states higher predicates delineating the overall biographical gestalt of the life history. Essential features of this formulation of the overall biographical shape are: the abstract description of the present general inner and outer state of the life situation and its evaluation, the assessment of the benign or unhappy overall fate of the life history up to now and the delineation of its possible central turning points, the accomplished biographical work involved (especially finding out about dominant biographical process structures and understanding them, as well as dealing with the question whether there will be a continuous or discontinuous personal future with regard to the present dominant biographical process structures). The coda part of the autobiographical narrative interview is normally preceded by a narrative and descriptive segment dealing with the present phase of the life history; this can also be combined with some argumentative assessments of the present life situation and with the course of the life history in general. In Mr. Funke’s interview, the narrator here is formulating his present occupational situation and the success of having reached that position, and in addition he is also reflecting how his life history should go on in the future: He attends evening school in order to get a bachelor in business administration and, through this, he might be able to realize a biographical action scheme of getting ahead by intentionally undergoing a career in the convention centre hall (page 7, lines 43 to 53).
The coda part of the main story line is – as we saw – usually the most explicit textual referral to the global story line of the autobiographical narration and the overall biographical shape or ordering of the life history expressed by it, because it is full of textual activities of biographical work. As I said already, the preamble of the main story part of the interview is another referral to the global story line and the overall biographical shape of the life history, although normally much more implicit. In addition, there are other textual indicators linked to the usual narrative segments of the inner regions of the main story part of the autobiographical narrative interview. One type of these indicators is the suprasegmental demonstration marker that indicates the general feature of biographical process structures dealt with in the autobiographical narration. As such it just depicts the concatenation of autobiographical narrative elements and the experiences expressed by them. But their sequential or simultaneous combination hints at the global story line and the overall biographical shape (or ordering) expressed by that combination, e.g., the combination of a trajectory marker such as: “Yes, and the I got new problems and life became more and more difficult”, and the action scheme marker: “And then I started to think about these difficulties”. Such a combination expresses a global story line of the sequence of acceleration of a trajectory of suffering and of the action attempt of escaping from it. Finally there should at least be a short mentioning of argumentative commentaries linked to narrative parts of the presentation segments. Of course many argumentative commentaries just explain and evaluate intensive and unusual experiences, happy ones or difficult ones, of locally encountered events or situations. But quite often the argumentative commentaries, especially when they are dealing with very unusual, enigmatic and/or very intensive experiences, attempt to assess the local experience in its importance for the global story line and the overall biographical ordering expressed by it. Special instances are the argumentative commentaries within the pre-coda segment of the autobiographical rendering: here – or in the coda itself – we quite often find argumentative commentaries of balancing the pro’s and con’s of one’s life and biographical work in general, and therefore they deal with the global story line and the overall biographical shape of the life history of the narrator.

The global story line expresses, as we saw already, the largest cognitive figure of autobiographical story telling, i.e. the overall biographical ordering or the overall shape of the life history. Just let me remind you that we established biographical processes and thus the overall biographical shape of the life history, too, as a quite normal social phenomenon exerting even social constraints in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim 1895) on the biography incumbent and her or his interaction partners. These constraints will even take place, if the biography incumbent doesn’t reflect on them and if he doesn’t have a circumscribed autobiographical image of them. The socio-biographical phenomenon of the
global biographical shape as such with its social gestalt constraints will be called “overall biographical structuring”. If there is a conscious image of it or even a self-theoretical reflection on it, it should be called “biographical view”. Biographical views quite often are the result of sober and intensive biographical work taking into account the authentic experiences of the biography incumbent, and then they have the power to help the biography incumbent to work realistically on her or his biographical problems. But biographical views could also be constructed in contrast to the authentic experiences in order to fade out or to mystify the difficulties and problems of biographical experiences or even of the overall biographical ordering or the biographical process structures involved in it.

4.2. Overview of the Level of the Intermediate Cognitive Figures and Their Strategic Importance for Research

There are five other cognitive figures of autobiographical story telling which are indispensable for the recapitulation of personal experience, for shaping the overall biographical structuring, for experiencing the concatenation of events the individual is involved in as an ordered self-historical gestalt or story, from which one is able to make sense and to which one is able to orient oneself, as well as for doing biographical work. In order to give a short overview here is a list of them (Schütze 1984):

1. The abstract, evaluative, emotional and stylistic global shape of the narration, which can be especially studied in the preamble, the coda and the pre-coda segment of the narration (dealt with already):

2. The concatenation of narrative segments: the presentation of the sequence of the events the narrator was involved in and the related experiences including inner changes of the narrator as the person having been involved in the events; especially interesting are here the supra-segmental demonstration markers expressing the contours and the essence of biographical process structures;

3. Situations or scenes of biographical importance, in which there is a peak in the concatenation of events as well as in which the identity change of the narrator as former dramatis persona is experienced by her or himself and can be observed by others; a situation as a peak phase of a concatenation of events with a story-historical shape is rendered in a stylised episodic form as well as expressed by a narrative segment which presents the event(s) and its (their) experience through differentiated and multiple interaction perspectives of the participants – including the differences of interaction perspectives between the biography incumbent and her or his interaction partners, this mainly by the rendering of direct speech, as well as including the different perspectives of the inner speech of the narrator as former actor and as present autobiographical story teller;
4. The story carrier, who is at the same time the narrator and the biography incumbent: the autobiographical narrator is identical with the person whose life history is told in the autobiographical narrative rendering; that person is on the one hand the agency of shaping one’s own everyday situations and life affairs as well as the “reactor” of experiencing and undergoing it, i.e. the story carrier in the strict sense of the word. On the other hand, that person is the carrier of the overall life history to be told and the red thread of the overall identity development and identity change in the course of the life history, who, at the same time, paradoxically keeps identical with her- or himself as a permanently changing entity, i.e. the trajectory incumbent proper; there can be enormous differences between the former experiential perspectives in the life history and the present one of autobiographical narration; in case the difference in perspective is reflected, there will be a reflective (e.g., self-ironical, self-critical, amazed) self presentation of the biography incumbent with a proliferation of argumentative commentaries; in case the difference is not reflected there will be a naïve selfpresentation of the biography incumbent with an unnoticed abundance of symptomatic, almost unconscious markers (as hesitation phenomena, paralinguistic markers like an embarrassed laughter, small self-corrections, etc.), and the narrator is then missing a concept of her or his own identity change;

5. Event carriers: other dramatis personae beyond the story carrier; as any type of social units they can even belong to the non-human world (e.g. a severe illness, an old car, a house or a panhandle); they are introduced into the autobiographical narrative rendering by a narrative statement of what they did in terms of higher predicates or by descriptive characterizations often connected with personal evaluations; sometimes an additional characterizing story is told depicting personal (or individual) features of the respective event carrier; there is always a self-referential or retrograde indexicality of the depiction of the event carrier referring to the narrator, the story carrier and the biography incumbent; of special analytical interest are the significant others of the story carrier and biography incumbent, since they are the central helpers, mirror image and counsellors, for her or his biographical work; as well as

6. Social frames for the flux of events and social processes as well as for the flux of the inner time of the story carrier: they can be organizations, institutional milieus, any type of collective social units, social relations between individual persons or social units, social worlds and social arenas, etc. Social frames are depicted by descriptions of social units, social relationships, and social arenas. They can be facilitating conditions for the socio-biographical processes to be told, but they can also be impediments for them. Narrators sometimes differentiate between official social frames and background scripts, e.g. the relationship between mentor and apprentice could be re-interpreted as similar to
a relationship between father and daughter. Especially those background scripts are dealt with through presentation marker of contrast sets from the store of elementary social categorization. – There can be a circumspect type of autobiographical narrative rendering with lots of considerations of social frames: especially of new and strange social worlds that by their influence can introduce pivotal changes of identity of the story carrier; on the other, hand there can be an isolating and/or egocentric type of autobiographical narrative rendering. In this case it is difficult for the narrator and her or his listeners to find out what would have shaped the identity development of the story carrier.

The five latter classes of cognitive figures permanently contribute to the overall shape or story line of the autobiographical narrative. In this sense they belong to the presentational grammar of the overall story line or shape of the autobiographical narration. The global gestalt of the autobiographical story cannot be constructed and understood without their help. On the other hand, they also are meso-structures in between the global shape of the autobiographical story line and single narrative units dealt with later. But by their general cognitive orientation power that operates both on the overall story shape and on single narrative units, by their combinations (e.g. situational elaboration and raising the explication level of the concatenation of narrative segments) as well as by the special and careful import laid on the formulation of a cognitive figure, i.e. by their stylistic elaboration, they exert an indirect modelling impact on the overall story shape. Through this they combine the macro and the micro level of life histories as well as the global or long term retrograde “history perspective” with their former and present mundane enactment on the level of actual life within the everyday world of existence.

Cognitive figures are both phenomena of the narrative text of the autobiographical rendering and of socio-biographical reality. This is not difficult to understand. As an elementary means to recapitulate personal experiences of social (or socio-biographical) reality the communicative scheme of narration has to express and to depict basic features of that reality. Social reality is the reality of the members of the everyday world of existence who shape that world, but at the same time live up to its expectations. Therefore there are two alternative, but intertwined basic views of the everyday world of existence.

In the first view, the everyday world of existence is seen through their perspectives and interpreted by their biographical (or identity) relevancies (Schütz 1962, Part III). Partially it is even produced through their activities. Therefore it has a subjective origin of personal experiences: it is shaped by the perspectives of story carriers or biography incumbents and their interaction partners, the event carriers. It is on the one hand seen through the actual scenic orientation of the story carrier or biography incumbent to social situations she or
he has to undergo, has to experience dramatically, has to come to terms with and/or attempts to shape. It is also seen through the basic format of relationships between the identity development of the biography incumbent and social processes (including biographical ones up to the extent of a whole life history) realized through mundane “historical” events. These relationships are the several biographical process structures of biographical action scheme, of the trajectory of suffering, of institutional expectation pattern and of metamorphosis (Schütze 1981, 1984, 1994, 1995, Riemann and Schütze 1991; Perleberg, Schütze, Heine 2006; Riemann 1987, 2000). The relationship of the biographical action scheme between the identity of the biography incumbent and social processes is characterized by her or his active attitude to the shaping of social processes (including life historical ones) she or he is involved in or will be involved in; the basic feature of that active attitude is the intentional orientation structure. The relationship of the biographical trajectory of suffering between the identities of the biography incumbent and social processes is characterized by the attitude of feeling overwhelmed by powerful outer forces and of just suffering through their impact. This attitude includes the basic experience of having lost the aptitude to model one’s everyday encounters and one’s life through personally controlled action; to the contrary, there is the feeling to be able to do nothing more than to react to the powerful outer events and just to attempt to keep some balance of handling social encounters and one’s life situation. Therefore a basic feature of the trajectory attitude is that of a conditional orientation structure. Another feature is the irritation of becoming strange to oneself, since the active relationship to life is lost. The relationship of institutional expectation pattern between the identity of the biography incumbent and social processes is characterized by the attitude to follow up expectations of institutionally defined paths of development and pertinent activities – institutional expectations which order a social or biographical realm by normative rules and constraints in the Durkheimian sense and which are accepted by the biography incumbent. A typical class of it are career paths and patterns. A basic feature of the attitude of the institutional expectation pattern is the orientation structure and the sense of obligation, but on the other hand there is also the orientation possibility of getting into a distance to the institutional expectations or even criticising or reinterpreting them. The relationship of biographical metamorphosis between the identity of the biography incumbent and social processes is characterized by the attitude of encountering and exploring something essentially new in a social encounter and especially in one’s biographical identity and life history, which is not conditioned by outer forces and normative expectation pattern, but stems from the inner identity realm of the biography incumbent and/or her or his interaction partners. A basic feature of the attitude of the metamorphosis relationship is the orientation structure of being puzzled by the dynamics of
inner change of one’s personal or of individual identity and of feeling driven to find out what are the riddles of it.

The other basic view of the everyday world of existence is that of the objective reality of it: it exerts normative and material constraints on its members, and it delivers favourable conditions, which allow to do things and to develop in certain directions. As we saw already, the biographical process structures of trajectory and institutional expectation pattern especially take into account the objective character of the everyday world of existence, although, at the same time, they are shaped by a subjective or relational basic perspective, which the story carrier or the biography incumbent casts on them. In a certain sense, they are internalisations of the objective reality into the identity formation of the story carrier or biography incumbent. On the other hand, there is the exterior perspective of the objective reality of the everyday world of existence. The stock of cognitive figures of autobiographical story telling deals with it in terms of all sorts of social frames like organizations, institutions, collective social units, social milieus, social worlds, social arenas, social relationships. Of course these social frames have their unique normative and procedural ordering principles, which the biography incumbent has to take into consideration in dealing with his everyday encounters and his long term biographical processes. The cognitive figure of social frames of autobiographical extempore story telling takes into account the exterior relationships of the story carrier or the biography incumbent to the social structures of the everyday world of existence. Naturally these relationships can have a central impact on the identity formation of the biography incumbent, but originally they are envisioned by her or him as phenomena not belonging to the interior formation of personal identity. To the contrary, they have to be set into a more or less explicit relationship to the identity formation of the biography incumbent: a dialectical relationship of shaping them and being shaped by them at the same time. Finally, there is an additional aspect of the objective reality of the everyday world of existence: There are overall historical gestalts of concatenations of events within the everyday world of existence (Schapp 2004). One of these gestalts is the total life history of the biography incumbent, another one a shaped phase (a chapter) in the life of the biography incumbent as ordered by a dominant biographical process structure or the unique interface by two or several of them, still another one the episodic evolvement of a situation of mundane interactive encounter, and still another one collective historical gestalts of any type of social units with a collective identity and collective memory, where the biography incumbent would belong to or be shaped in her or his existence by it. (Those collective units could be families, friendship groups, social milieus, firms, nations, etc.). Overall historical gestalts are experienced, detected and then focussed on, interpreted and worked on by the persons involved. They are only possible
through the view and the definition of the individuals taking part in them or being impacted by them. Persons involved have to find out that there is something like that, that it has a shape, and that this shape has a logic of evolvement that must be taken into account (if one likes it or not). That logic of evolvement exerts an exterior orientation pressure, and sometimes even a moral obligation, on the story carrier and biography incumbent. One important aspect of this pressure is the collective character of the image of the overall historical gestalt (this statement holds even for individual biographical phenomena, since the biography incumbent is always in an outer and inner conversation with significant others); the other is the formative logic of the story shape itself, which becomes a self-evident script of past and further evolvements and which grasps the attention of the members of the collective (or biographical) identity unit, where that overall historical gestalt is told about, and their interaction partners. So, in a certain sense even the global shape or overall story line of an autobiographical narration belongs to the aspect of the objective reality of the everyday of existence – as soon it is told to somebody.

Now it might be understood that cognitive figures of autobiographical storytelling are both phenomena of autobiographical narrative texts and of the everyday world of existence. On the one hand, autobiographical extempore narration has the function to “reanimate” or re-enliven former experiences of past events encountered by the biography incumbent through the dynamic recollection of extempore storytelling and the power of its narrative constraints. And this means that by the power of narrative recollection the narrator as biography incumbent again imaginatively dives into former life phases and the social situations connected to them, and there she or he must orient herself through the logic of the action and experiential perspectives of the everyday world of existence. We also saw, on the other hand, that autobiographical storytelling is very important for the construction and build-up of overall historical gestalts connected to all sorts of evolvements of social identity units, including the life historical one of the individual biography incumbent. Therefore, storytelling even has a direct structuring impact on the identity work of all types of social we-communities and of individual biography incumbents. – The “double reality status” character of the cognitive figures of extempore autobiographical storytelling has the crucial epistemic implication that there is a close and tight relationship between the logic of life (experience of events, action, suffering, normative following up, metamorphic identity changes) in the everyday world of existence, on the one hand, and the basic presentation and demonstration markers of autobiographical extempore narrative texts depicting the phenomena of the everyday world of existence. – The latter I would like to address some bit.
In a former chapter I addressed the general methodical strategy of pragmatic refraction. (Schütze 2005) Pragmatic refraction means not to take verbal – here: specifically autobiographical narrative – expressions at face value, but to contextualize them, and by this to find out their social functions – regarding our type of materials: especially functions of biographical work – within the constitutive social frames, that have an impact on the production (and possibly later on also on the eventual interpretation, re-interpretation and re-shaping) of the form and the content of these verbal expressions. As we saw, the constitutive social frames of extempore autobiographical story telling are: the process of action, of interaction or of life constellation of the original experience of an event; the situation of first narrative recapitulation of that experience; the biographical process structure that was dominant during that experiential situation; the overall biographical structuring of the life history of the biography incumbent; and finally the actual communicative situation of the ongoing autobiographical narration in front of an interaction partner (e.g. the interviewer), which is possibly influenced by her or his expectations of the autobiographical recapitulation as assumed by the interviewee as well as by other interaction dynamics stemming from the interview situation (like the interviewer’s topical interventions that don’t belong to the program of a proper narrative interview). But how is it assured that the procedure of pragmatic refraction is done in an adequate way, which mainly means to detect the authentic social frames, which exert their power in shaping the autobiographical rendering as an important part of the biographical work of the narrator as story carrier? By looking at the presentation, the authentic frames can be delineated as well as demonstration markers of the cognitive figures as used and revealed on the macro-, the meso- und the micro level of autobiographical narration. Firstly, the cognitive figures are, as we saw, the ordering principles, on the one hand, of the global and the meso-structural autobiographical story shape, i.e. of macro-textual phenomena, and, on the other hand, of the overall biographical structuring of the life history and of its biographical process structures, i.e. of long term social phenomena of the everyday world of existence. Secondly, cognitive figures also are, on the one hand, the ordering principles of single narrative segments, i.e. of micro-textual phenomena, and correspondingly, on the other hand, of experienced single events, single situations and single episodes of historically shaped sequences of events with their short term mundane meaning (and embedded and ascribed to them: their long term biographical meaning), i.e. of micro- or short term phenomena of the everyday word of existence. Thus, by formal linguistic means textual presentation or demonstration markers identify constitutive logical grids of activities, procedures, processes and frames of the everyday world of existence, which by itself is very deeply modelled by speech activities, including “historical” story
telling, as well as the implicit knowledge store of the linguistic categorizations built into the semantic structure of the ordinary language of a social milieu, social world and/or society. There is a stable relationship between the quite short list of formulaic textual presentation and demonstration markers, on the one hand, and those formal logic grids of social evolvements and frames of the everyday world of existence. And that is the epistemic reason for the research-strategically comfortable fact that formulaic textual presentation and demonstration markers can formally delineate the social frames and social procedures of biographical work and biographical processes as told in the medium of extempore autobiographical story telling.

Textual presentation and demonstration markers, by the way, are different for various types of social evolvements and social frames, e.g. for action, for trajectory of suffering, for social situation, for discourse arena, as well as for various types of communicative schemes of presenting facts of the everyday world of existence like the communicative schemes of narration, description and argumentation.

4.3. The Presentation Markers and the Language of Biographical Process Structures in General

Making methodical use of the presentation and demonstration markers of autobiographical story telling basically consists out of three elements: (a) looking at the overall orientation and presentation perspective of the narrative rendering, (b) searching for, and focussing on, formulaic expressions, which formulate the gist of the orientation perspective as well as (c) looking at the sequentially well ordered micro-contexts of the extempore narration, i.e. the narrative segments – at micro-contexts (including difficult contexts with self-corrections and background constructions), in which the narrative perspective will be expressed and in which the formulaic expressions will occur. The latter will be discussed in the next section of this text; the two topics mentioned first will be dealt with right here regarding biographical process structures.

Just to characterize the various overall orientation perspectives of the narrative presentation of the four biographical process structures, which are the four alternative types of the cognitive figure of socio-biographical processes (or concatenation of life historical events) specifically relating to one’s own life and identity, and just to give some examples of formulaic expressions and language perspective for the four different orientation perspectives of the biographical process structures:

1. The narrative orientation and presentation perspective of biographical action scheme is characterized by a language of formulating intentions, of
emotional volition and of being in a positive, optimistic mood and/or of thinking and planning (the Latin grammarians would name it “verba sentiendi and dicendi”), of deliberation and calculation, of assessing and evaluating the discrepancies between plans and their realization, of getting hold of the adequate means to fulfil those plans or at least reach at goals halfway as well as of securing social and/or professional support to perform the action scheme. Typical formulaic verbal expressions of biographical action scheme would be: “and then I got the idea”, “and then I thought”, “and then I planned”, “and then I decided to become an (occupation)”, “then I decided unconditionally to carry it through”, “I attempted to get assistance and I was successful in it”, “I always wanted to be (occupation) and I’ve never seen a reason to change”, “then I became some bit keen of hearing and said to myself: ‘Now you have to do something’”, “that would be simply my way”, “and then I realized that my plan was not so easy to carry through”, etc.

2. The narrative orientation and presentation perspective of biographical trajectory is characterized by a language of conditioned reaction to powerful outer interventions, of deep and long term suffering, of being fatigued or even being paralysed, or to the contrary of being agitated, of progressive proliferation of the trajectory effect by transformations of their dynamics into other realms of life, of the mutual intensification of the trajectory dynamics by the different conditions (band wagon effect) and its traplike character, as well as of being disoriented and of becoming essentially strange to oneself – the latter might be connected to expressions of standing on the outside of oneself or even of being disconnected from oneself. Typical formulaic verbal expressions of trajectory would be: “and then it became difficult”, “and then I had the inking that I wouldn’t come past”, “and that struck me down”, “and there was this powerlessness, and I couldn’t do anything against it”, ” I realized that I would deteriorate”, “that pressed me down that much that I was without any wish for anything at all”, ”my energy to fight against it was lost already”, “and then, again, it was a wash-out”, “and then I didn’t know what to do against it”, “and then everything would come together and I was in a real mess”, “and then I was really down and this had a severe impact on all the other aspect of life”, “and then I was so stupid in my head, that I couldn’t think; everything was like broken”, “and then I was ashamed about my reaction; I had never thought that I could be drawn into it”, ”I went into a state of shock, I can’t remember anything; the voices of the persons around me would be way, way off”, “and that pressures would become almost unbearable for me; I was astonished that I could stand them at all”, etc.

3. The narrative orientation and presentation perspective of institutional expectation pattern in the course of life histories is characterized by a language of relation between normal expectation and its usual fulfilment and of the
temporal (especially sequential) ordering of such cycles of expectations and their fulfilments (in terms of life historical standard courses), of willingly following up the normative and procedural standards of the institutional (including career) order of society and of sometimes distancing oneself from it and criticising it, of passing through institutional or organizational doors, of following up status ladders and their hierarchies and echelons, of opportunities for climbing up on the status ladders and respective sucking mechanisms for elevation as well as of being engrossed or even seduced by them, and of procedural selection, manipulation and alienation. Typical formulaic expressions of institutional expectations patterns within the life history would be: “everything developed quite normally in my life”, “during the upper classes of my secondary school”, “and then one did, what everybody would do; that’s life”, “and then one did what was expected from us”, “one had the feeling that one should serve in the army”, “and then I applied and got it, and then I immediately underwent that career line and carefully followed it up”, “and then I could use it as a springboard”, “and then the career wouldn’t go on”, “and then I had an inkling that I possibly wouldn’t pass”, “there was the attempt of the organization to make me more responsible, but every time they wanted to raise me, I could not help myself but do something against the order”, “there I could pass through”, “there I saw colleagues climbing up and this stirred my sense for competition”, “and then I was asked if I would be interested”, “and then I did not realize that it took all the energy from me”, “and then they had me on the hook”.

4. The narrative orientation and presentation perspective of biographical metamorphosis is characterized by a language of creative inner development, of being puzzled by oneself and one’s inner evolvements, of searching for one’s change of identity and finding out about it, of discrepancy between the inner time of the dynamics of creative change and the social time of institutionally expected procedures, of being moved by new developments stemming from strange social worlds (this might be connected with the language of travelling), of being eventually disoriented in a limbo situation of having lost one’s old world view and pertinent categories and not having found a new one and the pertinent categories yet, of being counselled by significant others about the riddles of oneself or even of undergoing a special social arrangement of instruction and learning with a mentor and, eventually, of finding bystanders in the difficulties of the metamorphosis process. Typical formulaic expressions of biographical metamorphosis would be: “My permanent wish was, after I had gotten so mature, that I had a better view of the situation, that everybody should do what she or he would be fit for. What one loves to do, one is really able to do well. And what one can do well, one even loves more to do, and one gets even more interest in searching for the sources of its inspiration”; “they told me, that I would have an absolute sense for hearing tones / for seeing colours; I knew that
this would be wrong, but I realized that I would have a certain capacity”; “then I got sharp ears: I realize that I wasn’t never satisfied in my life situation / in my occupation, and I knew that I had to do something”; “I was always especially interested in things I was not able to do perfectly. I knew there were personal sources /barrels never opened”, “there would be a hunger for something, that I did not know – a desire, that could not be satisfied. I was uncertain, empty, unsatisfied”, “being in a strange social environment (e.g. in the army – F.S.) and seeing totally new things including strange geographical and cultural surroundings, this probably shook me loose from my roots, and it broadened my horizon”; “and then, during my adolescence, in my free time I made myself totally independent and used to be alone with myself; I didn’t know what I needed”; “and I would say, that being in a strange environment would somewhat enlarge my life”; “and then I had a good time to go off into the desert, find interesting and strange things”, “I had some sort inspiration, I didn’t know were it would come from”; “that corresponded to me, it was very natural and easy for me to accomplish it; I didn’t know, where it would come from”; “this capability was strangely tailor-made for me, and suddenly I realized that it was not that difficult to do”; “I had certain qualities, but I never had the sense of responsibility to function in that organization”; “I was undisciplined, I never could accept anybody telling me what to do”; “I had lost my old world view and felt totally senseless, but I knew that I had to search for something else”; “I realized that it was something I couldn’t do and had to find a new stance to it”; “there was a stern, but understanding mentor, who introduced me into the new world”; “I think, her (the spouse’s – F.S.) approach to life had a strong influence on the way I felt and what I got interested in”; “I got help from others being in the same limbo situation of starting to focus on new phenomena with lots of inner difficulties”.

4.4. The Language and the Presentation Markers of the Three Biographical Process Structures of Action Scheme, Trajectory, and Institutional Expectation Pattern in the Funke Interview

Now it might be useful to make out three of the four process structures in the interview with Mr. Funke by just looking at some of these specific presentation markers and some other features of their specific language perspective:
4.4.1. Biographical Action Scheme:

Mr. Funke has just told that he had been integrated in a class of the vocational re-training institution (“Berufsförderungswerk”). Then he goes on:

17        and all of a sudden
18        life started to be nice again (').
19        I                          yeah
20        M                          girl-friend was there (-).
21        and ehm. had goals right (?)
22        I                          mhm
23        M                          you will pull through this here. doesn’t matter
24        what will happen after this. you don’t know that anyway (').
25        I                          yes
26        M                          I got (-). thanks to
27        Mrs. Brühl from the agency for advancement for educational training. 
28        personally/ I can’t speak for the others but I speak just about. eh. me (').
29        got a lot of help (). didn’t matter what kind right (?) . whether it were
30        encouraging words or even now when looking for those practical apprenticing
31        companies (). 
32        I                          mhm
33        M                          and eh. well. because
34        everything got going ('). that in that view/ you didn’t feel so alone. you :<could>:
35        even during the vocational school let me say that again and again at/ well
36        that was always your contact (').
37        I                          yes
38        M                          and if anything happened
39        (-). or. they were actually always there for you. and I have that/
40        that was very good for me (). 
41        I                          mhm
42        M                          right (?) .

(Page 6, lines 17 up to line 42)

I marked the presentation and demonstration markers by grey shadows. There is the indication of intention to follow up a biographical goal: to carry through the re-training procedure (“goals”—line 21). There is the language of unconditional decision to carry the difficult procedure through (“you will pull through this here”—line 23). There is the focus on rich social and technical support in order to reach the goal (“got a lot of help”—line 29—,”you didn’t feel so alone”—line 34). There is the general assessment of the efficacy of oneself
and the professional social pedagogue in the retraining institution to accomplish the biographical action scheme of vocational re-training (“everything got going” – line 34). And finally there is a textual marker of the re-establishment of a positive, optimistic mood for embarking on serious and efficient biographical action. (“And all of a sudden life started to be nice again”) This marker we find in the introduction to the narrative segment; it is a very emphatic supra-segmental marker of the change from a protracted severe trajectory process (and the initial institutional intervention by putting Mr. Funke on the re-training career track) to a serious and successful biographical action scheme of working on oneself through learning and building up the capacity for successfully performing in a different occupation and finding a position in its organizational context. Supra-segmental markers that indicate a decisive change from one biographical process structure to another will further on be called “demonstration markers” in contrast to usual presentation markers of biographical process structures, which express the quality of a certain process structure in-between.

4.4.2. Biographical Trajectory of Suffering:

Mr. Funke has just told that he had caught a severe disease to the extent that he couldn’t go on to do manual work anymore, that he had gotten out of work, that he had been trapped into such severe financial difficulties, that he became incapacitated to pay his rent any longer (i.e. that he was on the brink of becoming homeless), as well as that he had become socially isolated. He then goes on:

5 and ehm . everything came out of the blue (,)
6 I couldn’t pay my rent anymore (-) were unemployed (´)
7 I mhm
8 M and eh . was alone (-) .
9 well that was actually a really deep low point let me say that like that (,)
10 I yes
11 M yes(?) there
12 I was actually really deep down (,). and eh . my life looked like that actually
13 right (?) . a lot of alcohol came to that (´) . well practically . really (-) . well how
14 I should I say (-) just so . hanging/
15 I mhm
16 M hanging around (,)
17 I yes yes
18 M and ehm .
Again I marked the presentation markers for biographical process structures, in this case for trajectory, by grey shadows. First of all there are two markers of the final result of going the downward road: i.e. losing control over one’s life as well as of the accompanying depression that is overshadowing Mr. Funke’s whole life situation (“that was actually a really deep low point” – line 9 – as well as “I was … deep down… and my life looked like that actually” – line 12). The narrator stresses the generalizing power of the trajectory experience: that it transforms its impact dynamics into any realm of the life situation of the biography incumbent. He also implies by pointing to the “here and now” actual present that the trajectory afflicted person cannot distance her- or himself even through imagination from the trajectory dynamics: she or he is totally immersed into it, and there is no cheering up in looking to one’s future hoping that there would be a way out of the predicament, and as well there is no encouragement from looking at a better personal past, which could demonstrate one’s capability for an active controlling of comparable former situation. Secondly there are two markers for what Anselm Strauss would call the “cumulative mess” character of many trajectories; one could also call it the multi-conditional trap character of trajectories of suffering (“some things come together, right?” – line 21 – “every thing came out of the blue” – line 5). This is the vicious circle character of trajectories: the different conditions of the trajectory dynamics are influencing and enforcing each other; there is the effect of an uncontrollable negative bandwagon effect. The two types of trajectory markers in this narrative segment are essential ones that depict trajectories almost unambiguously. They are classical supra-segmental markers that exert their symbolic expression and delineation power over more than one narrative segment. But, on the other hand, they are not demonstration markers, since they do not introduce a totally different quality of biographical process structure, although they introduce a new phase in the course of the chaotic unfolding of the trajectory (transformation into other realms of the life situations and negative band wagon effect) – but which is, in its fateful progression, at the same time strangely ordered.
4.4.3. Institutional Expectation Pattern of Life History

After having recapitulated the change from a long term and severe biographical trajectory to a biographical action scheme as discussed already (see the section above on biographical action schemes) and his fast and successful learning in the re-training institution, Mr. Funke arrives at the last segment immediately ahead of the coda of the main story line (also mentioned earlier already) that depicts his present life situation during the time of the interview. Mr. Funke draws on the present life situation as follows:

"I am working now as a white-collar worker in the public service (\textquoteleft) and ehm. have then/ well as I said before I finished it and did work then too (\textquoteleft) and you always talk to each other. and I did say then "if there is any possibility to get into a higher position. I am open-minded to everything (\textquoteleft) right (\textquoteleft)"

"I\textquoteleft mhm

"now I go beside my work go to eh. night school in ( )\textquoteleft and do my degree in business management (,)

"mhm

(page 7, lines 43 to 52)

In this segment Mr. Funke draws on a threefold career experience as central to the recent part of his life history, which is still dominant in the present. Again I marked the language of career experiences by grey shadows. As we mentioned already, career is one important class of institutional expectation patterns. During the most recent and the present phase of his life it is the dominant biographical process structure – this in combination with an enforcing biographical action scheme to undergo and follow up the career line as obligating, entitling and enabling institutional expectation pattern. Firstly, there is the language of passing a door to a next phase of career (\textquoteleft I finished it\textquoteleft – this refers to the apprenticeship and the final examination, line 44) and the language of orientation and achievement to approach the next door (through additional learning in night classes – lines 50 and 51). Secondly, there is the language of hierarchy and climbing up on the status ladder (\textquoteleft if there is any possibility to into a higher position\textquoteleft – lines 46 and 47). Thirdly, there is the language of opportunities to move up and conscientiously to take one\textquoteleft s chances; this language could even refer to some sort of sucking or elevation mechanism – partially accomplished by casual or directed institutional conversation (lines 45 and 46) – or a mechanism that pulls the biography incumbent up into higher
regions of the career status system and to an inner attitude of, on the one hand, mental and social openness or, on the other hand, reservation or even resistance to let that happen (line 47).

Of course, the biographical process structure of career must not be that benign as expressed in the piece of text just quoted. Mr. Funk as a child and adolescent undergoes another institutional career path in the elite sports secondary school. Even the language of the pertinent pieces of text conveys the selection and possible entrapment character of that in institutional expectation pattern and career path; i.e. the orientation on the personal development of school boys was not decisive, but the organisational demand for young blood as a pool for building up a team of official or state elite athletes, and this could only be realized through harsh selection as well as an extreme focus on sports training and sports competition:

3 and all of a sudden the door opened and somebody came to us (-) . and eh . “we support sport” and eh .
4 (my commentary: and not individual school children in their development)

(page 9, lines 3 and 4)

12 and ehm . it was such a training were all were
13 together (’) like a hundred people (’) . with several coaches (’) and right
14 away you got sorted out “ you can throw you do that and the rest of
15 you can go home”

(page 9, lines 12 to 15)

10 . but there it started to be interesting (’)
11 there was only the sport alone (’) . right (?)

(page 10, lines 10 and 11)

To close this up: the language of the biographical process structure of institutional expectation pattern – and even of career as one important class of it – can also be a language of an alienating normative-institutional or organizational processing, being mentally seduced by this processing and its sucking mechanism, being caught by one’s delivery of awareness and energy and being entrapped by it. In such a case the biographical process structure of institutional expectation pattern is connected to a biographical process structure of trajectory, i.e. of being estranged from one’s own identity development by normative and procedural norms, rules and manipulating arrangements.
4.5. The Special Chapter of the Language and the Presentation
Markers of Biographical Metamorphosis in the Funke
Interview as a Delicate Phenomenon

Mr. Funke has just produced the narrative segment (discussed already – see point one on biographical action scheme), in which he rendered that turning point in life at which he could get rescued from the multiple trajectory trap of being out of work, of being severely ill, of losing most of his friends and significant others and of turning into an alcoholic, to when he developed his long term biographical action scheme of becoming a secretary, clerk or executive and to, by all means, really carry through the respective apprenticeship of being trained as office and administration worker. After having finished the production of this narrative segment he goes on and deals with the learning experiences of his apprenticeship:

42 M right (?) . I also have found a
43 I very good apprenticing company (‘) . that was in the festival hall (‘) right (?)
44 M mhm
45 M and
46 I there (-) . yes (-) . all . let me say the average age elderly women (-) . I was there
47 I the spring chicken now (-) . that was great of course (-)
48 I mhm yes
49 M and ehm (-) .
50 I had the interview (‘) and it got confirmed there that I could do my training
51 I there (‘)
52 I mhm yeah
53

1 M and as I said I had problems then (‘) . actually I was ambitious
2 in school (‘) . in that eh . new vocational school (‘) . I in myself
3 accepted all that (-) . and eh . yes . made acquaintance ((faster till+))
4 that is clear with the young people and and and ( ) let me
5 say that (‘)+.
6 I mhm yeah yeah
7 M we were several re-trainees in the class (‘) .
8 I that was a real help too (‘) . ((softer till+)) when something was
9 somehow/then it is the elderly told a bit (-) and eh right (?)+
10 I yes yes mhm
11 M and eh (-).
12 I yes and no problems in the practical apprenticing company . that was
In this segment we find the language perspective and some presentation markers – even demonstration markers – of the biographical metamorphosis process (Schütze 1991, 1994). Again I marked these sociolinguistic phenomena by grey shadows. Just to remind ourselves: The metamorphosis perspective to one’s life and identity is characterized by being puzzled by new creative inner developments and intensive learning that changes one’s perspective on life, world and identity.
1. Firstly there is the language of the openness and willingness for experiencing the new and unknown. Mr. Funke, in the virtue of story carrier for his experiencing and handling of the recalled social situation of re-training and apprenticeship, is characterizing himself as a “spring chicken” which is a basic self-referential metaphor for one’s openness, willingness and “immature” plasticity for undergoing learning processes and being shaped by them (page 6, line 46 and 47). He is adding that this acceptance of “regression” to a former state of biographical development – eased by the age and competency of women working in his environment of apprenticeship and teaching him some bit like mothers would teach their sons – was quite natural and a lucky one; it just was his situation-adequate self-categorization as learner (“that was great of course” – page 6, line 47). Later on in this narrative segment he adds that in new work situations he would always have the basic attitude to identify with the new learning potentials and their work tasks in an emphatic way (page 7, line 30 and 31). (By the way: this is not just a marker of metamorphosis, but to a certain extent it also is a hindsight to a disposition of getting hurt by an self-alienating acceptance of normative and procedural constraints of the institutional expectation patterns of society and its administrated state-socialistic occupational work structure as well as by the seducing sucking mechanisms of career ladders and hierarchies.)

2. Secondly there is the language of an ambivalent limbo situation of passing through a phase of severe emotional difficulties connected to disorienting work demands asking the biography incumbent for too much. On the one hand, there is emotional trouble (“as I said I had problems then” – page 7, line 1; “(,) well it were hard demands” – page 7, line 13), and on the other hand Mr. Funke can have a productive experience (“but (-) . : <it was>: in . eh . was great (,)” – page 7, line 13 and 14). At the first glimpse, the narrator would just like to mention this experiential and emotional contradiction incidentally or just as a sideline, since – apart from the nuisance to reconstruct a totally different former mental state left behind some time ago – lively remembering it by delving into a detailed narrative or descriptive or argumentative rendering would be emotionally hurting. It not only re-enlivens the difficult experiences of passing from manual work to paper work in his apprenticeship, but it also deals with the former (and even today not totally banned) deep fear of the felt difficulties of not being fit for a new occupational life, taking into account his not forgotten history of a hurting and protracted occupational trajectory and the fact of just having learnt the categories of the world of manual work – and not those of mental work – in the formative adolescent period of his life. So he attempts to fade out this doubly hurting experience from his memory and his narrative rendering (page 7, line 1 and lines 13 and 14). But permanently self-monitoring his narrative presentation line, he realizes that his whole narrative
rendering would get implausible without embarking on those (double layer) difficulties. And therefore the narrator inserts a background construction into the main story line of his narrative rendering as some sort of elaborate self-correction device. (The beginning and the end of the background construction are marked by my graphic signs “///”, i.e. by triple slashes. The background construction starts on page 7, line 14; “whereas I have to say…”, and it ends on page 7, line 31 to 33: “…so that wasn’t a problem anymore after a couple of weeks (-)”, and the interviewer reacts with marker of sympathetic understanding: “mhm”.

3. On the one hand, the background construction explains the ambivalent limbo situation of passing through a phase of severe emotional difficulties during the apprenticeship as mentioned above. On the other hand, it makes the puzzling fact plausible that it nevertheless was a productive experience and a successful period of learning. This explanation work and the work of making it plausible is not only done for the listener or interviewer, but for the narrator as biography incumbent and story carrier himself, too. In inserting the background construction he performs important biographical work dealing with the fact and problems of his dramatic identity change: he is realizing and working through his being so severely troubled by this categorical change of identity. In a first step, the language of this metamorphosis-type of working through deals with the breakdown of Mr. Funke’s old everyday world perspective brought by him from his former manual work milieu into his new work milieu of administrative paperwork (“the next world was coming to an end” – page 7, line 16; reverting to the German original text, “next” just means that even before this new work situation of apprenticeship, Mr. Funke had “lost worlds” (e.g., firstly, the world of the manual labourer’s technical categorization and of his contempt of cultural learning, of getting cultured in writing, speech and foreign languages; or secondly, the world of elite sports). In a second step, the language of metamorphosis-type of working through deals with a severe state of disorientation of the biography incumbent; it depicts a feeling of total senselessness (page 7, line 23) and not-understanding (page 7, line 27), similar to Alfred Schütz’s account of the disorientation situation of the immigrating cultural stranger. In a third step, the language of the metamorphosis type of working through deals with the enculturation into the new world of administrative paperwork, especially with the learning of new categories and work procedures connected to this strange new work world (“to stick some little paper flags on pages” – page 7, line 24 – which is for getting a time control order on the documents coming in or being produced; Mr. Funke must learn new categories for taking into account time). – All in all we could say that in this background construction the language of biographical metamorphosis deals with one certain class – there also are others – of metamorphosis: with a biographical
conversion process in which the whole system of existential beliefs and world categorization must be abandoned and a new one acquired; this is connected to a central redefinition of one’s personal identity.

4. There is the language of dealing with an extremely intensive social arrangement of instruction and learning and of getting socialised into a new work milieu or even a new world: the relationship between master and apprentice. This is connected with the role of the stern, but fair and benign mentor responsible for the learning process of the neophyte (page 7, lines 35 to 38). And, in addition, there is the implied background of the imagined relationship between mother and son (page 6, lines 46 and 47) that is an additional mechanism of generating basic trust toward an instructor who can serve as a new significant other so pivotal for many metamorphosis processes.

5. Finally there is the language of dealing with the attitude and support of the peers who are bystanders in the limbo situation of the metamorphosis process: “we were several re-trainees in the class (’), that was a real help too (’)” (page 7, lines 7 and 8). Of course this doesn’t hold for any metamorphosis processes, but for those connected to biographical process structure of a collective, school-type, learning career.

Looking back on my treatment of the finally quoted narrative unit of Mr. Funke’s extempore autobiographical narrative rendering in order to give an example for basic features of the narrative rendering of the biographical process structure of metamorphosis, we can ask ourselves: Are there, in this example, just presentation markers or, in addition, demonstration markers of the metamorphosis process structure, too? The narrator Mr. Funke doesn’t introduce the metamorphosis process structure into his narrative unit, in which the partial coming up of the metamorphosis principle in his life history is factually expressed, on the level of the direct or straight forward presentation line of narration as well as by orderly occurring explicit demonstration markers like, e.g.: “and then, to start with, something totally new happened, and I was puzzled and started to search for its features / for the reason”. There are some markers of discontinuity of the unfolding of the presentation line of narration in this narrative segment and in the segment before, but they are much too vague, too unspecific or too ambivalent or even contradictory in order to unanimously depict the metamorphosis principle of biography: “I also have found a very good apprenticing company (’), that was in the festival hall (’), right (‘)… that was great of course (‘)” (page 6, lines 42, 43 and 47); “yes and no problems in the practical apprenticing company (’), that was all trouble-free (‘); well there were hard demands, but (‘) <it was>: in .eh . was great (‘)” (page 7, lines 12 to 14); “and all of a sudden life started to be nice again (‘)” (page 6, lines 17 and 18). That means that Mr. Funke is not very much aware of the dynamics of the
metamorphosis principle in his biography. And it also means that the metamorphosis principle doesn’t win unambiguous and long term dominance in the life history and overall biographical structuring in the life history of Mr. Funke. In a more explicit manner, he can only address it in the background construction he first attempted to leave out of his narrative rendering. I don’t want to repeat all those metamorphosis markers coming up there; I would just like to quote again the dramatic marker in the beginning of the background construction: “whereas I have to say of course the first time I started there (-) . the training well the/ the first time practical work that was/ for me there the next world was coming to an end” (page 7, lines 14 to 16). – Of course we can call markers like that demonstration markers, since they depict a new supra-segmental unfolding in the narrator’s overall autobiographical story line as well as, at least, a partial unfolding of a new biographical process structure in the life history of Mr. Funke: from just undergoing the procedures of the career type institutional expectation pattern of re-training and from just following a biographical action scheme of career management, he at least partially goes on to embark on a metamorphosis process of conversion from a mentality and world view of manual work to a mentality and world view of mental and paper work, which is linked to deeper learning and systematic re-categorization of the everyday world of existence and one’s own biography and personal identity. That the dynamics of dominance of the metamorphosis principle in the life of Mr. Funke are limited, might also be symbolized in his self reference as story carrier in this situation as “spring chicken” (page 6, line 47) – a quality which is restricted in terms of the time period to the life historical phase of being a re-training apprentice.

5. Exercises

- Take an autobiographical text from the enormous list of published autobiographies, including literary ones (it could even be a fictional autobiography), and identify the introductory part of the autobiographical narration and its closing part. In these two textual strings, are there indicators of the general character of the life history which is told in this autobiographical text?
- Within this published autobiography, identify some of the cognitive figures of biographical process structures, that is, of situations of biographical importance, of the story carrier, of event carriers and of social frames. Would you judge the textual expression of one or the other of these cognitive figures especially remarkable? What might be the reason for this?
- Take the two biographical process structures of trajectory of suffering and of metamorphosis and identify their beginning and their end. Are they connected with each other? What is the type of connection? When the informant talks about a metamorphosis process coming out of the process of working-through his or her severe trajectory experience, do you think that this can be just a rhetorical, phoney or self-delusional statement? How would you decide whether or not this is the case?

- Take the transcription of a narrative interview (e.g., the interview of Bernd Funke, say the section quoted in the beginning of the module) and delineate (i.e. do the segmentation of) two or three narrative units. Take one of these narrative units and do a closer analysis of it. What are the biographical and/or social processes expressed by this narrative unit?

- Identify supra-segmental markers of trajectory and/or metamorphosis in this narrative interview. Do you know of similar demonstration markers from literary autobiographies (or autobiography fictions), too? What is the nature of the biographical processes they convey?

6. Conclusions

By no means it is an „of course“, that extempore autobiographical narration would be an open avenue to social reality as experienced by individual members of society. Instead, a common understanding in the social sciences and literary studies is, that an extempore autobiographical narrative can be easily made up by the narrator in order to fit the requirements of an actually ongoing situation (e.g., to show up, to legitimize, etc.). But this common understanding is not true. Grosso modo, one can state – and this is empirically corroborated by the study of autobiographical narrative interviews that have been repeated after one or two years –, that the basic grid of the representational structure of extempore narration of personal experiences is quite stable in various situations of storytelling; only some of the argumentative commentaries are drastically transformed according to the change of life situations. The same holds to some extent true for the descriptions of social frames, since the narrator has to arrange them according to the state of knowledge the listener is assumed to have regarding the social structure, the institutions, the social network, the social worlds as well as the social milieu which the narrator as biography incumbent had to live in and/or had to pass through. (In case the narrator is addressing a society or an institutional realm of society that is culturally strange to the listener, he has to become more explicit in her or his description of social frames than she or he would have to in addressing a society or institutional realm
assumedly well known to the listener.) The considerable stability of the presentational grid of extempore narration is due to the fact that the structure of biographical experiences of having been entangled in life-historical events (Schapp 2004) is sedimented within the biographical identity of the narrator, i.e. in her or his memory storage, as well as within the mutually assumed and/or even explicitly stated collective remembrance by the social environment the narrator is living in. (And this collective remembrance is focussed on the social episodes or social stories, including the stories of collective or “big” history, the narrator as biography incumbent and her or his consociates are involved in.)

Autobiographical story telling does not just depict social and biographical reality like a photographic picture; instead it expresses it in a “refracted”, sometimes only symptomatical, way. But, on the other hand, there are stable formal structures of autobiographical story telling which are tightly connected to basic forms of autobiographical experiences of life historical gestalts. And these are the structures that form the basis for the empirically corroborated analysis of autobiographical extempore narratives in their capacity to express life historical experiences and identity developments. Therefore it makes good research-strategical sense to explicate these formal structures of autobiographical story telling as it has been done in this first part of the module (and will be additionally laid out in the following appendix to it). After having gotten meticulous insights into the formal structure of autobiographical extempore narration, one is sensitized for the presentational capacity of autobiographical extempore narration to express biographically sedimented personal and social experiences. After having practiced their textual-empirical identification, one is more or less automatically tuned to the specific modes of the epistemic capacity of autobiographical extempore story telling to express biographical and social processes, and one is, thus, able to perform the analysis of autobiographical narratives in a non-naïve, i.e. pragmatically refracting, way without a methodological necessity to permanently explicate all the formal-structural textual features involved. Such a sensitized shortened-up version of autobiographical text analysis is, then, especially valuable, for professional case analysis.
7. Appendix to Biography Analysis – part 1

7.1. The Language and Presentation Markers of Three Other Cognitive Figures as Exemplified Through the Funke Interview: Social Situations, Social Frames and Event Carriers

Now, I have accomplished my task of explicating the way of making methodical use of the presentation and demonstration markers for the depiction of the four biographical process structures as it basically consists of two out of three text-analytical steps: (a) looking at the respective overall orientation and presentation perspective of the narrative rendering, (b) searching for, and focussing on, specific formulaic expressions, which formulate the gist of the orientation perspective. I basically left out a third step of (c) looking at the sequentially well ordered micro-contexts of the extempore narration, i.e. the narrative segments, in which the orientation and presentation perspective of the narrative rendering of the biographical process structures will evolve and in which – meaningfully corresponding with them – the presentation markers with their formulaic expressions will fulfil their delineation function. This will be dealt with in the next chapter. – Just as an aside: In addition to text markers and language perspectives, there are two other linguistic phenomena that characterise two of the four biographical process structures, i.e. trajectory and metamorphosis, although they do not belong to the orderly occurring narrative presentation and demonstration markers of biographical process structures: background constructions and argumentative commentaries. Just right before we have seen the specific phenomenon of the background construction in our dealing with the last quotation of a narrative segment treated as empirical example for the language of biographical metamorphosis. However, background constructions abound much more in narrative renderings of biographical trajectories. We will deal with it – and with argumentative commentaries – in the following chapter, which outlines the microstructure, i.e. the presentation structure of single text segments, of extempore autobiographical story telling. Here is not the space to systematically deal with the exact text grammatical depiction of the cognitive figures of scenic situations, social frames, story carriers and event carriers. But I stated some important forms of their text grammatical depiction in my overview list in the beginning of the present chapter already. What we can shortly do here is to give a basic theoretical idea of them – this will turn out to be especially important regarding the cognitive figure of the story carrier – and to allude to their special realization in the Funke interview:
7.1.1. The Cognitive Figure of Scenic Social Situations

Scenic social situations are especially drawn upon during the narrative rendering of turning point situations. Central markers of it are direct speech, i.e. the quotation of a verbal communicative exchange in a quasi-transcript form, and inner speech, i.e. the “quotation” of tacit talk to oneself. There are three of these narrative passages in the Funke interview:

a) Getting into the career trap of the special high school of elite sports: Bernd Funke was in a normal type of secondary school, and he was not very happy in it. This might be part of a certain proneness for doing something else or a vulnerability disposition for getting seduced. Having sketched the general life and school situation, he goes on in his rendering:

3 “and all of a sudden the door opened and somebody
4 came to us (-) and eh . “we support sport” and eh . then a short
5 meeting took place so for what you could get enthused for and what you would
6 want to do (’) with addresses and so forth (-) .
7 I mhm
8 M and ehm . well then
9 thought about that together with ten boys “let us try with doing
10 handball(’)”.
11 I mhm
12 M and ehm . it was such a training were all were
13 together (’) like a hundred people (-) . with several coaches (’) und right
14 away you got sorted out “ you can throw, you do that, and the rest of
15 of you can go home” and whatever else and then there were thirty people
16 and these ones got divided again (’).”
(page 9, lines 3 to 16)

The narrator has a scenic remembrance here: The schoolboys and comrades were sitting in class, and then the door opened. Later the comrades would join together and would discuss the seductive offer together. Again later they are thrown together in a training hall. The central communicative approach of the state recruiters for the elite sports, which had a seducing quality, the communicative reaction of the schoolboys to it, and the first communicative step of the selection activity of the recruiter-trainers are rendered in direct speech. These are the fateful communicative steps of building up the career trap situation, which eventually became a central conditional potential for the start of a harsh biographical trajectory of undergoing an alienated course of apprenticeship and work life. The scenic rendering, including the quotations of
direct speech, demonstrates the fateful importance of this life situation of getting recruited into an unrealistic elite sports career for the overall biographical structuring of the life history of Mr. Funke.

b) That trajectory, in its conditional potential stemming from the career trap, starts three years later, and here again we have the presentation of a scenic situation:

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...(.), and ehm, yeah (-), but that wasn’t enough
all in all that means. ehm after the tenth grade (-).

that was for three years I’ve been there (‘). was taken out again of these
units (‘). …

40 M and that wasn’t enough all in all (-) and
41 eh. quiet till +) that was all of a sudden (‘). that was like struck by
42 lightening (‘)+. everything at once (-), that means “yes you are/ you didn’t
get further (‘). you don’t come further (‘). your sports career is
finished with that and ehm, now we have to see that we integrate
you in the normal life (‘). at that was the time
46 (‘) tenth grade was finished passed the exams “you don’t get further
47 and now we have to see that we get you into a apprenticeship (-)
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(page 10, lines 30 to 33 and lines 40 to 47)

Here the scenic situation is introduced by a supra-segmental demonstration marker of trajectory (“that was like struck by lightning”), which at the same time serves as the introduction to a communicative situation of pronouncing the decision against Bernd Funke of having him thrown out of the team similar to a death sentence in a trial. This fateful decisive communicative situation is again dramatized by direct speech. The direct speech with the pronouncement of the fateful sentence is that powerful activity, by which the biographical process structure of trajectory is introduced into the life of Mr. Funke, conversely ending the biographical process structure of career. Here again the rendering of the scenic situation and, connected to it, the direct speech are underlining a decisive turning point in the life of Mr. Funke, that is characterized by a pivotal change of biographical process structure.

c) We already have discussed the background construction dealing with the difficult beginning of the metamorphosis process structure in the vocational re-training and apprenticeship phase of the life history of Mr. Funke. I would just like to stress that the life historical importance of those difficult experiences are rendered by inner speech:
The inner speech is expressing the emotional and cognitive difficulties of really accepting the new learning and work situation; it is a means for demonstrating ambivalences, quarrels with oneself and puzzlement or even disorientation about a strange inner change of personal identity and about a decisive milieu change in one’s life. The conversion type of metamorphosis process was a decisive turning point in the life of Mr. Funke, and this is demonstrated through the dramatizing presentation technique of inner speech.

In the autobiographical narrative interview with Mr. Funke we find only a few instances of scenic-situational rendering. They are always reserved for the depiction of biographical turning points of the life history of Mr. Funke. The autobiographical rendering of the Funke interview is a relatively laconic one; the level of detailing is still quite low; Mr. Funke is not highly advanced in his biographical work; he still has some difficulties in dealing with decisive situations of his life and their various interactive perspectives.

7.1.2. The Cognitive Figure of Social Frames

Again, Mr. Funke is not very circumspect in his depiction of social frames. So we know very little about the social conditions, under which it was so easy to dump him into a sort of substitute apprenticeship (of learning specialized plumbing), which he did not like. But in drawing his attention on his retraining and his second apprenticeship, his rendering of social frames becomes quite...
circumspect and differentiated. We mentioned this already in dealing with his metamorphosis process structure, which came up in the retraining apprenticeship situation. Here he uses collections of social categorization or membership categorization devices (in the sense of Harvey Sacks 1992) by which he could understand pivotal social conditions of a successful metamorphosis. So we find the contrast set of mentor and apprentice: a stern, but fair lady chief who was responsible for his learning (page 7, lines 35 to 38). In addition, we find the contrast set of him, the apprentice, as the “spring chicken” in the festival hall and the “average age elderly women” working there as fully competent executives (page 6, lines 46 and 47); this contrast is indirectly alluding to the background script of a caring and protecting social relationship between son and mother. And finally, in regard to the vocational school, Mr. Funke had to attend, we find the contrast set between the younger regular students and the older re-trainees and Mr. Funke’s position in-between (page 7, lines 2 to 9; page 5, line 21, to page 6, line 3). The younger students are seen as interaction partners, who would accept him, too, as young and energetic; the older re-trainees would give useful counsel, but would also make clear, what could go wrong with the apprenticeship, if there wouldn’t be a firm belief into one’s personal occupational future; and both relationships are emotional help within the limbo situation of the apprenticeship and the difficult metamorphosis experience connected with it (including a conversion process as well as the re-categorization of one’s world view and self-definition connected with it).

We can come to the conclusion, that although Mr. Funke was not very circumspect in his differentiation of social frames, he made creative use of background scripts of social relations (of the family type and the friendship type in adventurous situations), which helped him a lot to find important social trust and social support, to define himself in a new situationally adequate way and to make himself open for new influences. The linguistic markers for those background scripts are collections of social categorizations, especially contrast sets.

7.1.3. The Cognitive Figure of Event Carriers

The most important human event carrier in recent life periods of Mr. Funke (up to the present situation of the interview) is his professional re-training counsellor Mrs. Brühl. The narrator states in the context of dealing with his re-training:

26 M I got (-) . thanks to
27 Mrs. Brühl from the agency for advancement for educational training .
28 personally I can’t speak for the others but I speak just about . eh . me (‘) .

209
got a lot a lot of help (.) didn’t matter what kind right (?) . whether it were encouraging words or even now when looking for those practical apprenticing companies (.) .

I mhm and eh . . well . because everything got going (‘) . that in that view/ you didn’t feel so alone . you :<could>:

even during the vocational school let me say that again and again at/ well that was always your contact (‘) .

I yes and if anything happened (-) . or . they were actually always there for you . and I have that/

that was very good for me (.) .

was always accompanied with “well just do it/ we have two years . don’t worry we get it done”.

(page 6, lines 26 to 40; page 27, lines 27 and 28)

Mrs. Brühl is naturally introduced into the story line, when her assistance work in the context of the re-training process must be reckoned on by the story carrier as former actor and biography incumbent with in the pertinent, then, actual life situation as well as taken into account “here and now” in the present retrospective situation of the autobiographical story telling. The introduction of this central event carrier is done by a quite abstract narrative statement, what Mr. Brühl did in order to support Mr. Funke. The narrator uses higher predicates in order to report, what Mrs. Brühl employed and accomplished in order to assist the apprentice career development of Mr. Funke: as caring professional any type of help that would be relevant (page 6, line 29); as social pedagogue and adult educationalist verbal encouragements of the client’s, Mr. Funke’s, future learning development (page 6, line 30; page 27, line 28); as social worker the mediation of basic trust into the future availability of necessary assistance from the professionals (page 6, line 30; page 27, line 28); as liaison worker building social and organizational bridges to other institutions (firms of apprenticeship, employers); as liaison worker mediating the care of other professionals in and out the re-training institution (page 27, lines 27 and 28); as well as in her capacity as personal counsellor serving as significant other for the limited time period of the apprenticeship and especially of the initially disorienting and later on still personally doubtful metamorphosis process. – Essential in the language of depicting this important type of event carrier is the tacit conveying, or sometimes even explicit underlining, of a basic self-referential indexicality of all the ascription of higher predicates onto the deeds of the event carrier towards, or in relationship to, the narrator and story carrier as biography incumbent:
“personally/ I can’t speak for the others but I speak just about . eh . me (‘)” (page 6, line 28), “I got thanks to Mrs. Brühl … a lot of help” (lines 26, 27, 29) as well as “you didn’t feel so alone … that was always your contact (‘)” (lines 34 and 36) . It is this characteristic and curious combination of the narrator’s general predication of event carriers by higher predicates, on the one hand, and the retrograde indexicality of this general predication towards, or in relation to, the origo of the story carrier, narrator and biography incumbent, that produces the deeper meaning of the event carrier for the story carrier and biography incumbent.

There is another classical type of introduction of event carriers into the autobiographical story line: the use of the communicative scheme of description for characterizing the most important features of the event carrier. This type of introduction is quite often done in combination with exemplary stories, in which the event carrier was involved. Telling these personal stories quite often has a tinge of gossip or lack of respectful detachment. At least it is mostly necessary to add an argumentative personal assessment of the person or at least some features of him or her. Here again we find the self-referential or retrograde indexicality of the depiction of event carriers – but in this version in a much more explicit way. Mr. Funke doesn’t take the liberty to use this explicit strategy of introduction of the central event carrier Mrs. Brühl, since he is full of respect towards her. The fact that the interviewer cooperates with Mrs. Brühl – the pragmatic refraction on the level the social context of the actually ongoing interview situation always must be taken into account – might be an additional obstacle to it.

And finally: there is one extremely important non-human event carrier in Mr. Funke’s narrative rendering: his severe disease of Morbus Bechterev, which he explains shortly as progressive chronic illness in medical terms, which he states in its decisive impact on his life (no manual work anymore, no intensive sports anymore) and which he half ironically and half respectfully evaluates: ”but it is a really flourishing disease” (page 2, line 37). Mr. Funke seems to have a quite distanced attitude to his severe disease. Perhaps since it had been so important in his life – changing every important feature of his former life situation –, he doesn’t want to give it too much room in his present and future life. This might be a fading out of a severely disadvantageous condition of his life that could cause difficulties for future life arrangements. Event carriers like this can – more or less straight-forward or enigmatically – depict the central set of conditions, which I will call “conditional potential”, for the evolvement of a severe and protracted trajectory of suffering. Their depiction through such a laconic and distanced linguistic reference might be an attempt to name and exorcise the might of an enigmatic trajectory potential at the same time.
7.2. The Special Chapter of the Three Epistemic Positions and Presentation Markers of the Cognitive Figure of Story Carrier: Narrator, Story Carrier in the Strict Sense and Biography Incumbent

In oral extempore autobiographical story telling, three positions of the I-origo of story telling and of the experiences and activities reported in the evolving narrative are permanently referred to and, at the same time, are permanently exerting a modelling power on the textual presentation work:

- the position of the narrator, who here and now autobiographically tells the story of her or his life history and at the same time is the communication partner of the listener, or more specifically: the interviewer, as her or his addressee;
- the position of the story carrier, who is the centre and the subject of activities and of suffering experiences in the reported life events with their, then, actually evolving episode-historical or life-historical forms as enlivened by her or him; as well as the
- the position of the biography incumbent who is the carrier (the designer and facilitator, the object and sufferer, the undergoer and follower, as well as the evolver and creator) of the overall life history of the autobiographical narrative told, the biographical worker in the course of biographical process structures occurring in the overall life history as well as the red thread of identity development in the sequence (including simultaneities, i.e. competitions and conflicts, mutual assistances and enforcements) of the biographical process structures.

The understanding is important, that not just the position of the narrator is exerting the modelling power of shaping the textual presentation work, but the positions of the event carrier and the biography incumbent, too. As I have contented in a former chapter, the narrator should not be seen as a freewheeling designer of her or his life history to be told, since she or he is under the heavy weight of her or his life historical recollections regarding the episode-historical and life-historical shapes of life events one was and/or is involved in and since she or he is in the grip of the developmental logic of evolvement of the biographical identity structure of the biography incumbent as well as of the biographical work connected to, and focussing on, the biographical process structures. But there can be lots of tensions and discrepancies between the modelling power exerted through these three I-origo positions of the presentation business of autobiographical extempore narration; these tensions and discrepancies are an important source of the thoughtfulness, creativity and
expression density of autobiographical story telling, i.e. its text validity. I will address this in a moment.

Before this I would just like to mention that in fictional literary autobiographies there could be additional I-origo positions of autobiographical story telling. On top of the narrator, the story carrier and the biography incumbent, there could be the position of the author of the book. E.g., the author of the fictional autobiography “The Adolescent” is Fyodor M. Dostoevsky; the narrator is the young man Arkady Dolgoruky, who is at the same time the story carrier. In a fictional autobiography the real author can only indirectly be present: through the logic of the story plot, through the overall structuring of dialogues, through mottos, through prefaces or postscripts; the straightforward word of the author would destroy the overall perspective-presentation frame of the novel, which is bound to the perspective of the narrator and, in a second instance, to the perspectives of the story carrier and the event carriers. – In addition, in this novel Dostoevsky differentiates between the young man Arkady Dolgoruky as narrator and the young man Arkady Dolgoruky as commentator, who discusses, what had happened and how he had been involved in it, from a (fictional) slightly later time position than those (fictional) slightly earlier ones, from which one the narrator would tell his partial autobiographical story. The small difference is that one of being at the end of autobiographical rendering, writing the epilogue and thinking by means of argumentation about the dramatic events of a year, which he had narratively reported just beforehand. The narrator Arkady has (fictionally) just finished the narrative of getting into a turmoil-laden but finally fulfilled felicitous relationship to his father Versilov who, before that intensive period of contact, had neglected his son as just an illegitimate offspring living far away in a cheap boarding school. (And at the very end of the book there is an additional commentator not identical with the narrator who, by means of a letter, comments on the report of Arkady he had just read from a neutral position of an “uninvolved observer”; this commentator is the old guardian of Arkady from his time period of the boarding school.) Even in authentic written (literary or non-literary) autobiographies there could be a partial difference between the narrator and the commentator although they are the same person, since the commentator could be a voice, which was formulated at a later time position than the first flow of writing had been taken place – in a later time period of rethinking and reworking the originally written down narrative. Of course, such a commentator in fictional or authentic autobiographies would normally have a more reflective, more explaining, more argumentative, more critical, more ironic or more understanding attitude regarding her or his experiences and identity developments than the “original” narrator – and, naturally, even more than the story carrier. But sometimes such a commentator could, to the contrary, also be more stupid than the narrator and even more than
the story carrier, since the real author would like to convey the atmosphere of
times getting darker or the image of a regressive biographical development. This
is the case in Eco’s “The Name of the Rose”, where the eighty year old narrator
and monk Adson is much more non-understanding than the young eighteen year
old story carrier Adson, the adlatus of his master William of Baskerville, when
they are in conversation about difficult topics. – In addition, in fictional or
authentic written autobiographies, especially literary ones, there could be an
editor, who is the fictional or real publisher of the autobiographical text; he
usually is not – as it is most often explicitly stated – identical with the authentic
author of the autobiographical text. In cases of real publishing the publisher is
motivated towards letting an important new (literary or experiential) voice to be
heard (e.g., the voice of the author Fritz Zorn, who had died from cancer and
whose autobiographical text was published by the eminent Swiss author Adolf
Muschg). In cases of fictional editing and publishing, through this framing the
authentic author would like to introduce the reader into the perspective and
world view of a strange forgotten or culturally very different world, in which the
story to be told would evolve. Quite often in these cases the authentic author
himself fictionally claims to accomplish an editing activity. E.g., in Umberto
Eco’s novel “The Name of the Rose”, which can be seen as a fictional partial
autobiography of master William’s Adlatus Adson, who tells an important phase
of his life more than sixty years later, there is the fiction of a medieval
manuscript found and published by author Eco (who fictionally got it as a
publication translated from Latin into French on the base of an earlier edited
publication and) whose I-origo position and activity of fictional publishing is
very important for drawing the reader into a late medieval world view, in which
the affairs of the world are seen as fatefuly worsening. – And finally, on top of
all these positions of I-origo positions of autobiographical story telling, there is
the I-origo position of the observer. In an implicit version we will find this
position in Dostoevski’s novel “The Adolescent”, since the narrator is producing
a much more meticulous recall of ongoing verbal interactions in the fictitious
medium of quasi-transcripts than a normal person involved in such complex
interactive situations could remember, and, in addition, he combines those quasi-
transcripts with cute and sometimes elaborate observations of the ongoing verbal
interactions. Thus, the epistemic I-origo position of the observer adds analytic
import to a realistic novel produced in the manner of a fictitious autobiography.

Let’s come back to the tensions and discrepancies between the modelling
powers exerted through the three ordinary epistemic I-origo positions of
autobiographical extemore narration: those ones of the narrator, the story
carrier and the biography incumbent. Naturally in extemore narration there
cannot be as much productive epistemic tension and contradiction between
epistemic positions as we would have in authentic and especially fictional
literary autobiographies, since in them – compared to the latter – are less epistemic I-origo positions of attention and presentation with their different perspectives. But even the three epistemic positions left, those ones of the narrator, the story carrier and the biography incumbent, which exert their variously specific modelling powers of presentation, provide a lot of potential for the tension-rich non-identity between:

- the story carrier and the narrator, between
- the story carrier and the biography incumbent as well as between
- the narrator and biography incumbent.

### 7.2.1. The Discrepancy Between Story Carrier in the Strict Sense and Narrator

The first non-identity relationship, that one between the story carrier and the narrator, is that one of analytical, understanding, critical or ironical detachment of the narrator (and commentator) from a less than adequate orientation, thinking, behaviour, capacity, maturity, sensitivity, thoughtfulness of the story carrier who in the course of the recalled life historical events behaved on a sub-optimal level. We can call it an up-hill or victorious sentiment relationship between narrator and story carrier, since the identity development of the involved biography incumbent would go on, would grow and would get stronger in between. Of course, it could also occur, that the identity development of the biography incumbent would deteriorate in between, e.g. that the biography incumbent would get rather stupid compared with the story carrier at a earlier point of the life history told. This could happen in cases of beginning dementia of the narrator. Because of such a medical condition the narrator in an authentic autobiographical communication and recapitulation situation is naturally not capable of presenting such a deteriorating development in a wellordered artistic way. Instead, there will be many symptomatic signs of incapacity in recollection and reflective commentary. In contrast to this, in fictional literary autobiographies there could be an aesthetically modelled presentation of the relationship between the former promising identity status and the later deteriorated identity status. E.g., the commentaries of the old monk Adson in “The Name of the Rose” who quite often reflects on his former deeds and conversations with his former master William are much more stupid than the reported naïve questions and statements in his conversations with William more than sixty years ago. An aesthetically successful presentation of a discrepancy like this is quite difficult to realize. It normally would not occur in oral extempore autobiographical story telling; there in most cases it could only be expressed symptomatically as a deterioration of the capacity of autobiographical
rendering. Of course, the natural course of a life history – “natural” in terms of the ontogenetic development and differentiation of personal identity – would imply the growth of personal identity and the biographical work connected with it. And in addition, there is a strong cultural expectation of personal growth in our Western culture and probably in almost every human culture. This is another reason for a strong tendency towards an up-hill or victorious relationship between narrator and story carrier.

Just to give two examples for the non-identity between the epistemic positions of the narrator and the story carrier. We already discussed Mr. Funke’s self-categorization as “spring chicken” (page 6, line 47) as presentation marker for a biographical metamorphosis process, when he was undergoing his second apprenticeship in the festival hall, expressing by this self categorization his openness for deep learning and for getting something taught by middle age women as his professional masters. Using this category of self-reduction or even self-degradation Mr. Funke expresses a self-ironical relationship towards a former state of mind and identity at least indirectly. Of course, at the same time, when he is using this self-belittling category, he is indirectly expressing his self-understanding that in between those days and the present (at the time of the interview) he has matured in his occupational capacity being now a colleague of his former master instructors. – Secondly I would like to point to the second quotation at the very beginning of this module: a text segment which deals with the lowest point of Mr. Funke’s trajectory experience: being out of work, having been informed to be severely chronically ill (Morbus Bechterev), having been socially isolated (having lost his girl friend), having run out of money and being on the brink to get extradited from his flat, being drunk all day, being unable to start any type of action towards his predicament (page 19, lines 27 to 42). What is in our present context analytically interesting is the distanced, excentric, self-estranging perspective of the narrator in dealing with this extremely low point of his trajectory experience. He is talking about young Bernd Funke like a different person looked on from the outside, out of the observational perspective of his social surrounding. Firstly he points out that, having been entrapped in that severe trajectory dynamics, he himself did not realize his desolate inner and outer state: “well at sometime/ I didn’t/ . I didn’t really check that myself (-) .” (page 19, line 27). Then he, the narrator, conveys that he, the story carrier, was confronted with his desolate state by his social surrounding, and most of it he realized only later, when he had already been rescued: “I was told that more or less by my friends ‘good heavens you are just drinking all day long’” (page 19, lines 28 and 29). And finally he, the narrator, evaluates that he, the story carrier, was like those strange addicted and intoxicated persons sitting on park benches and being not able to do anything: “I do understand the people who sit around on some benches and get stoned right(?) . drink smoke whatever . not doing
you did feel like that in that situation” (page 19, lines 30 to 32)
At the very end of the quotation, the narrator doesn’t use the personal pronoun “I”, but the second person pronoun “you” in order to underline the perspective of observational distance towards his former inner and outer state at the lowest point of his trajectory. By his distanced rendering, differentiating between him, the rescued and mature narrator, and him the intoxicated, self-delusional story carrier, the narrator can convey the atmosphere of the self-alienated inner and outer state of him as former story carrier entrapped by a severe trajectory as well as, at least indirectly, the later rescue process finally leading to a present inner and outer state of being able to control one’s life.

7.2.2. The Discrepancy between the Story Carrier Proper and the Biography Incumbent

The second non-identity relationship, that one between the story carrier and the biography incumbent, is characterized by the import put on the experiences of discontinuity between the former inner state of the story carrier when she or he would be involved in the life historical events recalled here and now within the medium of autobiographical narration, on the one hand, and upcoming later ones, which would, then, additionally shape the identity development of the biography incumbent, on the other. Especially important in this regard is the discontinuity between a specific first biographical process structure, in which the story carrier would be involved at this actual point of the evolvement of her or his life history told here and now, on the one hand, and the foreshadowed following, essentially different, second and/or third biographical process structure(s) which would then come up in the still evolving course of life history with its unfolding biographical identity, and, driven by its or their various ontogenetic evolvement logic(s), would then differently shape the overall biographical structuring, on the other hand, which then, in turn, would exert an influencing impact on further inner states of the story carrier. We can call it the discontinuity and inner change – quite often the fateful sentiment – relationship between the story carrier and the biography incumbent, since the identity status of the story carrier just focussed here and now in the ongoing autobiographical narrative his overshadowed by a tendency to inner change even within the limited course of a still dominant biographical process structure and still much more by a (stronger) tendency to inner change, if and when the story carrier moves from the identity state of a first biographical process structure (which she or he was involved in and which she or he is focussed on right now in the course of the autobiographical narrative) towards the identity state(s) of the later different one(s) she or he would be going to be involved in. Of course, there
could also be a long term stability of identity formation in the sense that the story carrier has no inkling of inner change what so ever, but in the complex (post-)modern everyday world of existence this is a condition of life which is quite rare. And in addition, naturally, the foreboding of a future further downward road of a trajectory, of an upcoming deterioration process of a biographical action scheme or a career and/or of a future impediment or petering out of a creative metamorphosis process – as well as the problematic inner developments of the biography incumbent connected to such fateful biographical process structures – is a much stronger emotional feeling than the usual expectation of a benign development. Out of this reason of emotional intensity, too, such a foreshadowed feeling or hunch of upcoming fate will be remembered much more often than an expectation of inner continuity. – The core feature of the non-identity between the story carrier and the biography incumbent is the fact, that the inner identity of the story carrier is automatically assumed to be a stable state, that would remain identical during the course of the evolving events and situations the story carrier is involved in, since agency needs a stable subject platform, whereas the inner state of the biography incumbent is seen as a changing identity, as an identity, which gets its structure exactly through the shaped development of an overall gestalt of different inner states following each other and partially assisting or contesting each other.

Again, just to give two examples for the non-identity between the epistemic positions of the story carrier and biography incumbent. The first example we know already; I already used it as example for the metamorphosis process. The narrator gives an ambivalent image of the career process of his second apprenticeship in the festival hall. On the one hand he states: “that was great of course (-)” (page 6, line 47). On the other hand, in the form of a reminder, although beforehand he has never referred to what he would like to come back to, he announces: “and as I said I had problems then” (page 7, line 1). Referring to the story carrier, the narrator would like to announce an unproblematic career process of apprenticeship that would develop as institutionally expected within the re-training process. The story carrier would exert the agency of learning and career, would be focussed on this and, being identical with himself, would stay in that capacity without any problems. But then the narrator realizes, that something else happened to him, which gave the career process the hunch of upcoming crisis: he got difficulties with himself being confronted with a totally different social world of working: that of administrative paperwork, whereas up to now he was only used to do manual work. This was the beginning of a limited metamorphosis process, which he, the biography incumbent, would go through changing his biographical identity considerably, i.e. in which he would not stay in his unproblematic agency of the story carrier just to learn and fulfil the institutional expectation pattern of the career process. Analytically important is
here that the narrative text is not just depicting the initially dominant situation and biographical process structure of the institutional expectation pattern – the situation of learning from his female masters and the biographical process structure of career –, but, in addition, at the same time in the course of narrative rendering the narrative text is conveying the foreboding of something different coming up: the difficult metamorphosis process – a hunch, which is expressed by ambivalent statements like this one: “and eh (-). Yes and no problems in the practical apprenticing company, that was all trouble-free (‘) well it were hard demands but (-)(-) : <it was>: in . eh . was great (,).” (page 7, lines 11 to 14)

And we saw, that at this point of ambivalence, discrepancy and implausibility the specific narrative constraint of going into details steps in and gives the start for the production of a background construction, which deals with the difficult metamorphosis process and through this repairs the plausibility of narrative rendering (see above). The difficulties in the narrative rendering express the non-identity between the story carrier, who is expected to function without any problems and being identical with himself and the biography incumbent, who is changing his identity with lots of problems involved; and this non-identity of story carrier and biography incumbent conveys the atmosphere of a fateful sentiment.

The other example is a quotation from that part of the questioning part of the interview, in which the interviewer is asking Mr. Funke about his ideas for the future after having been thrown out of the elite sports school (page 11, lines 26 to 32). Mr. Funke answers:

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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>I couldn’t think</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>of anything (‘)</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ehm. there haven’t been any ideas (,). nothing (,)</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>mhmm</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>ehm (-)</td>
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| 41 |   | actually that was only like "yes it has to go on now make sure you get something/"
| 42 | I | yes   |
| 43 | M | young (-) . You are 17 years old (-) . ehm that you there (-) . I thought “ well yeah that’s all over (-) that was it ok. now you have to make sure that you make something out of it (‘) and then it’s ok (,)” |
| 44 |   | mhmm  |

(page 11, lines 35 to 48)
Here again the narrator conveys that the story carrier, young Bernd Funke, 17 years old, is expecting a career type of development and that he would be willing to focus on it and be able to manage it (lines 41 and 42, lines 46 and 47). But again he doesn’t consider the upcoming inner and outer change, although there was the feeling of an empty head (lines 35, 36 and 38), which was a foreboding – and its textual formulation imparts a hunch to the listener – for a severe trajectory unfolding of being self-alienated in the upcoming first apprenticeship of plumber and heavy machinery establisher. Here we have the textual phenomenon of discrepancy between story carrier and biography incumbent again; it is again conveying the atmosphere of fatefulness.

7.2.3. The Discrepancy between the Narrator and the Biography Incumbent

The third non-identity relationship, that one between narrator and biography incumbent, is characterized by the discrepancy between the rational ordering activities of self presentation of the narrator as subject, who is presenting oneself to the listeners, to the scientific audience, which will later on treat the interview or pieces of it as interesting data, and, in addition, to her- or himself as one’s inner audience, which is monitoring her or his presentation activities, on the one hand, and the partially chaotic evolvement of the overall biographical structuring in the life span and long range perspective of the biography incumbent, who is engrossed in biographical process structures elicited by life historical events and, vice versa, having an impact on them, on the other hand. The discrepancy between the epistemic I-origo position of the narrator and that one of the biography incumbent is not only that one between a favourable self-presentation (in the sense of Goffman’s presentation of self in every day life), on the one hand, and the darker and more difficult realities of the hidden backstage life of the actor and narrator, on the other. That aspect of the discrepancy is important, too, but its range and intensity are severely restricted through the constraints of extempore story telling, which engross the awareness of the narrator and forces her or him to concentrate on recapitulating her or his life historical experiences, and this is limiting all the natural tendencies to show off. In contrast to this, the most important aspect of the discrepancy between narrator and biography incumbent is that one between an image of order and rational build-up regarding one’s own life-history and identity development, which is clearly understood, on the one hand, and the enigmatic, difficult and chaotic processes in one’s life history which one does not understand, one does not like to look at and one is tempted to fade out of one’s awareness, on the other. It is the discrepancy between the practical account activities (in the sense of Garfinkel – Garfinkel
1967, Garfinkel and Sacks 1970) of the narrator as a rational communicator who is presenting to oneself and to others the rationality and the orderliness of the every day events and life historical affairs she or he was involved in, the rationality and orderliness of her or his own activities in shaping those affairs in an essentially transparent way as well the rationality and the orderliness of her or his transparent, controlled and circumspect identity development, on the hand, and the vague, non-transparent, difficult, chaotic experiences and identity feelings of the biography incumbent engrossed within the dynamics and contingencies of the biographical process structures, on the other hand. The discrepancy between narrator and biography incumbent exhibits its especially neuralgic areas in dealing with the following activities:

- to accomplish a favourite self-presentation,
- to accomplish a rational understanding of one’s involvements in life historical events and one’s management of them, as well as
- to fade out of one’s own memory and narrative presentation complicated experiences of one’s own identity development, that seem to be too difficult and too hurting to look at them.

This time I would like to give just one example for these especially neuralgic areas, since it is so complicated. The example starts with the phenomenon of fading out off one’s own memory, but it also includes the presentational tendencies for rational understanding and for favourite self-presentation. Part of the example, i.e. the second part of quotation we will look at, stems from the same section of the interview as the last quotation did. The example demonstrates the difficulties of recalling the gloomy, discouraging and hurting experience of the trajectory of a self-alienating apprenticeship for learning the occupation of a mechanic for the establishment for heavy machinery after having thrown out of the elite sports school. In the pertinent section within the main story half of the interview the narrator is just laconically stating his change from the elite sports career to this apprenticeship:

16       M       and ehm. well my sports career couldn’t develop any further (-)
17      yes (?) .
18       I  mhm
19       M : and : ehm ((slow till+)) how was it going with finding the right vocational
20      school+ yes (?) & or anyway with the right job (-) nothing at all you were just put
21      into something (.)
22       I     mhm
23       M                      :> so many people do this so and many people
24       do that ( ) <:
25       I     eh so that I can understand that (-) . was that before the wall
In the first course of rendering within the main story part the narrator doesn’t like to focus on the difficult trajectory experience, and therefore he fades it out of his awareness and recollection. At the beginning of the interview it would be too hurting to address it immediately without any stabilizing context and basic trust relationship already generated between him and the interviewer. And in addition, the narrator would like to stress the rationality of such an imposed proceeding (e.g., without one’s intentional interference) of being personally re-directed in his educational course within the GDR system of managed allocation of individuals to positions and opportunity slots of education, apprenticeship and occupational work. He would like to convey, that it would have been a normal thing under the condition of the administered GDR educational, vocational training and occupational system, and that it would present himself as a rational and circumspect actor. The narrator express this in the second, the questioning part, of he interview in a cute way: “and I’ve been slipped into that and there I’ve made my two/two and a half years ((quieter till+)) I believe it was to that time. made my training for fitter of power-plant then + … that as I said was that what actually everybody did here (,)”. (lines 13 to 18, page 11) In stressing his own activity and the normality of it the narrator is also giving a favourite self-presentation; at the same time he, in his capacity of narrator doing his present business of autobiographical narrative rendering, is showing some of the naïveté of not reflecting what had really happened to him and what would have been behind the façade of the second educational career he is superficially talking about.

But in the second half of the interview the narrator would like to know what would be behind that laconic rendering in terms of inner experiences and emotions. We can assume that not only the fact of having been thrown out of the elite sports school would have been a disaster for him but, I addition, the fact of having been dumped into an apprenticeship he did not choose himself and he did not basically like. Of course there is a point of implausibility just having lost one’s most felicitous auspices of becoming a professional state sportsmen and,
in the manner of business as usual, going over to a quite down to earth and cumbersome apprenticeship of becoming a mechanic. The interviewer would like to clear up this implausibility and starts an interviewer-elicited or hetero-elicited background construction (page 11, lines 21–34). In answering to the cautious, sympathetic questioning of the interviewer, the narrator looks at this dramatic change of occupational future again, and he realizes that he was in the trap of a powerful trajectory of occupational self alienation as well as that he was on the brink to adjust to it without looking on to the devastating harm that this would cause to his own identity development and to his whole further life:

The analytical aspect regarding this transcript is, that – driven by the two narrative constraints of going into details and of condensing as well as assessing the relevancies – the narrator now puts away the mask of rational and orderly presentation – and explicates the devastating impact of trajectory on the identity development of the biography incumbent. It was even so devastating that in finally recalling it – induced by the sympathetic questioning of the interviewer – he is driven to fade out of his awareness and recollection one additionally important fact of this course of experiences again: that he was induced by an instructor of the GDR semi-military youth organization “Society for Sports and Technique” (GST) and by his father to apply for a vocational education in the organization of the paramilitary GDR riot police. He is driven to fade it out of his awareness and forget about it, since he was in such a difficult trajectory situation of occupational self-alienation and the rescue plan could have even made it worse. The rescue plan of going to the riot police in times of de-legitimation of the late GDR political system was – and still is in the presence of autobiographical narration – a dramatizing symbol of the hopelessness of his trajectory entrapment he was caught in.
He just remembers this rescue plan, which would actually be a way of falling out from the frying-pan into the fire, when he, being the rational narrator in his orderly narrative rendering, is attempting to translate or re-interpret the gloomy auspices of his passing from the elite sports school education to the apprenticeship of being trained as mechanic – and especially the involved entrapment within a severe self-alienating trajectory – into something totally mundane and normal: “that was it then (-). … so (,). now begins the/your daily life (-)” (page 12, lines 12 to 15). In the very act of attempting this rational reinterpretation he realizes that such a translation to the normal of being caught in such a severe and devastating trajectory trap with all its life-long impact would be implausible again. Exactly then he recalls that he had at least tried to rescue himself, although at the same time he would also know that this way out in undergoing a career at the riot police could get even worse than working as mechanics. He starts a second order background construction:

16 although eh I have to say of course (-). ehm (-) I totally forget that earlier
17 on (,). I have during the/during the trade school (-) . right (?).
18 there were such GST camps here (-)/
(page 12, lines 16 to 18)

In throwing in the second order background construction the narrator is firstly making the story line much more plausible again, and secondly he is demonstrating the last remnants of his capacity for rational agency and, in addition, for a rational narrative presentation. But the upcoming point of implausibility itself, which actually induces the background construction for the first time, is an indirect expression of the disorderly, chaotic, difficult inner and outer development of the biography incumbent totally trapped in his trajectory predicament. All the difficulties in narration we could see through the points of implausibility and the corresponding necessities for insertion of the two background constructions are due to the contrast between the narrator as a rational presenter and the biography incumbent as a being who has to undergo lots of chaotic, difficult, irrational processes.

7.3. Last Remark on the Epistemic Power of the Cognitive Figure of the Story Carrier and Cognitive Figures in General

We are now at the end of the delineation of the cognitive figure of the story carrier. Out of epistemic reasons we split it into the I-origo positions of the story carrier in the strict sense of the word, the narrator and the biography incumbent proper. The tensions and discrepancies between the epistemic I-origo positions
of the narrator, the story carrier and the biography incumbent really add to the thoughtfulness, circumspection, authenticity, creativity and stylistic expression density of autobiographical story telling, i.e. its text validity. This is very much connected to the epistemic power of the three constraints of story telling mentioned in an earlier chapter. The constraints of story telling force the narrator of extempore autobiographical narrative story telling to explicate those discrepancies, to assess and grade their relevancies and, again, to restore their single and triple overall gestalt order after having meticulously looked into, and sometimes even scrutinized, all those deep and complicated cleavages between them. By this, the autobiographical extempore narrator is forced to leave the attitude of naivety she or he is inclined to adopt when she or he is confronted with all the difficult and hurting trajectory experiences and experiences of being lured into a powerfully pre-arranged institutional expectation system of career paths. It is remarkable how much Mr. Funke is forced by the epistemic power of extempore autobiographical story telling and by the biographical work he has done before to abandon the recollection and presentation attitude of naivety he is understandably prone to in the beginning of his autobiographical rendering. But some of it still left; we will deal with it in the next chapter.

7.4. The Contextual Level of Single Narrative Units and of Partial Concatenations of Narrative Units

In the course of making methodical use of the general methodical strategy of pragmatic refraction we must harness the presentation and demonstration markers and the specific language of the cognitive figures of autobiographical story telling and contextualise them within the presentation activities of the autobiographical extempore rendering as well as within social and biographical processes which are expressed through these presentation activities. As I said already, this endeavour basically consists of three steps: (a) looking at the overall orientation and presentation perspective of the narrative rendering of cognitive figures, (b) searching for, and focussing on, formulaic expressions, which formulate the gist of the orientation perspective of these cognitive figures as well as (c) looking at the sequentially well ordered micro-contexts of the extempore narration, i.e. the narrative segments – at micro-contexts (including difficult contexts with self-corrections and background constructions), in which the narrative perspectives of the cognitive figures will be expressed and in which the formulaic expressions will occur . The first two steps we dealt with quite elaborately, the latter step was already activated practically, when we analysed background constructions, but we did not address it in a systematic manner; this we will do now. Most important is the insight that pragmatic refraction with its
analytical focus on the embedding contexts and the functions of the presentation activities and expressions of social and biographical reality in them can only be done in the course of micro-textual line-by-line analysis of the unfolding autobiographical text. The basic reason for this methodological limitation is that the textual context – and all other types of social contexts, too – are sequentially generated and constructed. In a somewhat too bold manner we could also formulate that textual macrostructures like the representation of the cognitive figures can only be generated through textual microstructures. Textual microstructures are providing the sequential contexts for the constitution and functioning of meso-and macrostructural textual phenomena and the social and biographical processes they express. Only through the creative line-by-line production of textual micro-structures the emergence of new textual expressions and respective socio-biographical phenomena is possible, and only through this the power of conditional relevancies of former presentation activities and phases of socio-biographical processes they exert on later presentation activities and process phases can be set free.

As with the formal text-structural phenomena connected with the cognitive figures, it again is important to look first at formal textual structures – this time at the phenomena of the presentation of single narrative units or segments. A single narrative unit or narrative segment is the basic building block of an overall autobiographical narrative. Each of these narrative units could be an autonomous narrative itself. The basic ingredient of an elementary extemore narration of personal experiences minimally is one kernel sentence depicting a social or biographical process that passes over a time threshold of a before and a later on. In addition, such a kernel sentence has another basic quality: it depicts an outer event or row of outer events, on the one hand, and the planning and production of that outer event(s) or the reaction to it by the story carrier (or biography incumbent), on the other hand, and the latter means: change of the inner state of the subject of that activity (or activities) and/or reaction(s). Thus, the minimal kernel sentence of extemore narration of personal experiences must normally have a binominal characteristics: it depicts outer events and the related inner changes – at least smallest processes of identity change – of the subject of the experience(s) and activity(ies). If one of the two aspects of the binominal characteristics is missing, then that is a deviating presentation phenomenon and expresses a certain type of disorderliness of personal experiences (e.g., it could be conditioned by the fact that the trajectory experience is so hurting that the narrator doesn’t like or is even unable to depict his or her inner state). Quite often a single narrative unit produces more than one kernel sentence. In this case, one kernel sentence could depict the outer event(s) and another the change of the inner state of the subject (the story carrier and the biography incumbent). The elementary quality of a kernel sentence in
autobiographical story telling is the expression of an at least minimal life historical gestalt or episodic life historical story. And the basic grammar of it is the mutual conditional relationship between outer event(s) and change of identity of the subject involved in that event or those events. This we did already call the self-historical gestalt of autobiographical story telling.

Many narrative units are much more elaborate than that minimal textual structure I was discussing just before. A full-sized narrative unit is constituted out of the following structural presentation activities:

7.4.1. Frame Switching Elements

In the very beginning of the narrative unit there would normally be an element that is expressing the change or the passing over between narrative units following each other: a frame-switching element between narrative units. Typical is the combination of a connector like “and” and a temporal adverb like “then” or a spatial adverb like “there”. Quite often this combination is introduced or interspersed by a paralinguistic element like “ehm” as a sort of thinking and planning pause – and sometimes a hesitation and retardation pause – in constructing the following narrative unit. Quite often there is the additional element of a segmenting and dividing particle like “well”. The narrative segment that immediately ends before the start of the new unit is normally characterized by a closing statement and by a falling intonation. And in between the two narrative units there could be pauses or paralinguistic elements of thinking, planning and/or hesitation. Here are two typical examples from the beginning of the Funke interview: “And ehm. Well my sports career couldn’t develop any further (-)” (page 1, line 16) as well as: “And then the Federal Armed Forces was added to it (‘)” (page 1, lines 44 and 45). – But one has to be cautious: The start of the new narrative unit could also be totally different. It could proceed in a manner that could be called telegram style: e.g., “(I) Continued of doing sports” (Funke interview, page one line 35 – The German original is characterized by a deletion of the subject ‘I”). Such a beginning would express breathlessness or haste of the re-enlivening of a speedy row of events, a super-focusing on an action scheme or career, or an attitude of fading difficult experiences out of one’s awareness. – One has to take into account that a narrative unit is depicting a lived experience (an “Erlebnis” in the sense of Dilthey or “having an experience” in the sense of Dewey’s “Art as Experience”). And such a lived experience can be recollected and imaginatively approached by the narrator on various paths and from various perspectives. Therefore the frame switching elements for the marking of change between narrative units cannot be used in a technical de-contextualized manner. They are useful “technical” or
formal single indicators for delineating narrative units, but as isolated markers they are not unambiguous. The delineation of narrative units can only be done by the interpretive use of them in combination with each other and with other markers of narrative units occurring within sequentially unfolding meaningful contexts of the narrative unit and by hermeneutically taking into regard the developing whole of the narrative unit.

7.4.2. Introduction to Narrative Units

The second element of a full-sized narrative unit would normally be an introduction. One would not find such an introduction in shortened versions of narrative units, whereas the frame switching elements one can find in the beginning of even minimally developed narrative units. The introduction pre-announces the overall quality of the content of the narrative unit to be depicted. Into the introduction is therefore quite often incorporated a first kernel sentence expressing basic features of the self-historical gestalt (process or episode) to be told in the narrative unit, e.g. stating the occurrence of a pivotal felicitous new opportunity. Sometimes the kernel sentence of the introduction is even a suprasegmental marker of a biographical process structure pre-announcing the depiction of long-term processes overarching several narrative units. For doing its pre-announcement work, the introduction uses higher predicates in order to characterize the general features of the socio-biographical processes coming up within the following narrative segment. Sometimes to this could even be attached an argumentative section underlining the biographical import of what will be presented in the narrative rendering, fighting it as something adversative to one’s own identity development or explaining it as something difficult to understand. Just to give a few examples from the Funke interview: (a) an introductory remark dealing with the nature of a new situation: “and . that . ehm . . yes(-) . I started there (-) . the first sessions (-) . that was for me . first all new (-) completely new (,)” (page 5, lines 4–6); (b) an introductory remark dealing with a new period and atmosphere in life:” an ehm . . and all of a sudden life started to be nice again (,)” (page 6, lines 17 and 18); (c) an introductory remark stating a new pivotal event in the life of the biography incumbent: “I also have found a very good apprenticing company (,) . that was in the festival hall (,) right (?)” (page 6, lines 42 to 43); (d) an introductory marker announcing the deepest point of a trajectory: “there I was actually really deep down (,). and eh . my life looked like that actually right (?) “ (page 3, lines 11 to 13); (e) an introductory marker suprasegmentally announcing the beginning of trajectory: “. and actually then it all started (-) . yes (-)” (page 1, line 38); (f) an introductory marker announcing the permanent unfolding of the trajectory, being trapped in it
and paralysed by it: “and ehm . that continued further and further (-)” (page 2, line 31). – I have marked by grey shadowing the higher predicates for delineating general features of the upcoming socio-biographical processes to be told within the narrative unit.

### 7.4.3. Narrative Kernel Sentences

The next elements of a narrative unit are the narrative kernel sentences, which we already have talked about. At least one kernel sentence must be found in a narrative unit; therefore it is a universal element of any type of narrative unit. But normally there are more than one kernel sentence, even in the course of a very laconic rendering. We have such an example in the first quotation in the very beginning of this text. The very laconic narrative unit start with: “and eh . ((slower till+)) to that time my former girl-friend left me (´)” (page 2, lines 16 and 17). It ends with: “and ehm . had then/ . :<couldn’t>: actually work in my profession at all (,)” (page 2, lines 27 and 28). In this narrative unit we can observe a whole row of narrative kernel sentences depicting outer events: (a) that the girl-friend would leave him, (b) that he would get severe back pain, (c) that he would go to the medical doctors who were not able to find the reason of the back pain. In addition there are two kernel sentences dealing with the inner change of the biography incumbent: (d) that the abandonment by his former girl-friend would have a decisive impact on him which would be somatized by a dramatical loss of weight as well as (e) that he would lose the ability to work in his present occupation (which is actually just indirectly implying a change of inner state). Analytically remarkable here is firstly that, although the narrative unit exhibits the binominal characteristics of depicting outer events and changes of inner states, which are connected to each other, the depiction of inner changes are expressed very indirectly either through a vague abstract higher predicate ("things of great, decisive importance I had there" – line 20) or through a statement of somatization ("that were when I have lost a lot of weight"– line 21). This partial tendency to fading inner states and their change out of his awareness of recollection conveys the impression that Mr. Funke still today is suffering from his severe triple trajectory experiences: being out of work and without any money, becoming socially isolated and becoming severely ill, and he, then, could only stand this triple-potential dynamics of the trajectory unfolding by partial fading out. In the first narrative segments he even deviates for the general principle of the story grammar to give a binominal rendering. There he just states the outer events of an unfolding disastrous trajectory, e.g.: “and ehm . well my sports career couldn’t develop any further (-)” (page 1, line 16) or: “I continued with doing sports (-) & that was actually always a big part
of my life: yes (?) and ehm . . : no: then in that company no (-) . opportunity to continue to work (-) : and: got then unemployed (´)” (page 1, lines 35 to 38). Even today Mr. Funke has lots of difficulties to look into the inner identity changes and the suffering related to it, which occur in the course of his trajectory of occupational self-alienation. Analytically remarkable secondly is the hasty and laconic row of narrative kernel sentences without any sections of detailing in between. This expresses the unhindered unfolding of a multidimensional biographical trajectory process or even the unhindered interface of three of them which overwhelms young Bernd Funke to the extent that he cannot fight it and gets finally paralysed by it.

7.4.4. Textual Sections of Narrative Detailing

In full-sized narrative units textual sections of narrative detailing are specifically attached to narrative kernel sentences. Many kernel sentences contain higher predicates, specifically higher predicates for expressing basic features of biographical process structures (in this case in their capacity of presentation markers or at least in their combination with them). Such kernel sentences for the characterization of the biographical process structure of trajectory are: “and zap!, chop-chop, that was it: and I’ve been slipped into that” (page 11, line 12 and 13); “yes(?). there I was actually really deep down (,). and eh . my life looked like that actually, right (?)” (page 3, lines 11–13); “and then the Federal Armed Forces (´)+ to that time everything was fine yet(´)” (page 1, lines 45 and 46). The first quoted kernel sentence addresses the trajectory quality of slipping into a trap situation (in this case the non-beloved first apprenticeship as heavy machinery fitter); the second kernel sentenced defines the absolutely lowest point of Bernd Funke’s multiplex trajectory experience (as we have seen already). And the last kernel sentence characterizes a temporary time out from the unfolding dynamics of the biographical trajectory of occupational self-alienation (the military service quite often can have such a time-off quality for the life course of a person). Since the three quotations are introductory statements at the same time I don’t want to dwell on them here, although in all three instances the following text sections could be seen as a sections of narrative detailing. Let’s take just the last example: the following statement details the kernel sentence about the time of military service:

“and eh . I have
during my time in the Federal Armed Forces . gained a lot of weight . I had actually
a really cool and easy-going job there (´)
mhm what did you do there (?)
The quoted statement firstly details the bodily development of Bernd Funke (Here “gaining weight” is used by the narrator as an indicator for the temporal still-stand of trajectory; later for him the loss of weight becomes a symbol for the precipitation of the unfolding trajectory, as we saw already). Secondly it details Bernd Funke’s work situation at the federal German army. And the understanding, that the whole section is understood by the two interaction partners of the interview situation as a section of narrative detailing, can additionally empirically be corroborated through looking at the intervention of the interviewer via his activity of asking for even more details regarding the work situation at the Federal Armed Forces.

But let’s look at two other examples of narrative detailing that are not attached to introductory statements. The first deals with narrative detailing in the context of Mr. Funke’s depicting his emerging biographical action scheme, the second one with his narrative detailing in the context of depicting a phase of his severe biographical trajectory.

The first example we already dealt with in demonstrating the presentation markers and the language of biographical action scheme (chapter 2.2.2.4, point 1). In this example the narrative kernel sentence is clearly separated from the introductory statement. The introductory statement is: “and all of a sudden life started to be nice again (’)” (page 7, lines 17 and 18). And the first narrative kernel sentence as “head” of a following “trunk” section of narrative detailing is: “and ehm . had goals, right (?)” (page 6, line 21) Here again we have a higher predicate, that one of “goals”. It is quite vague and therefore must be explicated. This explication is accomplished by recalling and stating the following inner conversation, which then, at the beginning of his re-training, Bernd Funke had had with himself: “you will pull through this here . doesn’t matter what will happen after this . you don’t know that anyway (-)” (page 6, lines 23 and 24). Therefore the higher predicate (“had goals”) is explicated by stating an unconditioned and ascetic endeavour to hold on to the occupational re-training, whatsoever difficult – and partially even senseless – this could turn out. Another kernel sentence in this narrative unit is: “I got (-) . thanks to Mrs. Brühl from the agency for advancement for educational training … got a lot a lot of help (,) . didn’t matter what kind right (?)” (page 6, lines 26 to 29). Here the higher predicate is “lot of help”, and the narrator himself underlines the broad range of several types of assistance he got from his counsellor and social pedagogue Mrs.
Brühl. This broad range then gets explicated: “whether it were encouraging words or even now when looking for those practical apprenticing companies (,). everything got going (‘). that in that view/ you didn’t feel so alone . you :
<could>:even during the vocational school let me say that again and again at/
well that was always your contact (‘). and if anything happened (-) . or . they were actually always there for you” (page 6, lines 29 to 39). So Mr. Funke is explicating the broad and vague higher predicate of “lot of help” by drawing a list of activities, which his counsellor Mr. Brühl and her colleagues would do for him: verbal encouragements, liaison work, offering a permanent openness for getting turned to and for counselling, being a biographical caretaker for every type of difficult training and learning situation with its implications of dramatic identity change.

The second example is addressing Mr. Funke’s second recalling of the beginning of his long-term and severe biographical trajectory of self-alienation conditioned by his having been thrown out of the elite sports school in the questioning half of the autobiographical narrative interview:

and eh. (quiet till +) that was all of a sudden (‘), that was like struck by
lightening (‘)+. everything at once (‘). that means “yes you are/ you didn’t
get further (‘). you don’t come further (‘). your sports career is
finished with that and ehm. now we have to see that we integrate
you in the normal life (‘)". at that was the time
(‘) tenth grade was finished passed the exams “ you don’t get further
and now we have to see that we get you into a apprenticeship (-)”

Here we have a narrative kernel sentence (marked by gray shadowing), which contains two higher predicates: the first characterizes the sudden and devastating effect of Mr. Funke’s having been thrown out of the elite sports school – dealt with in the first subsegment of the narrative unit – on his inner life, the second vaguely addresses additional problems connected to the inner devastation of Bernd Funke: “everything at once”. The narrative detailing section (that part of the quotation that is not marked by gray shadowing) is explicating the two kernel sentences: the first part (up to the middle of line 44) deals with the clearance of the definitiveness of the life historical end of Bernd Funke’s career as elite sportsman. The second part deals with the haste of getting Bernd Funke transferred into a “normal life” apprenticeship, whatsoever that could be, without asking him about it at all. The section of narrative detailing is

(page 10, lines 40 to 47- by the way, the quoted section is just a sub-segment; the whole narrative segments starts earlier – page 10, line 3o - and ends later – page 11, line 12)
basically constituted by the quotation of direct speech of the powerful instances of the elite sports school and – possible instances of the school administration or labour exchange. The quotation of their direct speech conveys two impressions: the first one is that the disclosure of the end of Bernd Funke’s sports career and the planning of his transfer into an apprenticeship was done in a one shot “high noon situation”, and the second one is, that the disclosure and the planning was like the pronunciation of a trial sentence powerfully superimposed upon him without giving him a chance to fight and to reshape it.

The basic function of sections of narrative detailing is to explicate the higher predicates of kernel sentences. This explication can even lead to the reconstruction of a whole scenic situation. One example of that would be the inner structure of the background construction in the chapter on the features and the language of social situations (2.2.2.6, point c). There the kernel sentence is: “the next world was coming to an end (,)” (page 7, line 16). The following section of detailing is a depiction of a whole scenic situation using the techniques of inner speech and the reconstruction of attitudes to work assignments and features of the environment of administrative paper work. Sometimes the depiction of a scenic situation can also substitute a kernel sentence (at the same time delivering a hidden or “tacit” kernel sentence) in order to demonstrate the dramatic unfolding of the course of events and/or to express that the emergence of new phenomena is not sufficiently understood yet in order to formulate a kernel sentence with a higher predicate delineating the basic features of the proceedings connected with the emergence of the situation. A typical example of this is the narrative depiction of the scenic situation in which Bernd Funke is sitting in class still being in the ordinary secondary school, the door opens and the recruiters of the elite sports school come in (page 9, lines 1 to 10 – quoted and discussed in chapter 2.2.2.6, point a). Here the hidden kernel sentences are: (a) “We have been seduced out of the raison d’etat, and they did not take into account our own personal development”. (b) “After having been seduced, we as a peer group started a dangerous career”.

7.4.5. Textual Sections of Descriptive or Argumentative Detailing

There are three types of conditions for the production of textual sections of descriptive or argumentative detailing: (a) Vague higher predicates of kernel sentences must be concretised in order to really understand them; this can be done by referring to social frames via description. Such a section provides the ordinary characterizations of social frames in the ongoing course of autobiographical narrative rendering. (b) An unfamiliar concept or conception needs interpretation, which is very important for one’s identity development; this
interpretation is mostly done by argumentation. (c) An enigmatic or at least partially unknown phenomenon, general noun or proper name (including acronyms), which normally would occur in a textual section of ongoing descriptive or narrative detailing, calls for (further) explication, which, again, can be accomplished by means of description. The quality of vagueness, of enigma as well as of not being known basically refers to a lower state of knowledge of the listener as assumed by the narrator. This is especially true for categories (b) und (c); the narrator realizes that she or he controls over knowledge, which the listener doesn’t have. Of course this difference in terms of knowledge – one person knows about event constellations that the other doesn’t know – is a basic condition for the extempore narration of personal experiences. But in being embarked on the endeavour to let the listener know about a self-historical event constellation, which she or he, the narrator, was involved in and she or he, the listener, doesn’t know yet, the narrator gets especially aware and concerned about this difference of knowledge – as assumed and announced by the narrator and as ratified by the listener in the beginning of the interview and as still permanently assumed and mirrored by the two parties during the ongoing narration and listening to it –, if and when she or he realizes in her or his permanent self-monitoring of the ongoing conversational story telling, that the listener would have lived in a totally different everyday world of existence, cultural world, social world or social milieu with very different social frames as compared to that one of the narrator. In the Funke interview this condition of the pivotal difference of social frames comes to the forefront, when specific GDR institutions are focused on: like the system of the state sportsmen and sportswomen or the paramilitary Society for Sport and Technique (GST). –

Other general condition for the production of textual sections of descriptive or argumentative detailing consists of difficulties in presenting the preferable self-image of a realistic and rational actor and story carrier. Here – as part of his biographical work – the narrator attempts to fight possible counterarguments against such a self-presentation, including his own doubts about her or his own former dealings with problems and their rationality. Naturally, textual detailing sections working on such a problems of rational and realistic self-presentation are argumentative in their general nature. – Now let’s look at the three different textual conditions of the need for explication or explanation.

a) Explication of a higher predicate

The following quotation is the beginning of that narrative unit, which dwells on Bernd Funke’s adolescent period of exclusive life for the requirements of elite sports:
but there it started to be interesting (‘)
there was only the sport alone (., right (‘)?
you are ehm (-)/. ehm that was
out there in South Town (‘) you are/ I’ve lived in the North (‘). you went
in the morning at at at six. by tram through the town (‘), and
you’ve started either with school or you had training(‘). and ehm .
that was going eh . training ten times so twice a day (‘)
sometimes even three times (-) .and ehm.
school (-),alongside (/) & well what means alongside (-) ((faster till+))
imagine in the morning training a bit school and then training
again an so on (‘)+

I again marked the combination of introductory remark and kernel sentence by gray shadowing. The higher predicate here is – to reword it a little bit – the super-focusing of young Bernd Funke on elite sports training and competition. The social frame of his former elite sports training and competition must be explicited to the listener and re-enlivened and recapitulated for the narrator himself in order to understand and qualify the life for elite sports during those adolescent years as an important biographical condition for the severity of the following trajectory of occupational self-alienation, after Bernd Funke has been removed from the elite sports school. The expliclation of young Bernd Funke’s superfocusing on elite sports is accomplished by means of an inserted communicative scheme of description for the characterization of the pertinent social frame(s). The descriptive presentation is firstly setting a contrast set of two locations and the distance relationship between them: the home in north town and the training sights in south town; this depicts the geography of Bernd Funke’s life situation in those three years of education and career in that elite sports school. Secondly the narrator states, that the distance relationship between the two local sites of Bernd Funke’s life can only be managed by the habit of daily routine travel via tram from the north site to the south site of the city early in the morning and vice versa at night; this exposition of daily itinerary is one of the basic “text grammatical” forms of the communicative scheme of description I cannot dwell on in this text. Thirdly the narrator concentrates on the contrast set between the work requirements of elite sports training and ordinary school requirements; he conveys the impression that the training requirements would have been always dominant – he dwelled on this partial postponement of school requirements even in the narrative unit before (page 10, lines 1 to 7) –, which could have been a detrimental condition for later intensive phases of academic learning and biographical work. Such a contrast set is another basic “text
grammatical” form of the communicative scheme of description of social frames. Finally the narrator dwells on the strictness and the required extended time and high energy input into the sports training by means of the communicative format of drawing the picture of the daily time and work schedule of the training procedures. Reconstructing schedules of routine procedures is a third typical “text grammatical” form of the communicative schema of description of social frames.

b) Interpretation of an unfamiliar concept or conception, which is at the same time very important for one’s own identity development

The following example for the structural phenomenon of detailing interpretations of unfamiliar notions – here of the GDR notions of the master team, the good conditions and auspices and the elite state sportsman – stems from the same narrative unit as the last quotation did; it is its immediate follow-up in the course of ongoing narrative rendering, and the end of the quotation is equivalent with the end of the narrative unit:

In this second half of the narrative unit the narrator formulates a bi-nominal kernel sentence, which (a) reports the outer event constellation, that he as a regular member had played in the master team of his sports discipline, and which (b) expresses his inner identity development, that, thus, he had have a good career outlook which (c) would have implied the prognosis of his being able to carry on with his career expectation pattern up to its institutionally envisioned end of maturation at the elite sports secondary school (in German terminology “gymnasium”, which is roughly the equivalent of British “grammar school”) and to finish it successfully as state acknowledged national sportsman. In formulating this quite complex three-string binominal kernel sentence the narrator uses specific abstract concepts or higher predicates that belong to the GDR official sports language: master team, auspices and status of absolvent of elite sports school. He realizes that his West-German conversation partner, the interviewer, might not know the special meanings of those GDR sports concepts.
In addition, he would like to make clear that his perseverance in keeping himself oriented towards an optimistic prognosis of educational career even up to that very moment when he had been kicked out of the elite sports school would not mean that he had been extraordinary unrealistic in his outlook on his educational and occupational life. He would like to convey a personal image of his former modesty and realistic circumspection, i.e. that a glamorous Western type of professional sports career did not orient him during those days. To be a student of that GDR elite sports school and to become a successful graduate of it would have been something different. The narrator doesn’t explain that difference explicitly. But one gets the idea, that becoming a GDR state sportsman would have been the entrance to a normal GDR occupation like others – perhaps a little bit more privileged than the ordinary ones, but without extraordinary payments and respectively required spectacular sports achievements. And, in addition, the narrator would like to convey a sober image of his former self-assessment that he, then, rightfully and sensibly ascribed to himself the capacity of successfully reaching such a modest and realistic educational goal. – Regarding the just discussed textual section it is analytically interesting that the narrator harnesses the communicative scheme of argumentation, firstly in order to – at least partially – explain abstract concepts to a presumably uninformed listener (with a different collective historical background and the respective totally different background knowledge) and secondly in order to work on the problem of his own and – even more – of the listener’s possible misunderstanding that his former persistent belief in his own future as GDR elite sportsman might today be wrongly understood as a sign of irrationality and immodesty, i.e. in order to work on the defense of his image as a circumspect rational actor, even if, during those old days, he followed up that ambitious elite sports school career for such a long time. I have marked textual phenomena of argumentation by gray shadowing. Features of argumentation can be seen in the activities of drawing a conclusion (“so there”, “so that”), of using the indefinite third personal pronoun (“one” instead of “I”) and of taking into regard possible objections of others or himself (that his former attitude could be seen as unrealistic and irrational: makers like “well” – “but”) and arguing against those possible objections (in our present case: that an unrealistic and immodest attitude connected to his former sports aspirations could be ascribed to him). Of course, the communicative scheme of argumentation, which has its own generative procedures and rules of presentation we cannot deal with in this text, is here in a subdominant position compared to the communicative scheme of narration. It just serves the function of making the narrative presentation understandable and of conveying a rational image of the narrator as former actor and story carrier. It doesn’t interrupt the ongoing narrative rendering.

c) Description of an enigmatic or at least partially unknown phenomenon
The narrator might refer to phenomena, especially social frames and institutions, which the listener presumably doesn’t know. The general noun or proper name (including acronyms) that refers to such a phenomenon presumably unknown to the listener must not be a higher predicate of kernel sentence, and it must not be part of central concept of biographical identity formation and biographical work of the narrator and biography incumbent. It can be just part of the narrative rendering of a situation or of the description of a social frame in the course of the ongoing autobiographical story telling. But the narrator would like to make sure, that the listener does understand what would be involved since it may an important condition for the overall understanding of the unfolding of the biographical process structures involved. At one of the very low points of Mr. Funke’s unfolding of his trajectory of occupational self-alienation, when he had realized that he would not get happy with his apprenticeship of fitter for heavy machinery, he takes the biographical initiative (as biographical action scheme of escape from the trajectory trap, but which would actually have meant – as we mentioned already – to slide into another very difficult situation) to enter the vocational training of the GDR riot police. As we saw already, the idea for this was somehow connected to his experiences in the para-military GDR youth organization “Society of Sports and Technique” (GST) and to acquaintances connected with that organization. Thus, at least as a piece of background knowledge and referential background experience, the GST was important in the life course of Bernd Funke. And for the narrator it is understandingly import, that the listener understands what the experience at the GST meant:

18   there were such GST camps here (-)/
19       that are (?)
20       yes that are (-) you have to
21       imagine (-). do such things actually still exist today (?)
22       I     >I don’t think so<: (-). ehm . there were (-). the boy/ the young human
23       M     being was trained to (-) . yes how shall I say that now carefully (?). ((louder
24       till+)) well the principle of the GTS camps are that all boys (‘).
25       I       mhm
26       M       in one
27       group (‘) . with all/ you were nearly on the 500 (‘) did drive into the
28       countryside somewhere (‘) and have then there . premilitary training (,)+.
29       I       ah yes
30       M       and eh (-). ((thinking till+))
31       I       : yes: I had to that time, shortly (-)+
32       I       mhm. yes I don’t
33       M       know this as well (,) well that didn’t exist in that form in the West (.)
34       M       nay nay . and
ehm. you really stood there then/let me say that (') there was a settlement of
summer-houses and you stood in front of them (') with a rifle made of wood
and let the people out and in there (.). well that was (-). when I think about
that now totally stupid actually (.).

I mhm

M I mean ehm . there were non-commissioned
officers from Goldberg field officers who made the training there (-). ehm
real Sturmbann and & all such rubbish (.)

I yeah yeah

M not really like

the military (-), so not with gas masks and such things (') : but: (-) that was
quiet tough this line (.).
References


Appendix

I ( ) such a development & just see where you have the feeling where it starts for you ( ) & ( ) . You can start as you have said right from the early beginning ( )

M yes ( ) . ( it’s switch on yes (?) )

I ( yes it’s switched on )

M yes (-) . it started / start / &

where I would start the story now that was actually the normal vocational school / well normal school ( ) .

I mhm

M tenth grade in the secondary school :> that’s what you call it now:<

I mhm

M : and ehm : . where I am saying that now that was a drastic change where I’ve thought about that later on ( ) & that was / I was doing a lot of sport . and eh . then I have changed from the normal school to the . college of physical education ( )

I yes

M : & ehm : how was it going with finding the right vocational school + yes (?) & or anyway with the right job (-) nothing at all you were just put into something ( )

I mhm

M : > so many people do this so and many people do that <;

I ehm so that I can understand that (-) . was that before the wall came down or after the wall came down (?)

M & < that was > : still (-) eh . before it (-)

I ah yes ( )

M it was very clear (-) . eh eh very straight forward :< said >: and I became fitter for heavy machinery ( ) . that was here in Minden a lot here because of the loads of industries because of Meta and such (-) . I’ve was trained i Meta ( )

I mhm ah yes
I continued with doing sports & that was actually **always** a big part of my :>life<: yes (?) and ehm . . . :< no>: then in that company no (-) . opportunity to continue to work (-): and: got then unemployed (') . and actually then it all started (-) . yes (-)

I was doing casual work here and there (-) . and worked as a plumber for four years & then came the **military service** (') & :< that was already/ well **during** the apprenticeship :> eh then (-) then:> then wall came down<: yes (?)

I

mhm

and I’ve done then.

. as I said did casual work ((faster till+)) worked four years as a plumber and then the Federal Armed Forces (') + to **that time** everything was fine (') . and ehm . I have during my time in the Federal Armed Forces . gained a **lot** of weight . I had actually a really cool and easy-going job there (')

I

mhm what did you do there (?)

I was there well

a normal/ well that was more or less waiter . I have worked for one week and was one week . ehm at home (,) that was great

I

mhm

& ((faster till+)) so :< and then it was/ the time in
the Federal Armed Forces was finished(´)>. and then it started all again with
“What am I doing now(?)”
I
mhmm
M and eh. the casual work was going on and eh. I didn’t find a company where I continued
to work as a plumber (´)
I
mhmm
that: was then(-). after four years
I finished(´)
I
mhmm
M driving car here (-) and was doing something there(-). and so forth(-). :and
ehm: I then (-). because of pure coincidence(-) via a relative(-)
((slower till+)) slipped into my original area+ metalworking industry
again (-) in a small business & that was a (-) let me a call it a shackle (-)
I have worked there hard as well physically hard (-) and eh. ((slower till+))
to that time my former girl-friend left me (´)
I
mhmm
M and ((faster till+)) things of great importance which I had there (-). and there
that were the I have lost a lot of weight (-)
I
yes
M yes (?) ((quieter till+)) because before that time/ I’ve gained a lot (+) . and there I lost a lot (-) . and eh
and there it it suddenly started with my. pains in my back (-). I had
very strong pains in my back (-). went to the doctor (-) nobody could
for a very long time/ nobody could find out what it is and so forth(-). and ehm. had then/.:<couldn’t>: actually work in my profession at all (-)
I
mhmm
M and ehm. that continued further and further (-) more and more medical examinations till
somebody/till I found a doctor (-). who found out that it wasn’t
a simple blockage so something simple which can be
fixed
I
mhmm
M or so forth/ or with . with some kind of therapy can be fixed (´) but it is a real progressive illness (´). Morbus
Bechterew (´) that is an inflexibility of the spinal column (-)
I
mhmm
M and eh. there t was very clear (-) . not to pick up heavy stuff (-)
I: yes. yes

M: hard

physical work is actually not possible any longer yes (?) and eh. have then

>: to that time<: that ((faster till+)) broken up the contract of employment in that

metalworking company (')+

I: mhm

M: by mutual eh. agreement (-) and eh &

where the job centre wasn’t happy about that (’). is understable (-) but well

when getting the cash and then what was following (’). ((louder till+))

I slipped then into financial problems too (-) & well all of a sudden it was

a really huge lump which came/. which came onto me (,)


well I couldn’t (-) . pay anything anymore (-) . he he . where I have worked in that
metalworking shackle let me say it like that (-) . he couldn’t pay

M mhm

really a very small business (-) . and ehm . everything came out of the blue (,)
I couldn’t pay my rent anymore (-) were unemployed ( ’

I mhm

that was

M and ehm . was alone (-) .
well that was actually a really deep low point let me say that like that (,)

I yes

M yes(?) there
I was actually really deep down (,). and eh . my life looked like that actually
right (?) . a lot of alcohol came to that (’). well practically . really (-) . well how
should I say (-) just so . hanging/

I mhm

M hanging around (’)

I yes yes

M and ehm .

I a lot of things are

I mhm

some things come together right (?) . that was going on
to the eviction/ well eviction of my flat that/ had to leave the flat
and and (-) : there: my parents have actually then (-)/
well my mum my dad has died I was kid
of divorced parents (-) .

I mhm

M have helped me a lot (,).
and my grandparents (’) . helped really a lot (-) . and eh then I went/ got to the
health resort (’ because of that injury that was going parallel ((faster till+)) with
with with+ NHS and so forth (-) . ((softer till+)) was in the health resort for five
weeks+ and eh . there it got confirmed the diagnosis (-) . and :<after that>: it was
actually going well (-) . well young person (’)

I mhm

M actually (-) . as
they said at the job centre to that time(-) . number one on the labour
market (-) . young and/ well not employable because of that .

I

M and ehm . yes professional re-orientation (-) . ((thoughtful,
hesitant till+)) actually was a problem to me . actually I felt a bit
left alone from the job centre (,)+ . well that was “well, what
would you like to do(?)

I mhm

well I was choosing something (-). well that wasn’t fitting with the illness (-). and that doesn’t fit and that doesn’t fit

and well yes phew. yeah well let me say the psychologist who I was to (-). I found/ found that actually. cehm actually (faster and louder till+) just because you have to do that because the job centre decided that +. eh. yeah.

“likes to work with kids” and whatever else was discovered

there (-)

I yes yes

M well with the job centre then they waffled like “well
we can’t employ you as an educator (-) there aren’t any jobs in that field (-) I yes M up to then the discussions were going on that you had to choose a profession where you eh don’t sit around alone but move as as well and not to work outside and so forth (-) I mhm M and the only thing to be worthy of consideration was office administrator (-) & which was demanded on the market to that time actually (-) eh where you were employable (-) I yes, may I just (-) M of course I mhm well you are telling me very illustrative I can imagine that very well in what kind of situation you have been there (,) when you just started to describe there how the situation regarding giving advice was at the job centre (-) I had the idea of that the psychologist has done the usual test with you then (-) M correct, correct I how can I imagine (?) M well when/ well it was (-) you you/ eh it was/ to that time it was very clear that/ a new orientation is clear (,) that was clear (`) I yes M the only thing important was what and eh how how you yourself/ what position you had (,) I yes M whether you are let me say it like that (-) normal intelligent so you can later on let me say it now (-) put into some classes vocational school and so forth (,) whether you right from the start or later and so forth (,) that was such a psychological test at the computer (-) shortly after that a five minute talk with such a doctor (-) and eh lots of Din A4 pages got out of it (-) & and these got analysed at the job centre then (-) I mhm, yes, yes M and well that was . phew . I don’t know whether (-) whether everybody is feeling like that (-) but I did feel a bit like an idiot actually (-) because (-) yes. was/ about all different topics was I asked there sure that’s what the tests are for (-) I yes
but when the analysis was done

yeah (?) . I have thought that is a bit absurd (( getting very soft till+))

everything what they have for (-)

mhm  mhm

well then the other profession was worthy to be taken into consideration (-) and . and that got every time well right how shall

I call it (-) . approved or granted (-) and then . so it all started then (-) . and through the psychological tests it was known well I couldn’t start immediately (-) but you had to do first something like a pre-training , that’s how I that

I believe I can remember that

mhm
that was then through the agency for advancement for educational training. And, that, eh, yes. I started there. The first sessions, that was for me, first all new. Completely new. I am not great in German, let me say that, that was then German and English and calculations and maths and all such stuff. You've got there during that time eh, trained and eh, so well, you could start. Yeah and, because that training is well, that re-training is shortened and, how long is the? That goes for two years. That's how it used to be. I don't know, I think it is still that way. And, the normal apprenticeship is well, is well, is well, three years. That class in that of all ages, all of all classes too. Because all came from more or less the same field, that was on the one hand long-term unemployment or, eh, re-orientation too because you couldn't work in the former profession anymore. The desire I don't want to say that, but weren't convinced of the whole thing whether it will be of use or not. To that time I was still young, I didn't have such problems or, eh, to say I will go back to school again and want to learn completely new things.
older ones as well (-) . who actually come more or less discouraged
into the thing and . “does this all have purpose” and
“is it sensible . because I don’t get . a job anyway (-) . I am
let me say 50 or 45 (-) . do the two years there (-)” and and the
the biggest problem which I have seen (-) . ehm . was of cour/ not for
me personally . is then that , taking part in this new vocational school .
where then . sixteen seventeen eighteen years old young people sit . when you
then (-) as I said I was still young .
I mhm
M I didn’t have a problem with that I have then ( )
had more in relation ( ) . where I think that is a problem ( ) .
man then is in such a young class . . with me it was always
like that that I (-) . didn’t matter which activity I did (-) . I always
identified myself with it (') . a lot .
I mhm
whether I worked as a plumber
or I was going in those professions then/ or I have/ I always
have been taken up in it (.) .
I yes
and actually I have that later on too . eh . as a
seen as a springboard (,) . to start completely new there (.) .
as I said I didn’t have anything anymore before that ()
I mhm
right (?) .
I had an old car my flat I also lived in a one-room-flat in
Langenstedt that was all finished (-) an ehm . . and all of a sudden
life started to be nice again (') .
I yeah
girl-friend was there (-) .
and ehm . had goals right (?)
I mhm
you will pull through this here . doesn’t matter what
will happen after this . you don’t know that anyway (-) .
I yes
I got (-) . thanks to
Mrs. Brühl from the agency for advancement for educational training .
personally/ I can’t speak for the others but I speak just about . eh . me (') .
got a lot a lot of help (.) . didn’t matter what kind right (?) . whether it were
effacing words or even now when looking for those practical apprenticing
companies (.) .
I mhm
and eh . well . because
everything got going ('). that in that view/ you didn’t feel so alone . you :<could>:
even during the vocational school let me say that again and again at/ well
that was always your contact (') .
I yes
and if anything happened
(-) . or . they were actually always there for you . and I have that/
that was very good for me (.) .
I mhm
right (?) . I also have found a very good apprenticing company ('). that was in the festival hall (') right (?)

I mhm

M and

there (-) . yes (-) . all . let me say the average age elderly women (-) . I was there the spring chicken now (-) . that was great of course (-)

I mhm yes

M and ehm (-) .

had the interview (') and it got confirmed there that I could do my training there (')

I mhm yeah
and as I said I had problems then ('). actually I was ambitious in school (.), in that eh. new vocational school ('), I made myself accepted that ('). and eh... yes. made acquaintance ((faster till+)) that is clear with the young people and and and ( ) let me say that (')+.

we were several re-trainees in the class ('). that was a real help too ('). ((softer till+)) when something was somehow/then it is the elderly told a bit (-) and eh right (?)+ yes yes mhm and eh (-).

yes and no problems in the practical apprenticing company. that was all trouble-free (') well it were hard demands but (-) : <it was>: in . eh. was great ('). whereas I have to say of course the first time I started there (-) . the training well the/ the first time practical work that was/ for me there the next world was coming to an end (.)

/ you really want to do that. office administrator (?). before that you’ve been at the building site when it was –17 Degrees and did/ or were carrying around toilet stets and and got rid of blockages. so actually real/ really working the butt off and now you’re sitting on the chair and eh . start on the filing cabinet or/" to that time I thought of that that it is completely senseless . to stick some little paper flags on pages so you can see later on which month it is

I didn’t understand that yeah. yeah with the stamping and I did say there “nay that’s not it” but . as I said (-) . because I do identify myself with all things in a great way ((softer till+)) so that wasn’t a problem anymore after a coupe of weeks (-)+ .

but also had a stern chief (') well the one who was responsible for me (')

fair well not with mobbing or something like that ('). and eh that is now actually all in all when I am thinking about that ('). that was actually all of advantage('). and eh . luckily I was take over (').
I: mhm

M: I am working now as a white-collar worker in the public service ('). and ehm. have then/ well as I said before I finished it and did work then too ('). and you always talk to each other. and I did say then “if there is any possibility to get into a higher position. I am open-minded to everything (,).” right (?) mhm

M: and well

I: mhm

M: now I go beside my work go to eh. night school in ( ) and do my degree in business management (,)

I: mhm
so well I a at this time except of the work which I have now and that
night school (-) . in my private life this are going well ((faster till+))
actually I am a happy person I can’t say/ I have no grounds for
complaint+ I earn good money (-) and . well I am . ((louder till+))
satisfied and  eh every step I have done to that time (‘) . ehm in the direction
of re-training (-) . that was when I see that now/ everything was correct (‘)
and everything was great(,)
yeah yeah
right (?)and I am well (-) . can only get/
well can’t get better (-) & of course it can get better that’s clear
but it is/ great as it is (-) .
yes
mhm .
I hope that’s what you wanted to hear (-)
Nay
that is correct . well . that was I . eh . wanted to hear as a story I think
you have in a very . very illustrative and visuell way have told me (’)
well I got ( a) picture . ehm how this developed (’). ehm I
wrote a few things down (,) there I would like a couple
of questions
yes yes
( ) ask (‘) . ehm (-) . You’ve told me that
but . ehm . the first point I would like eh . to as/ or inquire about was (-) .
that was your decision of your original profession (,) well
( )
on the one
hand you’ve told me you were before that too eh . you’ve done a lot of
sport in the school (’)
yes mhm
I did understand it that way that there were
real ideas about doing something in that field (’)
yes yes
I had
the feeling there it would maybe be good too if you could tell
a bit more about that (,) even when none of it could be realised
but it is it seemed to be of importance (,)
ja sehr
eh vielleicht sagen Sie dazu/ ja fangen Sie damit einfach mal an (,)
yeah well as I said (’) I was like
everybody else in the the eh . secondary school tenth grade (’)

I started to go swimming & I didn’t like that that was too boring for me and ehm. later on that was training five times a week and then I was young to that time (I mean) eight years old.

I was young to that time (I mean) eight years old. I don’t know does it still exist back there (?) nay I don’t know that now.

“wood swimming hall” (?) yeah earlier on I don’t know was it right from the beginning in the “wood swimming hall” (?) nay I think (-) not the “wood swimming hall” (-) I don’t know does it still exist back there (?) nay I don’t know that now. well
and ehm. to our time (-) . I don’t know ((softer till+)) you probably

won’t know that it always was like that there came/ that’s how I felt

about it+ . school (’). and all of a sudden the door opened and somebody
came to us (-) . and ehm. “we support sport” and ehm. then a short
meeting took place so for what you could like to do and what you would

want to do (’). with addresses and so forth (-) .

I mhm

and ehm. well then

thought about that together with ten boys “let us try with doing

handball(’)”. .

I mhm

and ehm. it was such a training were all were
together (’) like a hundred people (-). with several coaches (’) und right

away you got sorted out “ you can throw you do that and the rest of

of you can go home” and whatever else and then there were thirty people

and these ones got divided again (’). after training for a while

let me say that right (?)

I mhm

after a few weeks once to the training centre

(’). that was the area where we trained/ where we trained often (-) and
everything was more intensive (’) and once normal let me say that

like that right (?)

I yes . mhm

well and I got into the training
centre (’) & used to have training twice three times a week (’).

I mhm

in the
course of time (-) . in the ongoing years that increased (’)

I yes

M and ehm. I fell in love with sport then too (’). and that was three times a week later

on (’). it really great (-) . during the holidays let me say that

we used to have then too ehm. training camps (’)

I yes

M right (?) that means in

the morning and afternoon in the same hall & well here in Minden (-) .
doing sports and so forth (-) . well that was going on so that you with 14

with 13 years (’). there was such a delegation were lots of top sportsmen

let me call them the young people (’) or the best clubs out of all the clubs

got together (-)

I yeah
and there was a delegation (').
that means the the/ nay no delegation is wrong but they got
looked out for
yes
and through the sports club Minden (,. and out of that
a team was put together (,.)

ah yes
and you’ve got delegated to the sports
club Minden (,. well that was the greatest (,. right (?)
mhm
M and eh... that was already (-) orientated: only sport. right (?)

I mhm

M let me say it in confidence and carefully. ehm: once: you are in handball or sports

I mhm.

M yes. whereas I used to be the good average (-) I wasn’t bad but also not very good either ('). but there it started to be interesting (')

I mhm. yes

M yes, whereas I used to be the good average (-) I wasn’t bad but also not very good either ('). but there it started to be interesting (')

I mhm. yes

M you are ehm (-)/ ehm that was out there in Landau (') you are/ I’ve lived in the North ('). you went

I mhm. yes

M and that was going for three years (.), and ehm...

I mhm.

M you are in the team as well during that time (') so there were good presuppositions (') so that you/ you could have/ well at that time there haven’t been professional sportsmen in the sense of a profession (')

I mmh. yeah

M ehm. but it was a bit different I believe & I don’t know ('). that you could have done (.), and ehm. yeah (-), but that wasn’t enough all in all that means. ehm after the tenth grade (-) .

I yes. yes

M to make then a junior team (') . and this one was again/ that means not to take out but out of this one has been developed upper league, (') that was that/ the best here (') what there was in the GDR (')

I mhm. yes

M and that wasn’t enough all in all (-) and ehm. (quiet till +) that was all of a sudden ('). that was like struck by
lightening ('). everything at once (-). that means “yes you are/ you didn’t
get further (’). you don’t come further (’). your sports career is
finished with that and ehm. now we have to see that we integrate
you in the normal life (’). at that was the time
(’) tenth grade was finished passed the exams “ you don’t get further
and now we have to see that we get you into a apprenticeship (-)”
I                                                                                                                yes
M                                                                                                                     and
I’ve been to a consultation then in ehm . in the children and youth sports
school (-) . where then/ . (faster till+) I’ve can’t
remember on that+ where it was actually fixed
what kind of profession I do, well I didn’t have much of a choice right?

you have to imagine it like there are five envelopes and the first one who
gets one has the best one, and that was it. and yeah, well there were no big decisions to be made and ehm “yes” and I’ll become fitter for power-plants, and that was it. well there were no big decisions to be made and ehm “yes” and I’ll become fitter for power-plants, and that was it. and I’ve been slipped into that and there I’ve made my two/two and a half years training for fitter of power-plant then. mhm. yes, that as I said was that actually everybody did here, yeah. yeah.

indicate that earlier on but, so in all the dimensions I could understand that argument ehm. did you have in that situation when that, that must have come very sudden. I believe that argument ehm. did you have in that situation when that, that must have come very sudden. suddenly it was clear that the development in the direction of sports didn’t go any further, you haven’t been chosen, did you have any ideas for yourself at all what you want to do?

do not have. I couldn’t think of anything. ehm. there haven’t been any ideas, nothing.

actually that was only like “yes it has to gone on now
make sure you get something?"

I yes

M I mean you are really young (-). You are 17 years old (-). ehm that you there (-). I thought " well yeah that’s all over (-) that was it o k. noe you have to make sure that you make something out of it (’) and then it’s ok (,)"

I mhm

M at that time you couldn’t know that the wall will come down and all such things (-).

I that wasn’t existing yeah
M well you would have now/ehm. for a lifetime I would have worked
Meta (-) at some machine (-) making ropes and would have gone
to the sport alongside (-)
I mhm mhm
M ((very quiet till+))
if that with the illness (-+) so would the/that was it then.
ehm. good ok (-) and then maybe doorkeeper with 50 sometime (') and
that was it then ('). right (?)
I mhm mhm.
M and so (-) it was/there was nothing & there
weren’t any ideas ehm from somebody else/ or to move over (-) or or/
I haven’t played with thoughts like that that didn’t exist right (?). that was
it then (-).
I mhm mhm. yes
M so ('). now begins the/your daily life (-).
although eh I have to say of course (-). ehm (-) I totally forgot that earlier
on ('). I have during the/during the trade school (-) right (?)
there were such GTS camps here (')/that are (?)
I yes that are (-) you have to
M imagine (-). do such things actually still exist today (?)
I don’t think so<; ('). ehm. there were ('). the boy/ the young human
being was trained to (-). yes how shall I say that now carefully (?). ((louder
till+)) well the principle of the GTS camps are that all boys (')
I mhm
M in one
group ('). with all/you were nearly on the 500 (') did drive into the
countryside somewhere (') and have then there. premilitary training (')+
I ah yes
M and eh ('). (thinking till+)
I: yes: I had to that time. shortly (-)+
M mhm. yes I don’t
I know this as well ('). well that didn’t exist in that form in the West (')
M nay nay . and
ehm. you really stood there then/let me say that (') there was a settlement of
summer-houses and you stood in front of them (') with a rifle made of wood
and let the people out and in there ('). well that was (-). when I think about
that now totally stupid actually (').
I mhm
M I mean ehm. there were non-commissioned
I officers from Goldberg field officers who made the training there (') ehm
I: Yeah yeah
M: Not really like
I: The military, so not with gas masks and such things. But that was quiet tough this line.
M: Yes
I: And ehm. What I actually wanted to say, that just shortly before that I had, if thought till, applied for a career as a non-commissioned officer.
I: Mhm
M: that means I would have then eh. eh.
((thoughtful till+)) after the trade school (-) . ehm. a training/ I believe that
would have been three years (-)+ . at the mobile police in Luden (-).

I: mhm

M: the so called
Knüppelgarde (.). And would have tried sometime (-). ehm(-). to go into
the direction of police (.).

I: yeah. yeah.
M: I totally forgot that earlier on. that was /
ehm. that was all during the/ during the training ('). and when the wall came
down everything stopped suddenly (-)

I: mhm
M: I haven’t thought
about this any further (.)

I: yes
M: actually that wasn’t no great
goal (’). that was more like . well from dad (,) “do it (-) and when you are
there then you can/have good chances in our lives in our
system. because/ well yeah maybe you can study there later on (’)” ’cause that
was a presupposition that you do such a training there (-)

I: yes
M: and even (-)

I: things like that. in this manner (.). :<but>> it wasn’t wasn’t
decisive that I would say “oh well I didn’t become a
police man (’)”

I: have I understood this correctly (?) you’ve done this
because of the advice from your father (-) ( )
M: ((louder till+)) that was. ehm yes yes at that time
he had connections to somebody who was in the police (.)+ and he had said
“well if then you can do that” (-) and there I had it my own way (’)/
but that was ehm. ehm. already towards the tenth grade (.).
there was something like a like a application (.) that was all moreorless/
well I can’t remember too well on that. because it didn’t (’)/ it didn’t
really interest me (,) . right (?)

I: yes
M: that would have been (-) . well. probably
went like (,)
I: mhm. mhm ((4seconds)) yes then ehm .. then you told me
well that then in the/ well after you did your training (-)
if I remember correctly you finished the training (-) . then ehm
the wall came down (’).
mhmm that was during the training
yes during the
training
right during the. the/ I was in in .. the last third there
it came suddenly and eh. yes the wall came down (-). (louder till+)
I finished my training that’s correct+. you would/ that was all here with us
. that was all in the air (-). ehm on the one hand they didn’t want to loose the
well-tried . eh . (‘) but the new things should go into as well
right (?)
yes
suddenly we were the Federal Republic of Germany
I mhm
M yes
Germany and eh (-) yes we have finished after the old criterions (') that means eh there were the demands yeah let me say/ ((louder till+)) that was all of a sudden so a bit easy going + well nobody was really taking care of that anymore (-).
Yes
M Well I had the feeling (.) and eh well the profession but was really finished in order ('), but then already to that time we were already one Germany right (?)
I Yes
M And that was all.
I in one (.), now I’ve lost the thread (-)
M yeah I/ that is normal I was interrupting you too well it was going about that transition (-) and you were/ eh I have asked you to that you put that in the contemporary history (.), you have made it very clear that you basically the wall came down that was in the final period of your training (')
M yeah correct correct (,) so all now I that had the consequence that basically something in the training has changed ('). well the old and the new had somehow to flow into one thing (-)
M yeah correct ehm. when ehm when I use now slang expressions was that connectable (?) so were/did you have an apprenticeship in quotation marks which you could use in the unified Germany (?) or was that more like that/well there were some GDR-professions which didn’t exist in the West (-)
M yeah ehm. I don’t know whether the profession machine fitter / I believe it is called a bit different (-) for sure the new one (-) eh. of course I could have used my apprenticeship (-) that was not the problem now
I mhm
M you should have put your stuff together and would then as a young employer eh.
M really far away go over (-) to that time/ as I said I didn’t eh. speculate with doing something like that (-).
I yes
M and as we were Germany now (') that was of course/that was jerky a whole lot of employers were sacked (').
mhm yes
and eh. so that we had the possibilities. well we had the possibility to finish our profession there( ) were then too. took over in fairness of the company for a quarter’s year long( ) after the apprenticeship( ) so to make sure that we could claim unemployment

mhm yes
but that means( ) eh no hours( ) that means I’ve got a contract

of employment for 3-month( ) but I didn’t give any service
I

M

eh . (. ) . because I well/ was on zero hours (. ) . ((louder till+))

there was no work there ( ’ ) + there were to many people still in

that company ( - ) . well you have finished ( ’ ) . and . that was it ( , )

and then ( - ) . eh so now eh . yes ( - ) . and then ( - ) “Have a nice day” ( - ) and that

was of course such a thing ( - ) . yes ( - ) . .

mhm

and eh because that here in our area

( - ) . there were so many unemployed who had the same profession ( - ) . and it

was then too with power eh . some companies ; were opened : and then they were
closed again and and car parks and a lot of people have to/ well not retrained but
have done something different/ . well I experienced that time so a bit ( - ) . so a
bit as >chaos< : 

yes

but ehm . . I was actually just

joining somewhere & I have then simply . doing just something .

somewhat ( , ) and even when somewhere where’s ( - ) . eh whatever ( - ) .
collecting rubbish or shovelling sand well some/ ( - ) something ( - ) right (?)

mhm

and
through the sport I was doing to that time ( ’ ) it came like “ yeah I know

somebody who has a small company a plumber business ( - ) and don’t you want
to ( ? ) ” and well I don’t know how that worked out whether he was the sponsor
or whatever ( - ) . he has two then . from us/well I had an acquaintance of mine
with whom I was doing sports ( - ) . and then both of us have
worked there ( - ) . ((louder and faster till+)) were just doing unskilled work in he
beginning of course because we weren’t in that profession+ . eh : so(-) .

but ehm ((softer till+)) . was there then ( - ) . working ( , ) +

yes , well that was

then this small small-time outfit as you called it (?) 

((louder till+)) nay that was/ that was
coming later yeah that ( ) + that was then again nearly my normal /

with steal and that what I have learnt

mhm . aha

no for a short time that

was plumbering then I had military service ( - )

ayeah right

and then I have that

plumber profession I liked that too/ done that for four years( , )
mhm

and eh ( - ) . well ( - )

. now in retrospect I say too that it was such a hut ( - ) . ((softer till+)) ehm very
much profit-orientated(-) and that was clear a coming and going of the people
(-)+ pretty much underpaid(-) . that means I have earned . eleven Euros an
hour(-) . rubbish(!) earned eleven Mark . eleven D-Mark an hour (-) . wasn’t
that great(-) . couldn’t think of holiday(-)

mhm

and you were eh

on standby and so forth (,)

yes

right(’). and then (-) . that was finished then

(’). and then it started again with this casual work (’). what I was telling you (’)

. and then I’ve got into that small-time outfit (,). in this small
Metal working business (,) . eh . (,) who hasn’t paid me ()
I Mhm yeah yeah . there I had earlier on (,) . eh . at least I remember it this way . had this impression that
that/ that this work in this in quotation marks small
Small small-time outfit actually that this meant something to you (')
((in a not agreeing tone)) mh . mh
M well I had it
I /maybe I did misunderstand that too . I had that / You were marking it this
way (,) . that that was such a connection to that what you have learnt
originally ()
M ((louder till +)) yes . but it was (,) . +
I were in the metalworking industry and ()
M yeah . eh .
we had there a small job there again (') . right (?) so something to do
(on the side(”)
I yes
and that was (,) . “here you have a car(”) and I urgently have
to/ three packages of alu strips (,) they have told” let me say I can’t remember the
place Cologne or whatever (”) “and whether/ I don’t have time” whether we
couldn’t do that(”). and there were two people and then we went of at night (,)
and got back on the following morning or the next day (,). ((softer till+))
and then we were just getting into :talks: + and that wasn’t an acquaintance of
ours but from somewhere there and “well I have heard you are
unemployed (,) . gosh I am still looking for people(,)” . in retrospect
I know why . because they were leaving there by the dozen because
he didn’t pay (,) . at that moment for me it was (”). “my goodness .
work! . well that is great it’s coming into place . that just fits greatly (-)”
. and eh . well wasn’t that great regarding the pay . but (-).
I yes
M you look for information (,) . well it was in that industry well in general in the
metalworking industry (,) it wasn’t in charge . there wasn’t anything else
possible
I yes
M you could be really satisfied with twelve Mark fifteen
Mark ()
M mhm . mhm
I and I was doing that for a period of time (,) and eh . was
actually satisfied with that (’) . with getting there too/in the morning (’) and that
was/ was daily life again there (,) . eh . yeah getting there in the morning and
back in the afternoon and that was it then(,)
42 I mhm
43 M right(?) and then the pain in the
44 back came (.) that’s why I got out there(.)
45 I mhm yes
46 M and then the indebtedness
47 came up. I had a loan to that time and eh. He couldn’t
48 pay (-) I told you that earlier on (-)
49 I yes
50 M and eh . well
51 all of a sudden everything went downhill(,) right(?)
52 I mhm
there it was going far
below zero

mhm . yeah . you’ve said earlier on that you . eh when the pains in
the back started eh . that you recognized they are more massive (-).
that you left in mutual agreement (,)
ehm .

yes . y/

how did this happen (?)

I didn’t . I didn’t (-) have an idea about the whole
legal position(,) . in retrospect that that was of course eh . really stupid (-) . I
should have done this differently but (-) . eh . you’ve got from the
job centre no (-) . definition or eh definition rubbish (!) . no
:<information>:
like in the sense how you could do that the best way eh (-).
“I don’t get money (-) . but I have to work if I leave myself then I won’t get
unemployment benefit” . and eh all of that
was missing (-)

yeah . yeah

that’s why I have/ “you have to get out of there
somewhere now (-) . can’t change that with my back () . got that confirmed from
the doctor . you can’t continue with doing that () he doesn’t pay me anyway
and now you’ve got to do it somehow () get out there somehow ()”

mhm

yes of
course(-) . now in retrospect you could have done that differently somehow () .
I should have my contract of/ eh . employment . well I didn’t have one . ‘twas
just with an oral handshake (-) . I should have let him run and should have then
(-) . “well that’s it I can’t do it any longer . disabled” let me say that

mhm

well “disabled and eh . that’s why I can’t continue working
in that field and that’s why I have to leave you ()” just that this/ he was
happy().

right

I didn’t never ehm . never somehow . . asked him again
for the . money ().

mhm

right (?) that were 6000 Mark (-) . well that was
quite . quite (-) . a bit () . because it was an acquaintance of mine (-) . and I
wouldn’t have gotten it anyway(-) . he was in debts everywhere (-) . the
tax and revenue office (-) . and they did tell me that in the job centre
“you don’t get it anyway . you are the last one” and there (-) . and so (,).
I don’t want to give them a bad reputation but you feel a bit left alone
by them as a young person

I yeah. yeah

M and ehm. “you don’t get

it anyway you are the last one in the queue and before you get your money eh.

that one, he, he and he are first” nd eh (-). yes

I mhm. yes . yeah that was for

you (-). that’s what you’ve said earlier on (-). of far reaching

effect (-). well you have eh (-). yeah . told me from te credit

you had (-). which you couldn’t (service) (-).

M yeah that’s right
I: because of the pay of your employee which fail to come in (-)
M: I have/ just recently now I have finished. you have to imagine that . . :<yes>: with starting to work ('). to that time that was in the plumber business I did get a loan then ('). to furnish my apartment ('). that mean actually I didn’t have anything ('). my father died ('). my mother had a man ('). and eh. my father was long time unemployed. I did / I left home with seventeen (') . to that time with my girl-friend (') . and ehm. was on my own feet . and when she left me then I ha/had nothing .
I: yes
M: and ehm . once again through the sport ('). he knows him and he knows the other one and he works at the LBS and with me ('). a loan (')
I: yeah
M: well you are young and you are naïve ('). and ehm 6000 Mark granted ('). and let me say that if it would have continued the way with my job with plumbing (') the I would have too/ then this wouldn’t have been a problem ('). even now with such a low income you could have covered that without problems('). but there wasn’t that anymore ('). that means all of a sudden I was in debt (') had rent debts (')
I: mhm
M: the the credit ('). in the meantime they were standing in front of my door ('). the bailiff came and and and ('). that was going over years ('). although you then well at some point now you’ve proved that had a job and then this was going always (').
I: mhm . mhm
M: but was (-) still . well that was quite (-) . what was of drastic change ('). that all of a sudden with my pains in my back the doctor said “yeah well forget about your sport now”. that was of drastic change (').
I: mhm
M: because actually that was still (-) . I don’t know (-) . who doesn’t do it can’t/t he can’t understand that but when you come back from work/ come back from work ('). and ehm ('). you’ve still got something what ('). you did some sport ('). that was your family let me say that let me call it like that (-) . and all of a sudden this was finished (')
mhm

that means eh . yeah well you just couldn’t do anything anymore ( .) . as hard as I tried and whatever I did in physiotherapy (-) . it just didn’t work anymore ( ,)
yeah

and then a young psychologist came up too ( -) . who did then well “well how do you cope with that( ?)” . during the stay at the health resort (-) . and “what other hobbies do you have (?)” and so forth ( .) . well and . phew . at this point of time I didn’t have a / but that came later the drama was later (-) . to that time I’ve said “well that will work out somehow (-) . somehow
I: all will go on (,)
M: yes
I: it will come (,). it comes later on when you realize that you are quite reduced and that is very frustrating you a bit as well. but (,)
I: mhm, mhm. yes (,). you did then. well that I can remember (,). eh. describe that then in that period you then did say I believe that a lot of things came together (,)
M: Mhm
I: Well you were using a picture there well that basically you were pretty low (,). well in different areas all of a sudden it was getting all complicated (,). girl-friend left you (,)
I: yes right
M: eh there was/ you even had difficult/ well that you really have lost your apartment (,). well at least you had troubles in that area (,). ehm. later on you were making clear again that it was going upwards due to the reorientation. ehm.
I: but I had the feeling there when you told me. that/ well I've got an impression that it was a very difficult time for you (,). ehm.
M: maybe you could describe that just a bit more how this developed in detail so that maybe I can imagine this just a bit better (,).
I: that with being pretty low (?)
M: yeah
I: well at sometime/ I didn't/. I didn't really check that myself (,).
M: I was told that more or less by my friends "good heavens you are just drinking all day long (,). you are smoking" that was ehm. I do understand the people who sit around on some banks and get stoned right (,). drink smoke whatever. not doing anything else (,). you did feel like that in that situation. I didn't have money (,). these few pennies/ which you earned on the side whatever with some casual work as I said (,). yeah well you did prefer to get some cigarettes instead/ instead of a loaf of bread or something like that and that's what I mean with that (,)
I: yeah. yeah
M: well it was really/ no money (,). really in principle you didn't know how this should go on (,).
I: right (?)
M: mhm
and eh (-) . . that was/ . right . and as I said if my grandparents and
my mum wouldn’t have been there to that time & they worked that out with my
apartment (’). that means I didn’t have to get
out of it (’)
yes
ehm . . they did manage that somehow (-) . right (-) . and such a/
“pays off that much each month and that will work out” and . eh . did give me
some money of course (-) . I mean whose parents or grandparents
wouldn’t do that (-) .
mhm
but ehm . ((thoughtful till+)) that was
somehow (+). In that moment actually it didn’t matter (.). if they hadn’t been
there I believe it would have gone even deeper downhill & although then of
course (‘). it went upwards with that with that
reorientation (.). but that went over two years (.). I was at home for two
years (.).

I mhm

and ehm. that went with the reorientation right (?) .

“You/we have to integrate you again (-). we have to see that somehow that
you (-). eh that doesn’t work (-) “. right (?)

I mhm

and then all of a sudden it

worked (’). then you had to (.). eh. go to all different doctors (.). then you had to go
to the psychologist (.). <health resort> (.). there I didn’t have a
great choice (-). I was actually landed in there (-)

yes

that was alright the way it went (.). and made new friends there (-). even up today I’ve got acquaintance
let me say that (-) which I got to know there (-). and ehm as I said and then it
all got (.). built up (-). because all of a sudden all started to work again (’). If/
when you think about that maybe (-).
because you were happy yourself that you has something right (?)

I mhm

even if

it were just some activities some things (.). yeah and (.). really (.). that was
dragging along itself (.). there/ up to that time you accepted that (.). it all really
started when it was time and when you sat in the class room for
the first time (.). ehm. I felt for the first time/ that was like when a
line was drawn (’). and that was something completely
new (.).

I mhm

that was another room (’). it was/ all of a sudden I had to get up
early again (’). and eh. that was too much for me (.). that didn’t interest
anybody there & I mean of course they showed consideration the people/ the
teachers and so forth (’). but they demanded a lot(-).
that/right (?)

right

and ehm. circle of friends (-). through my fellow students let
me say that (-) and that was like a line is drawn (.). up to that time it was more
like a drop/ such an unclear/ “yeah you have to go there and you have to go to
that doctor he wants to make a report”. yeah. then you just do it (.)

yeah
all of a sudden that was/. I don’t want to say that I don’t like to drink a glass of wine anymore (/). but then I had all of it under control (/).

I mhm . yes . there you express a very clear feeling what it means to an awareness of life (/). and eh there then something was changed then obviously (.). well when you see the period pre-hand . that it was basically that’s how I understood it (-). yeah it was a life which didn’t have a real perspective (.). where you didn’t know how it shall go on and I can imagine that myself very well (-). ehm . obviously that did take relatively a long time (.). the phase well from that.
time onwards when you realized that you couldn’t continue working in
that field because of your health (‘). In which you have worked (‘).
up to that point will you had then this new retraining
indeed (‘)
well the whole/ the period let me say that (‘). That was earlier on
already (‘). Right (?) you were unemployed (‘). And eh. That was still going alright
(‘). Right (?)
M mhm. Yes
M that with the illness (‘). That was the (-) . “Well now you can
(‘) jump (‘) like that. Well that was a real
body blow (‘).
M yea. Yeah
M well let me say that (-) . “Well now you are down
here and now you get even deeper. Now it gets even deeper again”.
well it wasn’t the end (‘). And of course that was of great
importance (‘). But I think that would/ everybody feels like that who is at some
point in his life
I yes
M who had some status and all of a sudden you don’t have it
anymore. Because it is (-) . For whatever reasons
healthwise right (?) . It is really going downhill and that was well eh. Well (-) . in
that moment that was it didn’t matter that everybody came up “Oh well I am sorry
for you”. Phew. All of that just didn’t bother me (‘). And that didn’t interest me
at all (‘)
M mhm
M whereas I (-) . To that time
nothing interested me at all. Let me say that (‘). Because you were pretty deep down
there (‘). Right (?)
I yes. Mhm
M and eh (-) . As I said (‘) . If that retraining
wouldn’t have come up (-) . . Then eh. I believe I still would be down there (‘).
if nobody would have cared about that or nobody looked
after (-) .
I yes. It was like a stimulus (‘)
M yeah you have to (‘)
or there are other maybe in that time where they/ where they continue to fight
these problems again and again and say “That’s impossible it must get upwards!”.
but to that time I was young and there was that/
and somehow “Well now the/ the sport is done with (‘). That’s finished (‘) and you
even can’t work anymore (-) . Well” . Well that was really of great.
great importance (‘).
I  

mhm, yeah I can understand that very well (>). you have told me that how it came to that, yeah.

reorientation. the field in which you work right now as well (').

ehm. and I’ve got the impression there . . . . (change of cassette)

. . . your first (finding of the right occupation?) (>). well the feeling that you put a main emphasis on something ('). but that was.

connected with similar less ideas like the decision you made right after school where you landed in Meta (').

yeah. ehm. that was ehm.
as I said this came from the psychologist (') . first you went to
a contact from the job centre and the first/ and
then something like filling in a questionnaire(.) . what you would like
to do . or occupational groups were there as well (,) and well “you can’t
do that anyway and you can’t do that and that doesn’t fit with your
psychological picture (-) and we really have to be aware of
that . not standing for a long time not sitting for a long time(-)” ( )and
then I felt it like (-) as when it was like (') . well . ehm .
“at the moment we are training office administrators” or “they are needed” . at
that time it could have been something else (,) . now like for instance
what the are training now event administrators (?) (-) . well new
occupations . ehm . but at that time it was well I felt it like that(’) . . eh .
that is the office administrator (,) . “office administrator I don’t know what
that is” . well just(asked around) (-) . . “ well you are working in the office as
whatever (-) . can be everything” . “well let us do it then (-) . isn’t a problem
now . but ten at least you have something then (’)” .
I mhm
I was quite lucky
with the payment I honestly have to say that (’) . because I had/was
unemployed before that as I said (’) . and eh . that eh . was then ehm . ((faster
till+)) because my previous employee is that metalworking hut didn’t come
to terms with and couldn’t give me any proof (’) + . they have . then they
well my money/my final salary (’) . or bridging money or whatever that eh .
it is called according the charge . and that was great (,) . all of a sudden I’ve got
monthly . eh quite an amount of money again and that was
(decisive) so that I say of course (-) . that is speaking in German I couldn’t
care less what will happen after that/ after that retraining (’) . you just to it now (,)
. maybe you are lucky and eh . . that right(?)
I yes
when I could
choose my apprenticing company (’) . I had two (-) . where I had an
interview (’) that encouraged me/ when I was to the first one .
that was . that was (-) . I can’t remember (-) . what was it (?) & a small
haulage business (?) . I don’t know it (-) . he says
“look so many people come here (-) . every day (,) . we will achieve that
that you’ll have a workspace (within) in the two years (.)
don’t worry about that (’)” . well . that was kinda
encouraging a bit right (?)
I mhm
that was/ . but a big choice (-) . to that time
I did chose (-) . well (-) . measurement technology maybe (-) . . 
that sounded interesting (,) . you do that/ . . then they had a whole lot
of booklets (-) . you just get them everywhere (-) . I found
that interesting (,) . not a baker (-) . not that (-) . that was all pffew . ehm . .
it isn’t like that that you just open an Otto catalogue and you say “ I
order that” and eh . well (-) .
and what did you find so interesting in
measurement technology (?)
I don’t know (-) . that was simply just the look of it
“well I guess that’s interesting” . right (?) . and (-) .
Mhm
actually I can (-)/ I think(,)

and I would have done that at that time if “yes ok do it that is no
problem you just get retrained”. I believe I would have
done this, that was/ I found that interesting. I can’t say
whether that really/ would have then/
I are that the people who are
running around with those rods? Yes, everything and eh measuring
houses and whatever that is very interdisciplinary.
I mhm
M eh.
but it wasn’t it right? our of the simple reason that I am standing there
outside. I am outside even when it’s raining and that wasn’t with my
health/ or my illness doesn’t work wouldn’t work out no way.
I mhm
M well then the drawer was opened. and in it was the office
administrator and there was I got landed but I liked that
as well was ok. right?
I mhm
((softer till+)) up to the first day in
the business. where I said “gosh. you should have”. but
eh. I like to work there depends of course on. if I
be one who is “nay for good heavens nay don’t like to
calculate don’t like to write. this could have started into
the wrong direction. that I say “well nay. that’s
nothing”. I don’t know but I there are a lot of people who
stop their training because it is not appropriate.
right?
I yes yes
but I liked it more and more. I have to say that
honestly. ((louder till+)) well with me it wasn’t just only because
of my training. it wasn’t just going about monotonous
office work. I was lucky. because it is the festival hall
society. which has to do quite a lot with events and eh
that was of course. that was something of course.
good heavens. you just walked along the hall and
you met Dieter Thomas Heck. let me say it just like
that. that was. all interesting. right?
I yeah yeah
M the people were nice
M (.) and that eh. yeah that was great. I liked that.
I mhm. mhm. yeah I
had that/ was after my impression too what I noticed in your story now eh (-) .

with that reorientation is that you/ well I said earlier on that my
impression was that basically like in you first choice of career you got into your
second occupation incidentally . You were even/ well you reached ehm .
in a phase where you were extremely terrified about what you
have bought (-) in quotation marks (-) . ehm .

but you made under these conditions this this new apprenticeship
appropriate (. ) . well I had the feeling/ well you say it even
now . you are very satisfied with it . you can imagine yourself to develop

and I found that/ well these (-) .
achievement of yours was very impressive (,). well ehm you did
mention it yourself too. there would have been the option throughout
to say “no that isn’t that what I want at all and I will
leave it and search for something else”

M well yes to that time it was the
clutch at a straw where you could have then/that is something (,). and eh well
(-). let me say it like whether I eat spinach or meat (-), well that was at that
moment but that was something to eat (,) let me say that like that (,) eh (-). well
(-), office worker well (-), you’ll see what waits for you (’). but that was then
(-) .. is was something again (,) it was a fresh start (,). and eh. actually that was
good in that way (-). I don’t know what else ( )
yes,yes,mhm

I

M well yeah I didn’t
have that big variety of choices there (,). that was (-). that was incidental
too (,): whereas: I have to say then too(-). when(-). I’ve done it then
ehm. I did pull through it (,). I’ve done it then. didn’t matter
&of course there were low points during the training (-), and eh.
direct from the training it was said “that is such nonsense
and rubbish and you really want to do it to yourself (?)”. that/ but there was that
in the first apprenticeship as well (,). that’s everywhere. that was in the factory
and actually everywhere (,) ..
mhm ... yes ..

I

M I am happy that it came

like that (,).

I mentioned before that you that you endured that then if I
can say that (,) and you appropriated it to yourself (,). you’ve just
mentioned again that it was for you/ the concrete
field of activity in which you worked so in those Festhallengesellschaft (,).
that it probably made it easier for you to appropriate it (-)
eh . . how strong would you calculate this now (?) . well (-).
I can imagine that in the field of an office worker you can get into
very different companies (,). I can imagine that
there is too eh. companies in which you do this idiotic work in the
office and ehm (-) . . would you that what you do
in that Festhallengesellschaft would you describe it distinctive different (?) .
well varied (-). or what is so special in this work (?) .

M . eh . that eh (-)/

I

mhm
M or mainly on the industry (-), in the book-keeping everything is based on the industry or on companies which produce something (-), that wasn’t like that in the Festhallen (-), that doesn’t produce anything (-), in that case actually just a service. with renting out these halls and and everything was a bit different because of that (-). I found that I found that very interesting (-). that was (-). pffew that had/I had/as I said (*). I had to well/ in principle you have to go through every department (-), and ehm (-), there was something new there to be sniffed at (-), it would have been different of course if I hadn’t gone to the Festhallen but maybe to a small haulage contractor (*), where I’ve sit behind the desk
&or had (-). and eh. yeah I don’t know incoming bills outgoing bills depot done. well my field of work or my field of training had a very very wide range (-). from the technical department into management eh. direct event management (-). . . ehm. then into the administration (-). everywhere where computer which were new to me (-). I didn’t have one up to that time (-). I haven’t worked at a computer before (-). I had great fun doing that (-). but at that moment I had fun with everything ('). even the normal idiotic book-keeping and accountancy on itself (-) . right ('). which is actually my field of work now (.).

I had great fun with that ('). whereas I have to say (-).

it was really (-), the factor ('). there weren’t at my training any obstacles put in my way (.).
much was demanded because I had a very strict female boss (') . in quotation marks. she isn’t strict . eh. the rubber stamp has to be there ('). the signature has to be there (') and it has to be done like that and the Fanchen have to be stuck there on the side (-). the Fanchen were really decisive for me (.), that has to be done that way (')

mhm. there won’t be discussions but it will (-)

that way (') and eh. well you did feel like but everything was interesting (.) . and eh. it were all nice people (.). as I said I was the only one (-). ehm. well I am not the only man in this factory but in this administration department which is actually. eh is now my field of work or area of work &and I was the only one there (.), the young boy ('). eh. mature women ('). and eh ehm. you were warmly welcomed there right (?)

I’ve got to know that the procedure of choice well. that it was handled with that document “look here he applied and we could take him as a re-trainee. yeah why not (?)” that was the reaction (.)

mhm and I never had any problems (-). to the same time we had an apprentice eh. a girl ('). she had normal vocational training. well those three years and there were much more problems with her than with me (-).

whereas I don’t see a connection that I was a young man (-). but. I have been quite a lot of steps ahead (-) well I was older more mature ('). and because of that you see everything different ('). for instance I have eh eh. seen “don’t let that thing been taken away from you (-). you have to go through that. you have to
do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe 
later on this could be a working place(,)”

I

yes

you get to know that during the time

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe 

M

of the training (,). and I can guarantee you I’ve seen the world completely

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

different than to the time of a apprentice because he was still naïve (-) and I

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

knew how it is to be at the bottom line or when you are broke. or how it is

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

to be unemployed (,). therefore I have there (‘) .. yes (-). I dunno therefore

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

I’ve intensified (,). but actually that was always like that (-).

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

I made every effort everywhere I liked to do everything then (,).

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

in my other fields of work too at that time (-). in the

do it like that (‘) .. you can’t forfeit that here (,). maybe

steal construction or
as a plumber (-) ehm. that was always a fulfilment for me (-).

mhm

M

but when it was over with that it was said then "so that’s it (-) from (-) now on it's done with". then a new thing came up (-) you got to (-) again (-) I don’t know whether I am something special here & many may just feel the same (-) but it is possible that. as I said it could have developed into the wrong direction (-) and it couldn’t have suited me(-)

I

yeah yeah

((very soft till+)) and ehm. I don’t know (-) +

I

yeah well (-) I very much impressed by the story you’ve told me (-) I have one last question (-) . I’ve told you that the research project has something to do with (-) the processes of consultation and company of re-trainees to have a closer look at that (-) as a person affected you made a lot of experience with that (-) when you look again at the processes of consultation and reorientation (-) what do you think was helpful for you (?) what do you think ehm. cou/ could have been much more helpful (?) well what ideas do you have regarding the processes of the the occupational reorientation eh. with professional support what went well . what could be better (-) .

I

well what could be better

I don’t know (-) . because I (-) in my (-) in my opinion. the way it went with me (-) . because it was successful (-) . although I might just be one of many who the/ got the spring board (-) . who was lucky to get a job afterwards (-) . what could be better/ I don’t know I can’t tell you (-) . I eh ((thoughtful)) if/ if I say it in (plain English) gone a shitty way. then I could say something straight away (-) . but well I have a very close contact to Mrs. Biel right (?)

M

mhm

that was our contact (-) and ehm. there are several things which could be changed (-) . I don’t know I can’t say anything to that (-) . helpful. everything (-) . ehm. I went there with every problem I had (-) . we got helped with the calculation of the mileage cover bill (-) . all of that/ where you (-) / especially my I have never done such stuff before (-) . everywhere where problems came up especially during the retraining right (?) "remember you’ve got to hand that in and that has to be sent there” and we’ve got from all that stuff relieved (-) .
anyway (-). I am just talking about myself right now (-) . ehm . when I had problems I could come with it there . and it got solved (-) . that was somehow always/ there was (-) . eh . Mrs. Biel was in the apprenticing company (-) . asked whether everything was alright (-) . eh . could have been that I didn’t go there (-) . there was no human being and so forth (‘) . ehm . letter of application . in my whole life I have never wrote such neat letters of application like during the time in the agency for advancement for educational training (‘) . I was kinda relieved from that by Mrs. Biel (‘) . well we got it all explained how to do that (‘) and so forth . but I didn’t have a computer (-) . I didn’t know at all how that functions (-) . and then all of a sudden . eh .
zack ('). "well ok Mr. Funke just because it is you I have here such a new
fashionable special folder (') . you use that now for your letters of application".
I said "I don’t know" (') . in principle choosing my apprenticing / my
apprenticing company that was (') . that was taken out of my hands
completely (') . because that was a problem . to that time there was just
that theoretical training . so we needed of course a practical eh an apprenticing
company too ('). and eh ('). I just remember how she stood in front of
me "I have two (') . you’ve got an interview then and
then another interview (') . and be like you are
that’s the best thing" . yeah so I had that . and zack I’ve got called
in again ('). ehm . we went through every little detail (')
“be aware of that . do it like this (') . we don’t call it hanging around we call it
occupational reorientation” . well such things . well I found
for me the help was great (') . but (') . (you are treated as you treat
others) right (?) . if someone didn’t want to at all
then/ . for instance we had someone he didn’t show up and well right he was out
('). if h doesn’t want to then he doesn’t want to . well it is a new point in your
life ('). where you got another chance maybe eh . eh .
but if you don’t take it (') . then that wasn’t it (') . and well
I don’t know what could be done better (') . sure there are things
Some (') .

Mhm
they were nice teachers/ nice tutors (') .
pfew . yep that was a nice time (') . well as I said the first few days
there ('). “gosh . (good heavens)”
mhm
and was always accompanied
with “well just do it/ we have two years . don’t worry we get it done”
and eh that was just shortly before I finished my training that
I was taken out of the vocational school (') . back again to the
agency for advancement for occupational education and there I’ve got
a real push ('). training . where you got focused on things you didn’t
understand or ('). there is always something (') . there is one
who can’t work with the sh/ computer or couldn’t cope with the computer (').
during that time in the vocational school . practising typing with ten fingers
and all such stuff where I said “ gosh that is a female profession I don’t
need that.” I have then with all/ but who wasn’t able to do that he
practised it (') . and then maybe whatever we went through calculation of
interest (') . focused on accountancy ('). everything we needed for the
exam and so forth (')
mhm
yeah sat the exam. passed. wasn’t afraid of the exam. was good. pfew.

so that is the normal procedure then or was the special that you basically got trained by the end of your time at vocational school.

nay I don’t know that whether that was a special procedure. that was done with us.

so everybody who had something to do with the BFW?

yes only them.

(, of course) only them. or when now/ or too/ it was eh ((thoughtful))
it was well/ how was it with the/ it was like that too so that ehm.
if somebody had problems (?) . they gave lessons after
the school was over (?) . you know (?) that was ehm . let me say
on the computer like whatever to draft a diagram (?) . there we
had quite a few who were unable to do that (?) . well (?) .
I wasn’t able to do that myself (?) . I didn’t understand that for a hundred
percent (?) . ehm . so we sat down for another two three hours and that
was after the school was finished (?) . those who needed it met
each other and practiced it . so well all of that where problems came
up (?) . but you had to say it too . you had to express it (?)
I yeah yeah . mhm
M well I don’t know what could be done better (?) . well . in my case it was alright
the way it was (?) .
I yes great
M couldn’t have been any better (?)
I mhm yes (?) . I
am quite satisfied with what you’ve told me
M I hope it is useful
for you
I it was very informative . I’ve got to know a lot about/
the meaning of the personal processes (?) . to get into situations
like that and I believe I can/ can understand it all much now/ imagine
everything much better now (?) . I want to thank you very much for the time you
took for me (?)
M mhm thank you
I I am sure this helped me a lot
and . I can’t say anything anymore right now (?) except that I want to thank you
and that I wish you all the best what is typical for this time of the year (,)

### Key to signs of transcription

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>short break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..</td>
<td>medium break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>longer break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(( 5 sec.))</td>
<td>long break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>word not understood/ possible utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>emphasised</strong></td>
<td>word emphasised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:-lengthened:</td>
<td>utterance lengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:-softer:&lt;</td>
<td>softer in comparison to normal volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:-&lt;louder&gt;:</td>
<td>louder in comparison to normal volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>„fast connection“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„we go ..“</td>
<td>quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((faster till +))</td>
<td>comment on utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>voice goes down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(')</td>
<td>voice goes up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>voice in the balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(?)</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th/ the</td>
<td>self-correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>remark of the interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>interviewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska
Editorial note...........................................................................................................3

Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas
Introduction................................................................................................................4

Sandra Betts, Aled Griffiths, Fritz Schütze, Peter Straus
Biographical Counselling: an Introduction..........................................................5

Sandra Betts
Social Responsibilities and the Orientation Towards Collective Identities........59

Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas
The Interplay Between Personal Identity and the Others. Interaction Partners and Competitors of all Kinds.................................................................83

Johanna Björkenheim, Synnove Karvinen-Niinikoski
Social Constraints and the Free Will – Life Course and Vocational Career........103

Johanna Björkenheim, Synnove Karvinen-Niinikoski
Biography, Narrative, and Rehabilitation..............................................................113

Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas, Jolanta Grotowska-Leder
Institutional Frameworks and Constraints for Occupational Counselling in Work Rehabilitation. Between the Office and the Counselling Service........129

Fritz Schütze
Biography Analysis on the Empirical Base of Autobiographical Narratives: How to Analyse Autobiographical Narrative Interviews – Part one..............................153

Appendix...................................................................................................................243
General rules regarding submission of articles

1. The journal only reviews and publishes articles in English. Authors writing in any other language are welcome to submit English translations of their work.

2. Articles submitted must be original works of their authors, not published previously and must not have been submitted for a review to another journal.

3. Articles that do not conform to the rules will be returned to the authors for appropriate revision, prior to being submitted to the review process.

4. It is the responsibility of authors to obtain permission from copyright holders for reproducing illustrations, tables, figures or lengthy quotations previously published elsewhere.

5. Articles must be between 5000 and 8000 words in length, including footnotes and references. Articles of more than 8000 words will not be accepted into the reviewing process, and will be returned to the author.

6. All manuscripts should be accompanied by an abstract of 100-150 words (if you have a command of Polish, please prepare abstract also in Polish language version) and 5 or 6 key words.

7. Please do not use any special formatting, also when using headings and subheadings.

8. Each table should be typed on a separate page. Insert a guideline, e.g., [Table 1 about here] at the appropriate place in the manuscript.

9. Tables and figures should have short, descriptive titles. All footnotes to tables and their source(s) should be typed below the tables. Column headings should clearly define the data presented.

10. Use endnotes, not footnotes. Endnotes should be indicated by superscript numbers in the text. They should be collected at the end of the text and should be kept to a minimum.

11. Submitted articles should be prepared in MS Word format.

12. Please follow the American Sociological Association text formatting style available at:
http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts

13. Articles will be subject of review by at least two reviewers. Every effort will be made to reach a decision about publication within three months.