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Autobiographical Accounts of War Experiences.

An Outline for the Analysis of Topically Focused Autobiographical Texts – Using the Example of the “Robert Rasmus” Account in Studs Terkel’s Book, “The Good War”

Abstract The paper demonstrates both: firstly, a research strategy for the social science analysis of autobiographical narrative interviews, and, secondly, a research strategy for the social science use of published oral history and/or autobiographical materials. It is an attempt to demonstrate a text-oriented procedure of biography analysis in the social sciences, especially – sociology. This allows the empirically grounded generation both of general theoretical concepts for socio-biographical processes, and of conceptual provisions for the uniqueness of the features and dynamics of biographical and historical single cases, their situations, and phases. The paper deals with the analysis of autobiographical accounts of *war* experiences and it shows the general mechanisms of collective, social, and biographical processes, on the one hand, and the uniqueness of historical, situational, and biographical developments, on the other, coexist during wars in an especially ironical, tragic, elating, depressive, dangerous, hurting, deadly combination.

Keywords Autobiographical Narrative Interview Analysis; Autobiographical Accounts; Communicative Schemes of Text; Structural Description; Analytical Abstraction; Macro-historical Processes; Second World War

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Preliminary Remark¹

The first draft of the following analytical text on Studs Terkel’s “Rasmus” interview is almost 30 years old. It was reworked several times until the year 2001 when Dr. Katja Mruck (Berlin) encouraged me to publish it in the electronic journal *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (FQS), which has been edited by her from the beginning. But then I was still very dissatisfied with its overall shape and, especially, with its quite awkward English language, although Katja Mruck had put a lot of additional, very thoughtful editing work into it. I am very indebted to Katja Mruck that she understood and accepted my decision at that time not to publish the “Rasmus” article in her FQS journal. I wanted to have more time to improve it later.

After Professor Kaja Kaźmierska (Lodz) had done an autobiographical narrative interview with me in the summer of 2013, and some further discussions with her about some of the topics which had emerged in the interview, I finally realized that in terms of my personal development as a sociologist the “Rasmus” paper had played a quite important role in my life: especially, for my perennial endeavor to get more insights into the mutually constitutive relationship between biographical identity development and the mental landscape of socio-cultural collectivities relevant for one’s individual life history (Kłoskowska 2001; Bertaux 2005). Therefore, I was finally convinced that it would now be legitimate and worthwhile to publish the “Rasmus” paper.

¹ I have to thank Kaja Kaźmierska (Lodz), Katja Mruck (Berlin), Gerhard Riemann (Nuremberg), and Anja Schröder-Wildhagen (Magdeburg) for many enlightening suggestions how to find an appropriate new “frame” (in form of preliminary remark and postscript) for the following unpublished contribution with its quite complicated “production and re-working” history. In addition, to all four of them, I am grateful for the last careful proofreading of the text.

I am especially grateful to Katja Mruck that she generously allowed me to entrust the “Rasmus” article now to the *Qualitative Sociology Review*. For almost thirty years I had worked together with my colleagues and good friends in Lodz on the impact of collective entities and processes on life histories, biographical processes, and biographical work, and vice versa. Therefore, it now made a special sense to me to publish the “Rasmus” article in Lodz. During my careful new proofreading of the “Rasmus” essay, I arrived at the conclusion that its statements are basically sound and that the way they are presented is sufficiently clear, although still some bit complicated. But, that might be unavoidable if one wants to fulfill several tasks at the same time (which, by the way, might be typical for pieces of intellectual work that are new and important for one’s own personal development), that is, the tasks of (a) documenting a single case analysis, (b) stating basic-theoretical insights both in the presentation work of extempore narratives for the expression of personal experiences, and of biographical process structures, (c) formulating the elementary steps of biography analysis, and (d) assessing (and showing methodically how this can principally be done) the epistemic power of published oral history documents containing wholesale autobiographical accounts as it is one of the special brands of Studs Terkel’s creative work of documenting and recreating the “mundane” historical experiences of ordinary people. In addition, I finally came to the understanding that the “Rasmus” essay drew first outlines for my later research on the mutual relationship between the development of individual identity, on the one hand, and the biographical work of shaping collective

phenomena of all kinds as relevant for one's life history (not just collective we-groups or collective identities but, in addition, collective mental spaces [see, i.e., Schütze and Schröder-Wildhagen 2012]), on the other.

Since my "Rasmus" essay still seems to be a solid piece of research, I did not change the wording of it throughout the whole text as it had been pre-finalized in 2001. I just eliminated some linguistic mistakes (lots of them will be still present), and I clarified some passages which now, in my present new proofreading, had looked strange to me. Throughout the essay, I also included some references to later studies of other authors and myself. I did not add any new paragraph, and I even kept all the old footnotes and bibliographical references. The only additions are (a) two analytical schemes – fitting exactly the "Rasmus" paper – on the structure of autobiographical narratives, which I had developed for a workshop in Lodz in order to prepare our joint European research project "INVITE" on biographical counseling in situations of vocational rehabilitation (Betts et al. 2007; this was the basis of a long article on biography analysis – Schütze 2008, actually, a sequel of two papers) and (b) a postscript dealing with two chapters of Studs Terkel's own (second) memoir (which is a very moving autobiography, too) published in 2007, when he was 95-year-old, on his oral history interviewing and text editing. Terkel had produced his autobiographical memoir partially via open interview sessions together with his journalist friend Sidney Lewis, plus editing the material produced by these sessions and partially via his own original writing "from the scratch."

I came across Terkel's (second²) autobiographical memoir in Chicago, Terkel's city, where he had lived and worked almost during his whole life (although he was born in New York City), in May 2009, when I saw it within the display windows of several bookstores. [Terkel had died on October 31 of 2008.] In 2009, I was in Chicago for the first time, although it is the city of many of my "significant others" in social science, especially, of George Herbert Mead, William Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, Robert Park, Clifford Shaw, Everett Hughes, Howard Becker and – last but not least – Anselm Strauss. Having been in a quite "sentimental" mood when roaming the streets of the Chicago Loop, I sometimes had the impression of coming across the spirit of Studs Terkel looking around and observing the several lively social sceneries there. In addition, I really had the feeling – that surmise might not have been very sound, but Studs Terkel probably would have liked it taking into regard my old age – that even today it would be still possible to outwit the barriers up on the staircases of the "Elevated" (that today is part of the Chicago-area underground-train systems; the older branches of it run on a steel construction

² In a certain sense, *Touch and Go* is just the second autobiographical memoir of Studs Terkel. Into one of his earlier books, he also put in more of his own personal experiences than he usually did working on his other documentary books: this first more autobiography-type or memoir-type publication is the magnificent volume *Talking to Myself. A Memoir of My Times* (1977). "In *Talking to Myself*, Terkel recounts some of the formative and entertaining incidents from his own life. ... As in his other books, he is often presenting other peoples stories, but in *Talking to Myself* they are perceived more directly through the eyes of the observer, Terkel himself" (Introduction to the Internet recording of Studs Terkel's own reading of *Talking to Myself. A Memoir of My Times*. See Terkel's Internet portal of the Chicago History Museum "Talking to America," gallery "Talking to Myself," para. 1). To my assessment, *Talking to Myself* is more of a memoir of Terkel's personal encounters with interesting social situations and persons in order to describe the atmosphere and life situation of American society in several historical periods, than talking directly about himself and his personal development in a strict autobiographical perspective. But, of course, as quoted above, in *Talking to Myself*, these other persons are very much described and assessed in Terkel's own personal terms. Typical for the style of this book is the colorful description of situations of interactive encounters; they are mostly rendered in present-tense language.

10 meters above the streets), to "sneak in" and ascend the upper platform; this is what the delinquent children and later producers of the documentaries of the Chicago Sociology had done for fun in the twenties of the last century (Shaw and Moore 1968:73, 70, 93). Of course, during those days the tape recorder and other, for instance, digital-electronic, voice-recording equipment was not around; "oral history" documentaries, or to be more exact: accounts of "mundane" historical experiences of ordinary people, were then still written accounts of personally experienced personal and collective history. But otherwise, the Chicago sociology documentaries and Terkel's oral history documentaries did not differ so much with regard to stylistic character and social expressiveness, although some of Terkel's renderings of ordinary people's "own stories" are usually aesthetically more refined than the Chicago sociology documentaries.

Introduction³

In wide fields of the social sciences, we generally do not pay enough attention how macro-historical

³ The first essay draft of my article on the Rasmus account was conceived and written while I was a visiting member of the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ. For discussions and suggestions regarding that draft, I would like to express my gratitude to the participants of the biography seminar which was held in the IAS during the academic year 1984-1985. To one of its members, Daniel Bertaux, Paris, I owe a special thanks: he made me familiar with Terkel's volume on "The Good War." Later versions of the article were discussed with Ralf Bohnsack (Berlin), Rainer Hamel (Mexico City), Gerhard Riemann (Kassel), Gabriele Rosenthal (Berlin), Marcel Schilling (Bochum), Teresa Sierra (Mexico City), Anselm Strauss (San Francisco), and Bärbel Treichel (Kassel). They all made most valuable suggestions for improvement. In addition, Peggy Clarke (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), Barbara Arlt (University of Kassel), and Anselm Strauss helped very much to find a format for the article version of the (much longer) first essay draft. I must express my special gratitude to Peggy Clarke, Anselm Strauss, Barbara Arlt, and Bärbel Treichel who – during different states of writing and reworking – underwent the cumbersome task to improve the language of my article considerably. Finally, I would like to mention: without the stimulation and encouragement of Anselm Strauss this and my other articles would never have been written.

processes and their involved social processes and mechanisms are personally experienced and interpreted by persons and groups involved in them (but see: Kłoskowska 2001; Bertaux 2006). The modes of experience and interpretation of the entangled persons play an important role in the overall shaping of these macro-historical processes. One way to improve the situation is to study extempore narrative accounts of persons engaged in social and historical processes (such as the World War II) as they tell what happened to them. But, these personal narrative accounts confront the social science analyst with awkward methodological and theoretical puzzles. She or he has to deal with autobiographical ramifications of the informants' experiences. Getting deeper into the riddles of autobiographical ramifications means studying the structural processes of life courses as such, and how the person attempts to come to terms with them. Empirically informed concepts of biographical structural processes and their respective methods of analysis – when used in interpretive minded social research projects – can help to add some realism to the study of socio-historical processes as experienced by their participants.

The question is, whether or not the structures of autobiographical narrative interviews – the "how" of off-the-cuff storytelling – show basic features which can lead to general theoretical concepts of structural processes of life courses and of biographically experienced collective phenomena (like rapid changes of social worlds and of symbolic universes of society – as encountered in periods of war). My paper is an attempt to demonstrate a text-oriented procedure of biography analysis in the social sciences, especially –

sociology. This allows the empirically grounded generation both of general theoretical concepts for socio-biographical processes and of conceptual provisions for the uniqueness of the features and dynamics of biographical, and historical single cases, their situations, and phases. The general mechanisms of collective, social, and biographical processes, on the one hand, and the uniqueness of historical, situational, and biographical developments, on the other, coexist during wars in an especially ironical, tragic, elating, depressive, dangerous, hurting, deadly combination. Hence, in substantive terms, my paper deals with the analysis of autobiographical accounts of war experiences.

To keep it transparent, the analysis will be confined to just one case of biographical experience of World War II. Also, it is likely to be easier for the reader to focus on a case which belongs to the published oral history culture of the United States, on the one hand, and which might be easily compared with topically similar cases in the oral history cultures of other countries, on the other. Studs Terkel's volume on "The Good War"⁴ offers biographical accounts on

⁴ Studs Terkel: "The Good War." *An oral history of World War II* (1984). It is my intention to demonstrate how texts of published oral history and autobiography which abound today can be utilized as valuable empirical data in qualitative social research. Actually, this is an old question in sociology – especially, in the version of the Chicago tradition and in several versions of interpretive sociology – because sociologists sometimes did the same as Terkel does: produce "documentary literature." To give just four representative examples: the letter series and the Władek autobiography in Thomas and Znaniecki's volume *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1958), Clifford Shaw's *The Jack-Roller* (1930), Stanisław Kowalski's *Urke-Nachalnik* (1933), and Edward Rose's *A Story about Heroin told by Ali Baba* (1981). The in-depth discussion of the methodological criteria for utilizing this kind of oral literature as sociological data started with Herbert Blumer's *An Appraisal of Thomas and Znaniecki's The Polish Peasant* (1939). Modern versions of discussing the methodological problems and theoretical potentials involved in utilizing "documentary literature" in sociology are: Bohnsack (2005), Riemann (2007), Schütze (2012a).

war experience which are suitable as methodological examples.

An additional basic methodological reason for analyzing the Terkel case (or comparable pieces of published oral history) on biographical war experiences – or other biographical experiences – is to demonstrate a method for text critique, which is devoted to the question whether or not, in what parts, and to what extent a published oral history text exhibits the features of extempore storytelling of "self-experienced" events, that is, events that have been experienced by the narrator herself or himself. This type of narratives reveals features of social and biographical processes in an exceedingly clear and expressive mode. Extempore narratives of self-experienced events (or "personal experiences" not only in a "private" sense) express and represent past (passages of) social (including historical and biographical) processes in a primordial eyewitness perspective – subjective, on the one hand, and gestalt oriented, encompassing, on the other, in its character. Therefore, it makes sense to envision them as crucial empirical data of past socio-historical processes, to collect them judiciously and carefully, and to apply social science research strategies to them for their systematic textual study. Published oral history and/or autobiographical texts can be part of these crucial data corpora in the social sciences. But, it is not clear at face value how much they are edited, for instance, blurring the eye-witness perspective; and, hence, they have to undergo a rigorous text critique

Terkel's volumes are eminent representatives of the genre of "documentary literature," which is highly relevant for qualitative social research, especially, biography analysis. The Rasmus account is particularly suitable for demonstrating the method of textually based biography analysis since it explicates at least some of the biographical ramifications of war experiences, although, it exclusively is topically focused on the war itself.

using the criteria of extempore narration of personal experiences.

After it has been proven that the basic textual features of the published oral history text chosen from Terkel's volume are those of extempore storytelling of personal experiences, and after it has been specified which stretches of the text are heavily edited, it is feasible for its further analysis to apply the text-analytical research strategy which I developed for taped and transcribed autobiographical narrative interviews. Only then, when the delineation and analysis of the non-edited, authentic passages of the published narrative have already been pursued, can those stretches of the text that are heavily edited be adequately interpreted. [I call the non-edited passages "authentic" because they reveal the features of extempore narration of personal experiences, and because, in turn, by virtue of the explicatory mechanisms of extempore narrative rendering, later termed "narrative drives and constraints,"⁵ they express the experiences and

⁵ In my German mother tongue, I use the term *Zugzwänge*. With the steering power of "drives" the *Zugzwänge* propel the narrator (a) to go into details, (b) to close the gestalt, and (c) to assess the relevancies and to condense. *Zugzwänge* are non-intentional, although they co-condition the intentionality of narrative presentation activities. Through this conditioning impact they exert a certain "mental power" that is constituted by the systemic logic of framing constraints. Therefore, *Zugzwänge* have the quality of "constraints," too. But, by no means are they "restrictions" in a narrow sense of this term; instead, they propel certain presentation activities of the narrator beyond her or his own intention. "Constraints" in this sense mean prescribed tracks of mental activities. The term "drive," instead, has no instinct- or desire-psychological meaning or even a Freudian connotation what so ever. *Zugzwänge* is not equivalent with a psychic desire governed by the pleasure principle and fuelled by libido energy. The phenomenon of the narrative *Zugzwänge* is comparable with the guiding or steering power of the turn-taking machinery as described in conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) and with the gestalt principles in cognitive psychology. I have to apologize that I did not find the proper word in the English language; the words "drive" and "constraint" used here mean an in itself identical, single phenomenon that shows two different aspects: that one of a propelling power, and that one of a guiding constraint. [Therefore, here *Zugzwänge* is awkwardly translated by means of the binomial utterance "drive and constraint."]

dynamics of the informant's socio-biographical processes without any preplanned concoction and censorship.] The method of text critique as administered to the Terkel's text uses basically the same analytical procedures for ascertaining the communicative schemes of extempore presentation of personal experiences as have been developed for the first textual screening of the exact verbatim transcriptions of extempore narratives generated through *narrative interviews*. Therefore, *uno actu*, my paper demonstrates both: firstly a research strategy for the social science analysis of autobiographical narrative interviews, and, secondly, a research strategy for the social science use of published oral history and/or autobiographical materials.

Overview over the Research Steps⁶

The major steps for analyzing narrative interviews are: analysis of the communicative schemes of the text; structural description of the story line and its formal units; analytical abstraction of generalities, which are revealed by the text; contrastive comparison with the generalities of other texts, which are comparable in topic and form (but might be poignantly different in content); development of (a) theoretical model(s); checking, densification, and re-specification of the theoretical model(s) by confrontation with

⁶ This chapter delivers a rather abstract methodological overview over the research steps of biography analysis on the empirical base of narrative interviews. In the course of a first reading, it might be easier to skip it and to look at it only later after having read the rest of the article. For the research steps dealing with several cases I am very much indebted to Glaser and Strauss (1973), Strauss (1987), Strauss and Corbin (1990). Quite detailed analyses of the general structure of extempore narratives of personal experiences and of extempore autobiographical narratives are Schütze (1987; 2005). In the latter text, one can also find elaborate descriptions of the research steps of autobiographical narrative interviews. For the research steps of qualitative social research in general see: Schütze (2005).

pertinent other empirical text materials. But, also in many other interpretive research projects, which are pursued on the base of empirical text materials, research steps like those I have mentioned are followed through in one way or the other, whatever labels assigned to them.⁷ These research steps flow from deep-rooted epistemic principles of investigation and inquiry related most basically to the elementary communicative schemes for reporting, representing, and scrutinizing social reality (i.e., the schemes of narration, description, and argumentation)⁸. Only the first three research steps are confined to single cases.

⁷ A section of one of my German autobiographical interviews, the Hermann interview, which is topically unfocused, but in a very detailed way deals with war experiences, was almost literally translated and published in the appendix to Schütze (1992:359-367). The translation attempts to retain at least some features of the exact transcription of the underlying extempore narration, the preliminary remarks to it discuss several modes of transcription. The excerpt of the German interview might be compared with the Rasmus account for assessment of the impact of editing and for the generation of contrastive ideas regarding the experience of war and the laboring with it. For short outlines on the communicative method of narrative interviewing cf. Schütze (1983; 1987:237-259). The article by Schütze (1989) is such a comparison of one of the other interviews in Studs Terkel's volume "*The Good War*," the interview of Red Prendergast (Terkel 1984:48-66), and one of my autobiographical narrative interviews, that of Georg Fulda, dealing with the topic of one's personal life at large, but, contrary to the Hermann interview, with a second topical focus introduced by the interviewer and researcher on the personal experiences during the Nazi time and World War II.

⁸ Cf. Kallmeyer and Schütze (1977), Schütze (1987). The elementary communicative schemes for dealing with reality (i.e., narration, description, and argumentation) are utilized in any kind of "looking at social reality for a second time," investigating particular features of it, which are problematic, and thinking about it. In everyday affairs, "looking at social reality for a second time" begins with the blockage of action caused by an unexpected problem (cf. also Dewey 1930, chap. III). The interaction partners start to investigate the problem by narrating the events which at first glance amounted to the blocking problem, then, they attempt to describe and isolate ("analyze") the features of the problem and the events in its advent, and finally, they argue about the reasons for the occurrence of the unexpected events and about an underlying pattern of relationship between the features of the problem and the features of the events in its prelude. Such a sequence of narration, description, and argumentation is also utilized in many kinds of *institutionalized* and *functionally specialized* endeavors for inquiry and sense making, e.g., in legal procedures, psychoanalysis, Balint group work, narrative interviewing, etc.

The research step of differentiating between the textual sorts and communicative schemes occurring in the text at hand is focused on the questions of how this text was produced and edited. A basic assumption of my interpretive methodology is that carefully transcribed extempore narratives of personal experiences, unless they are pre-concocted and/or pre-rehearsed, reveal, to a certain degree, what happened in the social area under study from the point of view of the people acting and suffering in it and how they interpreted it, focused on it, faded it out, and/or worked it through. Therefore, the first research step is always focused on the question of how much of the empirical text material is the result of authentic extempore narration of personal experiences (and not of pre-planned and calculated, mostly argumentative, presentation). In the case of published oral history material, the first research step also deals with the question how much the original narrative extempore rendering was edited for publication.

The second research step, that one of structural description, again, concentrates its attention on the narrative representation of the text. It attempts to depict the social and biographical processes (including activities of working through, self-explanation and theorizing, as well as of fading out, rationalization, and secondary legitimating of the informant) rendered by the narrative. This can be accomplished partly by a meticulous study of the representational and communicative work of the informant as narrator, which is orientationally and formally guided and controlled by the cognitive and representational drives and constraints of storytelling.⁹

⁹ Cf. Kallmeyer and Schütze (1977; 1982; 2001) and section "The Narrative Proper" of the present article for a description of the drives and constraints of extempore storytelling.

The third research step, that of analytical abstraction, tries to nail down those cues for general features occurring within the text material, which can supposedly be found also in other topically comparable text materials, on the one hand, and what seems to be unique of the case under study regarding certain text passages and/or the overall structuring, on the other. In addition, it formulates the recurring features and encompassing forms of the biographical and social processes (including the impingement of macro-historical processes on them) revealed in the text, which result in what I already alluded to as their "overall structuring." This can also lead to the explication of supposedly uncommon or even unique features of the case, as mentioned already, uncommon or unique in terms of situation, biography, and/or history. Also, the research step of analytical abstraction attempts to characterize the self-theoretical work as an important part of the biographical work (Schütze 2008, part II:66-71) of the informant as biography incumbent within the context of the *whole* case and *in general* terms, and to view and explain it as her or his cumulative result and/or the working-through of social and biographical processes revealed by the narrative text.

These are three research steps for *single* cases, which always have to be conducted in rigorous social science text analyses of narrative materials. [Of course, the research steps can be named differently, and variations of special research techniques are envisionable. But, by all means, the basic epistemological tasks of the three research steps must be worked on without any exception – whether conducted in a reflected or more or less naive "automatic" mode of handling.] If one, then, moves to the research

steps dealing with *several* cases, three additional tasks have to be mentioned.

By the research step of contrastive comparison (cf. Glaser and Strauss 1973:55-58) one attempts to compare the first case (in terms of categories and propositions reached at through its analytical abstraction) with other topically relatable and yet contrastive cases (in terms of *their* categories and propositions generated through *their* analytical abstractions). The research goals of contrastive comparison are to detect various alternative socio-biographical processes and their features within the field under study, to depict the basic mechanisms and features common to all the alternative processes, and to delineate the theoretical variation of processes and their social frames within the topical field under study. Of course, every case analysis will bring up new categories and relational propositions until some point of theoretical saturation is reached. [The research state of theoretical saturation is reached when, in the course of searching for unprecedented contrast features of processes, new phenomena do not show up anymore within the empirical field under study. Cf. Glaser (1978, chap. 4, 5); Strauss (1987:85f).]

By looking at contrastive features of alternative processes, the researcher, then, is enticed to theoretically follow up and to explicate the ideational kernels of process mechanisms and their social conditions of functioning ("social frames"). These ideational kernels are, so to speak, especially "sparkled" when the focusing on the contrastive features of alternative socio-biographical processes takes place. [Of course, some of them are sparkled even earlier in the row of research steps: there is encountered a "tentative

ideational radiation” when curious, difficult, enigmatic text phenomena of a single interview (such as background constructions) must be analyzed or a single overall biographical structuring must be analytically established.] By explication and imaginary development of the ideational kernels, one or several explanatory models of the phenomenon or phenomena under study are constructed (cf. Husserl 1968:72-87; Strauss 1987:170-214; Strauss and Corbin 1990:197-223). They formulate and explain structural processes of biography and/or of the self-experienced history of collective we-units as concatenations and/or interplays of social and/or biographical process mechanisms in socio-historically and situationally specified social frames. The process mechanisms are envisioned as personally experienced principles of the unfolding of socio-biographical and socio-historical processes to be guided by the conjunction of “outer” social frames and of “inner” process-oriented ordering devices, like cascades of conditional relevances or plan-realization sequences.

Finally, the theoretical process model(s) has (have) to be confronted with fresh empirical materials which had not been utilized yet for constructing the theoretical model(s). This final research step of re-specifying the theoretical model is done to permit its applicability to any envisionable social or biographical phenomenon in the topical realm under study. The empirical confrontation detects errors and holes in the original model and hence enforces qualifications written down in careful re-formulations. These cannot be made without a thorough-going differentiation of the explanatory model into core features and elementary process mechanism, on the one hand, and into their situational, life-historical,

and socio-historical realizations, on the other. In all these respects, the research step of re-specification densifies the theoretical model considerably.

I would only have been able to persecute and present the research steps of contrastive comparisons, model construction, and model re-specification if I had documented the analysis of *several* empirical cases (e.g., in addition to the Rasmus case, which will be discussed in the next sections, other interviews from the Terkel volume, or narrative interviews of my own corpus of autobiographical interviews focusing on experiences of World War II¹⁰). This I did not do because it would have destroyed the format of this article, which is mainly

¹⁰ I collected these interviews in a research project on “The biographical impact of World War II” which was financed (to a small extent, but very helpful) by the University of Kassel. The central assumption is that the basic relationship between personal identity and biography, on the one hand, and (large scale) collective identity and collective history (of the nation and the “world society”), on the other, are different for present-day Americans and Germans. The roots of this can be found in the considerably different biographical experiences of the generation of those Americans and Germans who had been young adults in World War II. An example of this contrastive analysis is my article on the question of collective trajectory as mainly experienced by German soldiers of World War II and the question of collective metamorphosis as mainly experienced by American soldiers of World War II (Schütze 1989). The research is empirically grounded on autobiographical narrative interviews with American and German informants who had been young adults in World War II (i.e., born between 1915 and 1930). The selection of the approximate 25 German and approximate 25 American interviews were done, following the methodological principles of theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation within the framework of the grounded theory approach of Anselm Strauss (Glaser and Strauss 1973). The analysis of the transcribed interviews was guided by principles of interpretive text analysis as outlined in this article. Text-analytical research of the last ten years has shown that life historical experiences are mainly expressed by the *narrative* textual structures of the interviews (as compared to the argumentative biographical commentaries in them). However, the reflective, “self-theoretical” working-through, i.e., the biographical work, as well as the imprint of the symbolic universes (and of the collective mentality structures) of societies and other inclusive or exclusive we-groups on the individual life perspectives and autobiographical thematizations are mainly expressed by the argumentative commentaries (regarding the narrative passages) of the interviews and by their abstract descriptions.

addressed to the first three research steps applicable to the analysis of single cases.

Analysis of the Rasmus Case

Now, I will turn to one of the biographical war accounts in Terkel’s volume on “*The Good War*” (Pp. 38-48). It is the case of Robert Rasmus. Robert Rasmus was nineteen years old when he entered the European war theatre in 1945. He told Terkel of his World War II experiences probably about 1982. He did not participate in the Battle of the Bulge, where the American army suffered many casualties and where many American soldiers became prisoners of war. Rasmus arrived in Europe when the German army was already basically defeated. Therefore, he did not have the bad experiences and haunting battle memories that some other interviewees in Terkel’s volume, and many informants in my own interview corpus, had, and still have. For a long time, Rasmus could manage to keep thinking of his being in the German war as something similar to being a tourist. Yet, he did have terrible experiences, too. The mixture of these different frames of experience is what is mainly interesting in the Rasmus account.

Analyses of the Communicative Schemes of the Text

Although the Rasmus text is considerably edited, it shows the general features of a topically focused autobiographical extempore narrative – the focus being on the topic of war as a particular life experience. The autobiographical narrative consists of three parts:

1. an evaluative introductory announcement of the story content, its plot, and its meaning;
2. the narrative as such; and
3. the combination of a narrative coda and a pre-coda argumental¹¹ commentary.

The Evaluative Introduction

The introduction of Rasmus’s story has two constitutive elements. The first element is a story announcement. This is accomplished (1) by narrative “prefacing” sentences (as: “I remember my mother saying, ‘Bob you’ll be in it.’ I was hoping she’d be right” [p. 38, para. 3]); and (2) by narrative “suspense” sentences showing a central change over the course of events, which, as hereby announced by the informant, would be revealed in the narrative if, and only if, the fellow interactant(s) would spend the time to listen (as, for instance, “[a]ll of a sudden, there you were right in the thick of it and people were dying and you were scared out of your wits that you’d have your head blown off” [p. 38, para. 5]). The second element of the story introduction functions in close conjunction with the story announcement: it consists of an autobiographical commentary conducted in a communicative scheme of argumentation. This conveys a central biographical

¹¹ Throughout the paper, I will use the old-fashioned adjective term “argumental.” It designates general features of the communicative scheme of argumentation, such as the term “narrative” designates general features of the communicative scheme of storytelling. Instead, the adjective “argumentative” carries a basic meaning of being fond of arguing or being quarrelsome. There are many types and instances of argumentation that are consensually enacted and carried out without any quarrel. I will apply the term “argumentative” only on those textual phenomena which imply some sort of quarrelling (including cases where the biography incumbent is quarrelling with herself or himself). The dictionary entry of *The Oxford Dictionary* (1933:443, column B) defines “argumental” as “of, pertaining to, or characterized by, argument.” The pertinent quotations are from the 16th up to the 18th century.

meaning to the flow of experiences and to the implied course of events, with sentences such as: “[a]t one level animal fear. I didn’t like it at all. On the other hand, I had this great sense of adventure” (p. 38, para. 6).

The Narrative Proper

The narration as such starts as follows:

I was in training at Fort Benning, Georgia. If you got sick and fell back more than a week, you were removed from your battalion. I got the flue and was laid back for eight days. I was removed from my outfit where all my buddies were. I was heartbroken. (p. 29, para. 3)

The narrative as such finishes with two narrative units in which Rasmus reports his intense feeling, thinking and evaluating during his actual war experiences.

The first narrative unit in pre-closing position is an account of the liberation of the Polish, French, Italian, and Russian slave laborers from their enforced work on farms and factories: here, Rasmus finally reports his encounter with, at least some part, of the evil and guilt of the German enemy (p. 46). Although this underlines the justification of the war that Rasmus had to fight in, he does not make a special theoretical point about it in his presentation. Rather, he stresses the unexpectedness of this evil, and his account is that of a personally acting, experiencing, and eyewitness observing who was involved in the freeing of the slave laborers and in the calming down of their so understandable hatred. Even in this part of his presentation, the account is truly that of an extempore narrative.

The second narrative unit in pre-closing position – associatively linked to Rasmus’s encounter with a liberated Russian slave laborer who was going to kill the alleged German murderer of his best friend and fellow prisoner, and whom Rasmus decided to prevent from accomplishing the execution, although he had realized his understandable desire for vengeance – is a narrative report on his then overwhelming feeling of gratefulness towards the Russian soldiers who had broken the backbone of the German army and saved the lives of so many American soldiers. This report is rather quietly but consciously contrasted with Rasmus’s present day (1982!) anti-Communist feelings, which probably reflect partially the difficult post-war relationship between the two super-powers and the official political rhetoric connected with it (p. 47, para. 1, 2).

Rasmus’s narrative unfolding in-between the first and the last narrative unit just mentioned is quite a normal instance of autobiographical extempore or off-the-cuff storytelling. The narrative units are constructed by a combination of unit announcements, narrative core sentences, narrative “detailization” sentences, and evaluative (argumental) commentary sentences (cf. Schütze 1984:88-92, 108-112; 1987:94-185). Of course, the normal type of narrative framing devices and connectors of extempore oral storytelling (as “ah,” “and then”) are missing because of Terkel’s editing. They are partly substituted for by his segmenting of the text into paragraphs. Terkel’s segmenting seems to be concordant with the internal and overall structures of the supposed narrative units of Rasmus’s rendering (with the “arc of segments” running from announcement sub-segments up to summarization sub-segments). In addition to

the erasure of connectors and framing devices of carefully transcribed oral storytelling, there is some reshaping of formulations observable, because of Terkel’s goal of creating pieces of “oral literature” out of the interviews. In extempore telling of personal experiences as transcribed, particularly the changes of viewpoints, modes, and levels of presenting are always marked, mostly elaborately, but sometimes by intonationality and other prosodic markers only. Throughout these stories of personal experiences it is always specified who of the fellow interactants (including the narrator) is talking, and whether or not the narrative account reports a “then” (once) ongoing conversation (as to be differentiated from conversations *about* those happenings and conversations at later points within the life course). In addition, it is painstakingly marked whether the narrator is talking to himself (“inner speech”) or to others and whether he is talking to himself *now* (i.e., in the situation of narration) or *then* (i.e., during the course of past experiences).

Taking these facts about oral extempore storytelling into account, it is obvious that the following stretch of narrative re-experiencing is made more literary by Terkel: “[a]nd there were our heavy mortars blasting away across the river. I had been seeing shadowy figures moving around. Were they infiltrators or just a bush that I was imagining?” (p. 41, para. 2). In oral extempore storytelling, as carefully transcribed, inner speech would generally be introduced by formal markers, like: “I asked myself,” or at least by very obvious intonation contours (as question intonation and talking to myself in a conceivably low voice) and other prosodic markers (as short pauses, change of speed of speech, etc.). Similarly, sharp contrasts

of experiences are always juxtaposed by markers of demonstrative appositive representation. Thus, the so to speak “naked” rendering of a deep contrast experience as we can sometimes read it in Terkel’s texts is surely heavily literatized. One typical example is: “and the brains were coming out on my hands and on my uniform. *Here’s the mama’s boy, Sunday School, and now I’m-really-in it*” (p. 44, para. 4 [italics by FS]). On the other hand, it has to be admitted wholeheartedly that many autobiographical off-the-cuff stories have their own poetry (although it can be poetry expressing terrible experiences). Surely, the Rasmus story, too, has its own artistic way of narrative representation. Terkel tried to reflect this by his special modes and styles of transliteration. Rasmus’s mixture of contrastive and blurred experiences is quasi-poetically reflected by the oppositive style of his narrative as rendered by Terkel.

A first issue that we are about to examine is the experiential authenticity of the text. The term “experiential authenticity” is here meant in the sense of unhindered expression of personal experiences by extempore narration (cf. Schütze 1993). In this sense, “experiential authenticity” or experiential validity refers to the whole gamut of rendering of life-historical phenomena, autobiographical referring, and biographical work: having personally been entangled in collective, milieu-specific, interactive biographical processes of former days; the experience of, and the emotional interaction of one’s identity with (at least partial aspects of) this entanglement; the partially unknown, and partially conscious and reflected, categorization and interpretation of it; the sedimentation of it in one’s autobiographical memory and topicalization system; the partial change of autobiographical

thematization (and its topicalization system) by new types of focusation and new activities of sedimentation and argumental working-through; provisions of fading out and repressing items and aspects of former entanglements, experiences, and interpretations; taking biographical decisions on the base of both – the entanglements within those social processes, and the inner autobiographical reactions to it; and, last but not least, of course, the unchecked recollection, free association, and communicative presentation of the former entanglements, experiences, interpretations, working-through, and decisions by the explicatory dynamics of extempore narration.

Luckily, a technique for determining degrees and areas of experiential authenticity of texts is available, and this technique basically consists of comparing the edited text structure with the text structures we know from carefully transcribed pieces of extempore storytelling. In general, I do not think that Terkel faked or spoiled the basic style of Rasmus's presentation of his own war experiences. But, one has to be aware that especially the descriptive sub-units of the Rasmus text (about what Rasmus allegedly "pictured" and felt) are literatized. Therefore, I shall not draw on them for my analysis in the first instance. On the other hand, it is obvious that Terkel sticks to the structure of the sequence of narrative units, the inner construction of the narrative units, and the placement and build-up of the argumental commentaries – as produced via off-the-cuff storytelling during the actual Rasmus interview. One can conclude this especially convincingly from the occurrence of background constructions, which abound in off-the-cuff storytelling of personal experiences and which are rare in literary narratives.

These background constructions are the result of the narrative drives and constraints of off-the-cuff storytelling. There are three of them: (1) the drive and constraint to condense, (2) the drive and constraint to go into details, (3) and the drive and constraint to close the textual forms (Schütze 1982). The narrative drive and 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 drive and constraint, to go into details, has the following effect: if the narrator has told event A, then she or he has to go on and has to tell also event B related to event A as the next link in the chain of experienced events – these events are concatenated formally in temporal succession, causality, finality, et cetera. In case of implausibility of the envisaged narrative proceeding from event A to event B, there has to be a "background search," a checking of the details of the supposed link between events A and B. The narrative constraint to close the forms (*Gestalten*) has 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 the closing up of embedded experiential patterns. In off-the-cuff storytelling, there is always an undecided competition between these three narrative drives and constraints, whereas in written storytelling the competition between the drives respective constraints becomes re-harmonized and disguised under the polished surface of a literary make-up.

The complications and difficulties of extempore storytelling tend to be eliminated in written narrative accounts. Whereas the oral narrator cannot rewrite his story line, the writer can. Normally, she or he would try to erase the vestiges of unexpected complication and disarray in the storytelling and in the hereby rendered flow of personal experiences. That means she or he would insert the experiential content of the background construction as it would occur in extempore storytelling at the proper sequential position within the unfolding flow of recollected experiences (turning back to earlier parts of it and inserting it there); or she or he would construct preplanned exposition and explanation chapters, in-advance stories or systematic flashbacks, which cut the story line. And, in doing this, she or he would very often distort the original stream of experiences. The reader should not detect that the narrator was puzzled, embarrassed, disoriented, disgusted and therefore, had some difficulties with the narrative reconstruction and/or tended to defocus or even to repress important events. Contrary to these artistic devices, which serve special functions of exposition, explanation and aesthetic expression, background constructions of oral extempore narration are impromptu attempts to get order into the complicated or even "turmoiled" stream of recollected experiences without eliminating the vestiges of these experiential complications and disarrays.

By contrast, in literary narrative accounts such background constructions proper – and, especially, delayed self-corrective background constructions – are rare. Especially, the occurrence of background constructions in many of Terkel's published interviews allow my conclusion that Terkel did not

edit or change the improvised oral renderings of the respective original interview communications enough to run the risk of destroying the flow of oral narrative activities in its time relationships, its sequential structures of unit linking, and its hierarchical relationships of dominance and embeddedness. On the contrary, in other interviews, he even shows some of the interactional work involved in his interviewing – this exactly at points where the coherence of narrative topicalization of the informant is deemed potentially questionable. In other words, he does not change the interview texts in accordance with his own version of a coherent topicalization system as a writer.¹² This is an important conclusion about Terkel's materials

¹² On the other hand, Terkel does utilize some artistic devices for transliterating and arranging his interviews. He does this basically in order to express the dynamics of the inner-psychic processes during the communicative presentation and to express their relationship to group processes in which the informant was involved at the time of the reported events, or is still involved presently. Thus, he interrupts the interview text with graphically specified descriptions of the informant; he puts in some references to paralinguistic phenomena of the actually ongoing interview communication (e.g., "laughs") at some places of the text, but not at others; he keeps some of the disorders of presentations (self-corrections, interruptions, etc.), whereas others are eliminated; he drops some of the formal framing devices for introducing and closing up direct speech and inner speech, which seem to be "void" as carriers of deeper information and meaning, etc.

At any rate, this is of no detriment to the expressive and presentational function or the experiential validity of documentary literature, which consists of depicting socio-biographical processes. On the contrary, any publication of oral history accounts and of autobiographical narratives has to struggle with the task of giving an understandable, intuitive, and even aesthetically enjoyable rendering. In many cases, to find one's way through the scientific transcription systems for conversation, group discourse (for example, in focus groups), and extempore narration is not an easy task for the lay reader. Therefore, Terkel's way of transliterating and arranging his interviews is really interesting and ought to be studied in terms of interpretive social science methodology and text-oriented analysis of literature. In interpretive sociology, Edward Rose, University of Colorado, Boulder (see his "poetic" transcription of the "Ali Baba Interview" – an interview conversation Edward Rose conducted with a sophisticated user of heroin [1981]) dealt with the problem of artistically transcribing and presenting autobiographical accounts most thoroughly. Through his "art of transcription" he tried to reveal the poetics in the presentational activities of the informant.

because – being confined to retrospective data as a researcher is in many studies of socio-biographical processes (since written materials of that past time period would not be available, or if they actually are, they often would not describe inner ex-

Every system of transcription or transliteration has its own epistemic perspective and potential for revealing insights, on the one hand, and for erroneous presentations, on the other. Terkel's methodological problem is the partial elimination of the formal ("empty") textual devices through which the interactional and presentational work of storytelling is accomplished by the interview partners. Such a "cleaning out" of the interactive text is done for the sake of providing the reader with moving and enjoyable pieces of "oral literature." Taking this into account, we can partially assess alleged methodological "shortcomings" of Terkel's published materials. In fact, there are some "methodological shortcomings" in Terkel's texts, but only then, when they are used as data in qualitative social research. And these "shortcomings" are shortcomings (in terms of social science methodology) just with respect to the text reliability, respective of the literal authenticity of the text (as compared with the original speech production of the informant), and to some dimensions of experiential text validity (i.e., with regard to the textual expression of the original ways of the informant's experiencing and orienting). Other methodological "shortcomings" would be the partial literatizing of the descriptions of inner psychic states of the informants, e.g., of inner speech, as shown already, as well as the presentation of just partial sections of the informants' original speech production and the rearrangement of selections of them in expressively and interpretively "densifying" clusters through the collage technique. [This was quite often harnessed in Terkel's earlier books. Of course, on the other hand, the collage technique can furnish highly artistic and "true" pictures of individual and collective mental states.]

One has to take into account that the "methodological shortcomings" of Terkel's texts are almost unavoidable if the editor of personal documents wants to make them accessible to a wider readership. The paradoxical antinomy between an intuitively understandable and artistically dense presentation, on the one hand, and text reliability, respective textual authenticity, and (some dimensions of) experiential text validity, on the other, is a problem from which the social science researcher is by no means exempt. Terkel's versions of literatized "transcriptions" might enhance the presentational power of the text for expressing the density of meaning and emotions, which is connected with biographical processes of gaining individuality and creativity, as well as with historical processes of collective remembering and working through. The methodology of qualitative social research has to build up some sort of differential theory of unavoidable presentational "mistakes" and limitations of perspective for all sorts of personal testimonies and documents used in social science research. These limitations of perspective are implied in the various styles of rendering of the text materials expressing personal experiences and of opening it up to the reader.

Throughout his book, I was not caused to suspect that Terkel distorted interview stories or inserted falsified texts. Terkel generally seems to stick to his oral text material.

periences and/or often would not provide a permanent description of the overall process, etc.) – only by studying the flow of the extempore narration of personal experiences, the empirically based analytical reconstruction of the flow of former day actual life-historical experiences and their elaborations and re-elaborations throughout the course of later life is principally possible. [Retrospective data are not dependable as such and in isolation; their analysis has to take into account their situational contexts of production, their textual context of presentation, and the processes of oblivion and memorizing, fading out and working through, etc.]

Background constructions are a quite powerful device for testing the questions whether or not a printed narrative account stems from an oral source of extempore narration and if or not it retains its basic architecture of the informant's presentation of her or his stream of recollected personal experiences. By the same token, it is an avenue for assessing the experiential validity and textual reliability, that is, the presentational power and personal authenticity, of printed narrative materials as social science data – social science data on personal experiences of social and biographical events and their concatenations.

By using background constructions in off-the-cuff storytelling, the narrator steps back and inserts an additional story, description or explanation into the main story line. She or he has to delay the telling of the main story line for a while – this generally amounts to some aesthetic impairment of narrative representation as evaluated by the criteria for artistic rendering in literature. She or he has to do this

because unlike the writer, she or he could not prepare in advance for the complications and disarrays ensuing later in the stream of recollected personal experiences by means of interpretation and explanation hints in advance, by means of elaborate expositions or framing passages or even chapters, and/or by means of expounding on additional story lines. The extempore story teller is not able to go back and forth in the story line, to freely detect in advance later coming turmoils of recollection and rendering by this, and to erase or edit those disorders of presentation in advance. In addition, it is impossible for her or him to use devices for the anticipating circumvention of presentational situations in which the need for putting off the main story line would turn out to be demanding in the future. For she or he would not (and in many cases could not) precisely expect and predict the upcoming incidence of these complications and disarrays on the empirical base of experiential data having come up in the flow of recollected experiences. Instead, the extempore narrator is focused on the main story line, concentrating on what is conceived of as biographically relevant events – driven by the narrative drive and constraint to condense.

An additional possible cause for a lack of provision for up-coming complexities in narrative recollection and re-experiencing is that some of the first potential allusions appearing during the course of recollected experiences in storytelling would have been misunderstood, or even forgotten, in their symbolic significance for the (then blurred or even "buried") actual ("original") experiences and biographical ramifications in former life. Or, they would not have been conceived of as "remarkable" in biograph-

ical, situational, or social world terms. Or, they would have been felt to be awkward, traumatic, or shameful. So, if that happens, they are dismissed as chances for expounding. And again, in the ensuing narrative activities, additional possibilities for their explication (as shown in more or less vague or obvious indications of the dynamics of text production permanently monitored by the narrator herself or himself and in the hereby revitalized items of the memory storage) are neglected as potentials for further storytelling and explanation (this up to the point where the story line becomes implausible). These are instances of de-focusation, fading out, or even repression.

In both cases – in the case of failure to expect story complications and additional story potentials, as well as in the case of their de-focusation – a narrator has to realize, at certain points in the ensuing parts of her or his narrative activities, that the account would become implausible if she or he did not insert background constructions. So, the narrator embarks on the unfolding of the background construction – driven by the drive and constraint to go into details. After finishing the background construction, the narrator has to return to the main story line at the very point she or he departed from it – driven by the drive and constraint to close the forms.

In the Rasmus account, two background constructions can be found. The first deals with Rasmus's sorrow ("I was heartbroken") that he had been separated from his buddies during their basic training as soldiers – a sorrow which seems to be paradoxical at first glance because most of his comrades during his basic training as soldiers were killed soon after

in the Battle of the Bulge. The point of implausibility for the listener is this sorrow, and therefore, Rasmus has to insert a background construction (a complex combination of narration and argumentation in this case). This has the function of demonstrating how and why the “comrades of the first hour” had become biographically so important to him, although he shared with them his life only for a little more than one month and although most of them died shortly thereafter.

Here, I shall not analyze the structure and content of this background construction, but some of its important informational features are: Rasmus was in a very susceptible period of his life; the comrades of the first hour were relevant, first, as real and, later, as imaginative significant others for Rasmus – they became points of orientation and evaluation throughout his life course; Rasmus started to feel, and still keeps on feeling, some sort of biographical deficiency compared to them, et cetera.

Rasmus’s second background construction deals with the death in action of one of the very experienced platoon sergeants of his company. This background construction is a very complex one showing a conjunction of storytelling, of argumental proposition and explanation combined with features of recurrence (of the refutational proposition “we did not kill him”), and of typifying the description fulfilling the function of re-normalization (of the demoralization phenomena in Rasmus’s military unit). To summarize its content, this particular background construction is provoked by the narrative re-encounter of the paradox that in the very first combat of Rasmus’s company – consisting mainly of

inexperienced recruits – a German unit was totally wiped out by taking advantage of the surprise factor and of the factor of superior strength, that just two people of the American company got killed, and that one of them was the very experienced platoon sergeant of Rasmus’s platoon. In his flow of extempore narration, Rasmus cannot help but to comment on, and to evaluate, this unexpected happening: “[i]rony again.” Both items – the very fact of the unexpected death of the most experienced soldier of the company and the evaluation of it as “irony” – seem implausible, and Rasmus has to be concerned about that for the sake of his story’s consistency and credibility (not only from the point of view of the listener but also from his own), and therefore, has to commence a background construction.

The construction tells the story of how the platoon sergeant became intensely hated by the enlisted men; how they would start to say with annoyance or even anguish – caused by the insensitive drill practices and machinations of this man: “[i]f we ever get into combat, I am going to kill him;” and how they approved his death with a grin. The background story as such is set into perspective by a descriptive and argumental device of social categorization and framing stating that dislike and even hate between the uneducated but powerful “drill” sergeants, on the one hand, and the at least partly more educated conscripted soldiers, on the other, was quite usual in the American army and would normally not cause detrimental results. Rasmus’s stating and describing of this social frame provide the argumental premise for proposing that the sergeant was surely not killed by American comrades but by the enemy. Rasmus ends his background construction with

a typifying description and comparison differentiating normal cases of demoralization (like damaging one’s weapons, intentionally inflicting wounds on oneself, desertion) from abnormal ones (like killing officers), and stating that his unit showed just the normal amount of demoralization (besides some examples of heroism, too, of course).

What nevertheless remains remarkable regarding Rasmus’s vigorous attempts at refutation is that it seems necessary for him to use argumental disclaimers against the same (imagined) charge, that his own platoon intentionally killed the hated platoon sergeant, again and again. He seems to feel attacked by an inner opponent who has strong accusatory arguments, and this opponent puts him in limbo with serious doubts regarding the innocence of his platoon that are fueled by constraints of argumentation (Schütze 1978:68-80, especially, p. 69, 79) regarding the possible weakness of his own refutation of a conceivable murder charge against members of his own military unit.

Of course, the voice of his inner opponent and his doubt enforced by the opponent’s accusation, are part of Rasmus himself. In Rasmus’s mind there always looms the question: Was the war really as morally clean as he would like to envisage it and live with it? He does not allow himself to tackle this question openly, and exactly this censorship is the condition for the later urgency to fill in the background construction.

The occurrence of the two undisguised, not literatized, background constructions in the Rasmus material properly reflect the cognitive, emotional,

and evaluative complication, and even disarray, in the ongoing flow of recollections of personal experiences and biographical processes which Rasmus had to undergo during his extempore storytelling. These difficulties suggest the most serious actual experiences in his life and the systematic obstacles of their biographical working through. Hence, Terkel’s interview materials, at least those published at their full length (as the Rasmus case is), seem to be sufficiently, and in most parts perfectly, text reliable in terms of the literal reproduction of the oral interview by the published transcript and experientially valid in terms of the expression of biographical processes the informant as biography incumbent was involved in. They are sufficiently, and mostly even perfectly, empirically dependable in terms of text reliability and experiential validity in order to be utilized as social science data. Terkel’s edition, at least in the Rasmus story and in other full-length stories of his volume on World War II (such as the Prendergast account [Terkel 1984:48-58; also see Schütze 1989]), is confined to erasing connectors and paralinguistic phenomena of spoken language and to ornamenting the explicatory parts of the narrative units, especially descriptive sub-units. Otherwise, the text material of the Rasmus account seems to be authentic in the sense that it renders the flow of autobiographical re-experiencing.

The Combination of a Narrative Coda and a Pre-Coda Argumental Commentary

The narrative account as such ends with reporting overwhelming feelings of gratitude towards the Russian soldiers because they had broken the back of the German army (p. 47, para. 1, 2). After

an important interlude (a pre-coda commentary), which will be dealt with below in a moment, the coda of Rasmus's narrative follows (contrastively juxtaposed to reflections on the Vietnam War as a difficult, agonizing war):

World War Two was utterly different. It has affected me in many ways ever since. I think my judgment of people is more circumspect. I know it's made me less ready to fall into the trap of judging people by their style or appearance. In a short period of time, I had the most tremendous experiences of all of life: of fear, of jubilation, of misery, of hope, of comradeship, and of the endless excitement, the theatrics of it. I honestly feel grateful for having been a witness to an event as monumental as anything in history and, in a very small way, a participant. (p. 48, para. 3)

Such a coda is to be found at the end of every off-the-cuff narration of personal experiences. [Cf. Labov (1972:365-366, 369-370); Kallmeyer and Schütze (1977); Schütze (1987:167-175). Of course, many of them are not that embellished as the coda in the Rasmus account is, but many of them really are.] A coda ties the past time of the story events to the present time of actual narration, and it shows the outcomes of the narrated events and experiences for the narrator, his life, and present situation. Wherever the coda shows at least some elaboration, it is combined with an evaluation of the informant's social and biographical processes in their impact on his life course at length, and, too, on the collective "we-units" at large, in which the informant is member and which were at stake during the course of the events depicted. And vice versa, it evaluates the impact of the collective we-units, such as the nation, and their macro-historical processes on the individual life history and its biographical processes. In au-

tobiographical accounts, activities of summarizing and stating of the outcome normally include statements about a (partial) change of the informant's identity as a biography incumbent – caused by the experience of events and social processes, which the narrative transpires. Each of these components can be found in the Rasmus account.

It is always interesting to analyze the answer to the question whether or not the coda statements of result and assessment really cover what has been rendered by the story line, and whether or not the summarizing statements and evaluations of the coda are consistent with those of the various concatenated narrative units. The statements of result and assessment of the coda form part of the biographical self-theory of the informant. They can at least partly be self-delusional. In Rasmus's story, the summary and evaluation statement is: "I had the most tremendous experiences of all life: of fear, of jubilation, of misery, of hope, of comradeship, and of the endless excitement, the theatrics of it." This formulation of biographical outcome, consequence, and value deals mostly with the biographical action scheme of adventurously experiencing new life situations rather than primarily with the trajectory experiences of suffering, disorientation, demoralization, though the latter are dealt with at least in the background constructions of Rasmus's autobiographical accounts. [He mentions fear and misery, but just as the byproduct of the dominant overall experience of excitement.] One can conclude that Rasmus's autobiographical theorizing represents a de-focusing of his own and others' biographical experiences concerning tragic war events and the implied personal sufferings.

In many autobiographical off-the-cuff narratives there can be found an elaborated argumental commentary, which is placed exactly between the last narrative unit proper and the coda of the narrative. The basic reason for this is that in the very process of extempore storytelling of personal experiences the informant is *nolens volens* touching biographical problems, which have remained basically unsolved in her or his life up to now. [Many of them cannot be solved at all even when focused and worked through thoroughly.] Telling (part of) her or his life history reminds the informant of the argumental potential regarding the fundamentals of her or his life. The quite steadily occurring summarizing and evaluation sub-segments of the narrative units, which are piling up during the course of storytelling, are feeding into the recollection of the basic elements and tendencies of the argumental potential for relating to one's own biographical identity during the life course. So, before the informant – as a biography incumbent – can end her or his story line via the production of the narrative coda, she or he, again, has to struggle vigorously with the basic argumental potentials of his or her life and with the difficulties of relating to one's biographical identity. At this point, the communicative scheme of argumentation takes over the rule from the communicative scheme of narration, which (in most interview cases to an overwhelming extent) was dominant throughout the entire interview communication before.

When the informant is involved with deep inner problems, the argumental pre-coda unit can be considerably protracted. In very serious cases, the argumental potential will not allow the straightforward summarization and evaluation activities of the

pre-coda and coda units at all. [However, such a tremendously serious "problem with oneself" obviously does not manifest itself in the Rasmus interview.] Then, the pre-coda commentary is transferred into the coda, splitting the coda into two parts. The first deals with summarizing and assessing activities of formulating biographical outcomes, consequences, and values (which gets elaborated because of the drives and constraints of argumentation). The second part deals with the closing up of the past time of the story events and with bringing in the (present) time of the actual narrative work again, that is, the present of the communicative situation and its social and collective ramifications. And in-between, the two coda parts would be the protracted (sometimes several pages long) argumentative activity, which is propelled by non-saturated argumental drives and constraints.¹³

It is intriguing that the Rasmus account shows an extended pre-coda biographical commentary (p. 47, para. 3 to p. 48, para. 2). The first lines of this biographical commentary are:

I've reflected on why people my age and with my experience don't have that spontaneous willingness to be part of the nuclear freeze. It's the sense that the Germans were willing to lose millions of men. And they did. Every German house we went to, there would be black-bordered pictures of sons and relatives. You could tell that most of them died on the Eastern front. And the Russians lost twenty millions.

Of course, this commentary starts as a commentary on the gratitude of Rasmus and his comrades

¹³ For such split codas see: Schütze (2001). They always document that the narrator, as biography incumbent, has not and is not finished with his biographical work; instead, she or he is trapped in serious biographical identity problems.

towards the Russians – the content of the last narrative unit proper. But, then the unit commentary is elaborated into a protracted argumental consideration: What would have happened if further fighting against the basically undefeated armies of decided peoples who were able to endure extreme sufferings (like the Japanese and the Russians) would have been necessary? Rasmus states his opinion that he and his fellow soldiers were not willing to fight in such a war. This would have meant extreme suffering or even death for them. Rasmus contends that even today the typical member of the American public would not be willing to do this; and that would be the legitimate reason for her or his backing policies of nuclear defense. On the other hand, the pre-coda unit seems to convey some uneasiness in Rasmus's conclusion. There were the comrades who died in the Battle of the Bulge (cf. the first background construction on p. 39, 40). Could it be that he, Rasmus, did not suffer enough as compared to *them*, and that therefore, he did not have the chance to grow really mature? And, could it turn out to be illegitimate if reconsidered properly that his, Rasmus's, "solution" of a technical substitute war (with nuclear weapons) would not take into account the suffering caused to (individual) others on this large-scale collective level, whereas he was able to do so in his personal encounters with dead Germans (cf. p. 44, 45)? Rasmus does not formulate these questions. But, at least he seems to feel a certain contradiction between having experienced some grievances of war and yet his current backing of "deadly" policies of defense with mass destructive weaponry. Otherwise, he would not be tangled in such obstinate argumental constraints (cf. Riemann 1986;

1987:287-322, 449-454; Schütze 1987:138-185) to defend conclusions that he is drawing from his war experiences.

Structural Description of the Rasmus Narrative

In my original analysis, after I had finished the depiction of the overall communicative schemes involved in the production of the Rasmus text, I conducted a systematic segmentation of the Rasmus story into its natural narrative units, sub-units, and supra-segmental relationships using those formal markers of storytelling which had not been totally eliminated by Terkel's editing (e.g., discontinuity markers, like "all of a sudden," time aspects, like "still," paragraphical segmentation as substitute for narrative connectors, like "then," summarizing statements for unit contents in end positions and the evaluations connected with them, statements of announcing in advance the gist of unit contents in an opening position, etc.). Then, I tried to use the outcome of this formal analysis for a structural description of the biographical processes rendered by Rasmus's narrative. It would be a distraction from the limited purpose of this paper to present my original unit by unit structural description of the story line,¹⁴ but meticulous structural description is always the most important part of my analysis of autobiographical narratives.

The research step of structural description is concerned with three types of presentational units:

¹⁴ Examples of an elaborate structural description can be found, e.g., in Maurenbrecher (1985), Riemann (1987), Nittel (1992), Schütze (1991; 1994; 2008), Schröder-Wildhagen and colleagues (2012). The English language article by Schütze (1992 pp. 199-205, 347-355) gives only a shortened version of the result of a structural description.

autonomous narrative units and their parts (like kernel sentences and narrative detailizations); background constructions, which are embedded in narrative units and cannot be produced without them; and supra-segmental compounds of narrative units. The aim of a structural description is – starting with the narrative units – to identify these pieces of talk; to show how they are concatenated in sequential order and how they relate to each other hierarchically (in terms of embeddedness and of being part of an encompassing, stretched out compound of narrative units); and finally, to point out what specific and general features they express which characterize sociologically remarkable situational, social (e.g., milieu, social world, organization, etc.), biographical, and collective socio-historical processes.

Text Segmentation

A structural description always begins with the identification of narrative units, which are the "story grammatical" backbone of any narrative. Every narrative unit starts with a new narrative focusing device. This device makes clear that the narrator is going to embark on the presentation of a new piece of recalled experience. In scientific transcriptions of extempore narratives of personal (and especially – biographical) experiences, one can see that at the end of the just finished narrative unit the voice of the narrator goes down and raises again at the beginning of the next narrative unit. Also, there will very often be a short or even a longer pause between the fading out of the voice and its setting in again. In addition, in scientific transcriptions, quite often there will be seen a paraverbal element at the beginning of the new narrative unit, possibly followed by

a particle with time reference: "ah/now." Finally, in actually ongoing extempore narrative talk, one can see many self-correcting devices, especially at the beginning of a new narrative unit, and many planning pauses – immediately after the narrator has started with the production of the unit.

In edited extempore narratives of personal experiences, such as the Rasmus account, these "disorganized" traces of the actually ongoing "work activity" of verbal presentation and communication are eliminated or "cleaned out." Only the narrative focusing devices, which announce a new piece of recalled experience to be told, are kept. In their minimal form, the focusing devices consist of a narrative conjunctive, like "and then." In their elaborated form, focusing devices give an introduction as to what changes of life situation or biographical identity are going to be reported now. Or they set a scene for the events, which are going to happen next within the story. A typical example of the latter is the beginning of the narrative unit in which the second background construction we discussed above (the one about the "irony" that the hated platoon sergeant of Rasmus's platoon was killed) is embedded. "All of a sudden, we spotted a group of German soldiers down by the slope of this hill, perhaps fifty" (p. 43, para. 3).

Every focusing device, which starts off a new narrative unit, implies at least a slight change of perspective during the course of "living through it again" by extempore narration. This can be (a) just a sudden change in the path of events, (b) a fading of activities plus an elapse of time and an ensuing new concentration of activities, or (c) a change of

experiential perspective. The first alternative can be seen in the example just mentioned. Examples of the second and third are: “[t]hree days later we pulled out, crossed the Rhine” (p. 41, para. 6); “[w]e’ve seen a little of the war now” (p. 41, para. 7). There can also be a major change of social processes the informant was involved in – the beginning of the narrative unit then announces that the narrator will now commence the presentation of this change. This is usually the beginning of a new supra-segmental compound of narrative units. One example in the Rasmus account is the narrator’s turning his recollection towards his encounters with German war crimes when he mentions the suffering of the slave laborers from occupied European countries: “[n]ow I began to get an inkling of some other evil abroad. We were very much aware that the Germans had mobilized the Poles, the French ... into workers on farms and in factories” (p. 46, para. 2). The focusing device in this case is much more elaborate, it includes a special technique of switching the frame of presentational reference and of relating to, and evaluating, the now upcoming phase of biography.

Just as every narrative unit employs an orderly opening procedure, it also uses orderly closing procedures. The simplest procedure consists in just following the internal grammar of the narrative unit. In this case, there might be a cluster of sentences describing the details of a scene in the end position of the narrative unit (“I had been seeing shadowy figures moving around. Were they infiltrators or just a bush that I was imagining? And there in sight was the Cologne cathedral amidst all this wreckage” [p. 41, para. 6]). Or, there might

be a cluster of sentences which state the changes the subject is undergoing. “It was reassuring to see how much artillery we had, but disturbing to see all these Germans dead. I had never seen a dead body before, except in a funeral home” (p. 42, para. 3). In these cases, there is no special closing procedure. Instead, the sentences of narrative and/or descriptive explication of stating the change of identity or situational changes (also implying changes of identity of the narrator as biography incumbent) automatically serve as closing devices, too. In actually ongoing verbal encounters, depicted by scientific transcriptions, these and other closing devices are accompanied by a falling voice and a shorter or even longer pause of talk.

But, of course, there can be special and much more elaborate closing devices for ending a narrative unit than have been shown up to now. One would be a summary formulation of the state of identity or its change, as for example: “I was sort of schizophrenic all through this period. I was a participant, scared out of my wits. But, I was also acutely aware of how really theatrical and surreal it was” (p. 41, para. 5). Another special closing device would be an outlook on the expected future as possibly resulting from what experiences the informant has rendered in the narrative unit just to be closed: on encounters with events, difficulties, horrors, or joys to be expected for the time period still to be told within the ensuing narrative units (although they might not really happen: stating “empty expectations” is an artistic device even, and especially, in extempore storytelling). In such a case, the narrator recalls his state of mind during the time of the episode told about in the narrative unit, and he re-

members that he was then expecting many more horrible encounters with death in war, not knowing at that very moment that the one he had encountered right now would luckily turn out to be his last one: “[referring to a dead German soldier:] Once the helmet is off, you’re looking at a teenager, another kid. Obviously you have to go on. There are many, many more engagements” (p. 45, para. 3). Still, another special closing device is a summary statement which is combined with an evaluation of the happenings occurring to the *dramatis personae* and/or to the narrator as biography incumbent that have been told in the just closing narrative unit. One typical example in the Rasmus interview refers to Rasmus’s being among the liberated Belgian population: “[t]here was a sense of victory in the air. They had already been liberated. They were elated” (p. 40, para. 4). Such a closing device is very often linked with the one mentioned earlier which formulates inner states of the narrator as biography incumbent and their changes.

Finally, there is the very obvious closing device of a self-theoretical commentary, which states the relationship of the informant as biography incumbent towards the events which happened in the situations or phases of life talked about in the narrative unit. [Self-theoretical commentaries always tend to be placed at the end of narrative units. If they occur in other parts of the narrative unit, it is a sign of “narrative disorder” reflecting difficulties the informant has with some part of her or his life or identity. Those self-theoretical commentaries have to be scrutinized very closely.] Self-theoretical biographical commentaries tend to be connected with closing devices, which summarize,

formulate inner states, and evaluate. This is the case in Rasmus’s fairly elaborated closing device, which finishes up the narrative unit in which the background construction about the platoon sergeant “ironically having been killed” is embedded:

[t]hose who really went through combat, the Normandy landings, the heavy stuff, might laugh at this little action we’d been in but for me. ... We were passing people who were taking over from us, another company. We had one day of this. Our uniforms were now dirty and bloody and our faces looked like we’d been in there for weeks. Now *we* had the feeling: You poor innocents. (p. 44, para. 6)

Rasmus marks the episode of combat, which was told immediately before in the same narrative unit (p. 43, para. 3 to p. 44, para. 6) as the peak of his war experiences. But, he still feels the problem that the intensity, frequency, and relevance of his experiences might be low as compared with that of the really experienced warriors and sufferers. He argues with himself in a self-theoretical biographical commentary. Then he states the change of his outer appearance and inner identity, having become an experienced soldier now. But again, he has to admit in his summary and evaluation that it was just one day he had of combat experience. Since this episode is still so moving for Rasmus, and still not totally worked through, he combines his theoretical commentary with pieces of narration about the encounter with the fresh replacement company. These pieces of text are dominated by the argumental activity of Rasmus’s self-theoretical commentary. Within the argumental frame they serve as a rebuttal against doubts of immaturity; they, again, state the now matured and “experienced” identity of Rasmus as a combat soldier.

*Presentation*al “Grammar” of Extempore
Narration as a Formal Base for Structural
Description

The presentational procedure of narrative units has to perform the following tasks: focusing the new stretch of personal experience to be rendered; formulating kernel sentences about what happened and/or what is the change of situation or identity being involved; giving details of the encounters, their social frames, and their impact on personal and/or collective identities being involved; summarizing the general features of the encounter (i.e., the events and the accompanying identity changes); stating the outcomes and evaluating the general features of the outcomes; and finally (but, which is more optional than the other tasks), to give a self-theoretical commentary on the relationship between the identity of the informant and the encounter talked about in the narrative unit. Of course, these tasks are completely fulfilled only in very elaborate narrative units; there are different levels of explication in different parts of an overall extempore autobiographical narrative (as told in an autobiographical narrative interview) and between whole (interview) narratives.

The absolute minimum of a narrative unit is the kernel sentence, which represents an essential element in the chain of sequential narrative units, that is, kernel sentences are the “scaffold” of the narrative. Narrative kernel sentences depict the central steps and turns of social processes, which are the theme of the narrative to be told and the related identity changes of the biography incumbent. As narrative sentences, they have to express

a temporal sequence of different states of the social process to be told, and the related situations and identity systems; between these states there has to be found a temporal threshold of before and after. Every narrative sentence has to exhibit an indexical expression referring to a specific time, location, and state of identity, however vaguely this specific time, location, and state of identity might be formulated by it.

In narrative units with “hot action” and suspense, the first narrative kernel sentence can be identical with the focusing device. Exactly this is the case in Rasmus’s narrative unit telling of the death of the platoon sergeant (p. 43, para. 3 to p. 44, para. 6). “All of a sudden, we spotted a group of German soldiers down by the slope of this hill, perhaps fifty.” The next narrative kernel sentence, which appears some sentences later in this narrative unit is: “[w]e killed most of the Germans” (p. 43, para. 3). An additional compound of narrative kernel sentences follows almost immediately: “[o]ur guys were getting killed, too. Irony again, the first one killed was our platoon sergeant” (p. 43, para. 3). Then, the background construction (p. 43, para. 4 to p. 44, para. 3) discussed above is inserted into the main story line which (much later) resumes by means of the next narrative kernel sentence, “[o]ur captain said, ‘pick up the bodies. We don’t leave our dead to the enemy!’” (p. 44, para. 4). What follows after the production of a few (additional) explicatory narrative sentences is a narrative kernel sentence, including its amalgamated explicatory amendment, which is probably somewhat blurred by Terkel’s literatizing practices in editing. It formulates the relationship between the clash of a terrible outer event (of the

death of the platoon sergeant) and the inner reaction of Rasmus’s identity: “[w]e got the sergeant on ours [stretchers] and, jeez, half his head was blown off. ... Here’s the mama’s boy ... and now I’m really in it” (p. 44, para. 4). The final compound of narrative kernel sentences of this narrative unit again depicts the change of Rasmus’s identity caused by the atrocious experiences of the combat day, but now another aspect of it is dominant: “I remember lying in that slit trench that night. It was a nightmare. I’d now seen what dead people look like, the color out of their face” (p. 44, para. 5). We can see that narrative kernel sentences deal with decisive outer events, with qualifications of outer events from different perspectives, with close connections between outer events and identity changes – these sentences normally are pivotal in autobiographical storytelling (if there is no fading-out from memory and/or presentation within the respective section of the autobiographical narrative) – and, they deal with the outcome of the changes of inner identity, as well as with qualifications of different aspects of identity change.

Explicatory sentences of narrative units add the “flesh” to the “bones” of the narrative kernel sentences – they qualify the experiential aspects. Firstly, they can be detailed narrations of the chain of events, especially, in narrative units with a lot of “hot action,” and/or suspense. In our narrative unit under discussion, the string of detailed narrative sentences commences after the introductory device has been produced, which is at the same time the first narrative kernel sentence:

[a]ll of a sudden we spotted a group of German soldiers. ... We were strung out, a couple of platoons. We

would be on the ground, get up on command, and start firing right into this group of Germans. We did catch them by surprise. (p. 43, para. 3)

Secondly, explicatory sentences can be narrative sentences of detail which provide predicative qualifications to narrative kernel sentences. So, the kernel sentence, “we killed most of the Germans,” is qualified by the following sentence: “[a] few might have gotten away, but we wiped them out” (p. 43, para. 3). This qualification of “wiping them out” is elaborated within the following narrative unit which depicts the “Damascus” of Rasmus – his realization of what really had happened in their “heroic” surprise attack:

[t]he whole thing might have been avoided had we been more experienced and called down in German for them to surrender. They probably would have been only too glad. Instead out of fear, there was this needless slaughter. It has the flavor of murder, doesn’t it? (p. 45, para. 2)

Thirdly, explicatory sentences can be detailing narrative sentences of slight or more obvious identity changes connected with outer events; learning (however problematic it might be) is part of such identity changes: “[i]t was a new maneuver we’d never done in training. We learned” (p. 43, para. 3). Fourthly, explicatory sentences can be a narrative description of identity changes and/or the description of the final result of identity changes (including outer aspects of the identity changes). The summary statement in the examined conclusion phase of the narrative unit exhibits this quality: “[w]e were passing people who were taking over from us, another company. ... Our uniforms were now dirty and bloody and our faces like we’d been in there

for weeks. Now *we* had the feeling: You poor innocents” (p. 44, para. 6). Explicatory sentences with the function of describing the outcomes of identity change are especially apt to serve as summary statements and devices for finishing a narrative unit. They can also generalize and qualify a narrative kernel sentence which depicted a change of the inner state of identity. This is the case of the kernel sentence, which reports Rasmus’s nightmare during the night after the combat: “I’d now seen what dead people look like, the color out of their face. I think each person in my squad went through this dream of mine” (p. 44, para. 5).

Finally, explicatory sentences can introduce and describe the “personnel” and the (web of) social relationships of the encounter to be narrated, as well as the setting, situation, and other social frames in which the encounter will take place, and they can describe the social and technical conditions under which events are happening. Strings of these sentences can be in themselves or by composition a mixture of narration and description. Thus, when Rasmus reports the recovery of the corpses of the two members of the company being killed: “[w]e had to improvise stretchers. I took off my field jacket and turned the arms inside out. We poked rifles through the arms” (p. 44, para. 4). But, these sentences can also be without any temporal threshold depicting a flux of events and/or changes of identity. Such sentences are purely descriptive, their time index is more vague than that of narrative sentences, and they do not delineate a difference of “before the event” and “after the event.” In one of the earlier narrative segments, Rasmus tells how they – the soldiers of his company and he – would stay overnight

in bombed-out buildings: “[h]ere’s a cross-section of a four-story, where every room is open to the atmosphere on one side and there’s another room that is still intact” (p. 41, para. 2). Of course, these descriptive sentences which give a physical, nature-related, and/or socio-cultural frame to the events happening (in this case just staying overnight, making yourself comfortable, and thinking about back home) are very closely tied to narrative sentences that depict the impact of the scenery on Rasmus: “[i]t was almost surreal.”

So far, I have sketched the presentational procedure of narrative units concentrating on the quite elaborate narrative rendering of Rasmus’s most ferocious combat experience and of the “irony” that the platoon sergeant had been killed. Looking especially at the kernel sentences and summary statements about Rasmus’s change of identity, one can conclude that this narrative unit exhibits, at the same time, two general features of biographical change Rasmus has to undergo, conditioned by his war experiences: (a) the aspect of becoming an experienced soldier and growing to maturity, and (b) the encounter with death and senseless killing. At the end of the narrative unit in Rasmus’s self-theoretical biographical commentary, the first aspect of identity change, that of maturation, still prevails. But, it is already challenged by the presentation activities of the background construction, which has been discussed above, and will be challenged to even a greater degree by the following narrative unit in which Rasmus has to realize – coming back to the field of combat – that the killing had probably been senseless because the German soldiers would have probably surrendered if addressed properly

(p. 44, para. 7 to p. 45, para. 3). At least some aspects of Rasmus’s belief in personal maturation seem to be hollow and self-deceptive.

The presentational procedure of the narrative units also provides devices of repair at points of implausibility and disorder within the recollections of the informant. These repair mechanisms are the background constructions. In the narrative unit having been structurally described just before, the narrative implausibility arises that the most experienced platoon sergeant of the company was killed, and almost everybody else was saved even though they were greenhorns. In addition, Rasmus has to deal with the problem that at least some soldiers of his company seemed to be happy about the death of the platoon sergeant, and he cannot totally dismiss the terrible suspicion that the platoon sergeant was intentionally killed by men of his own platoon. This would be a blatant sign of demoralization of his unit (Shibutani 1978; Schütze 1989); it would not fit at all with his predominant biographical orientation of adventurously experiencing the world and of becoming mature. It would also hint at the fact that the two action schemes Rasmus was in up to that point (the one of fighting in a just war and the one of using the military service as a touristic trip) were not quite as completely moral as he had thought before.

The interjected argumentative background construction tries to fight off a potential, irritating, background story of suspected murder of the platoon sergeant by men of Rasmus’s own platoon. But, he cannot totally dismiss or bury this possible story. After having argued: “I’m sure the guys who

said they would kill him were horrified that their wish came true” (p. 43, para. 4), he is caught again by his personal recollection, and he has to go on narratively: “[m]y best friend was leaning against a tree. We were waiting for further instructions. He had this sly grin on his face. I was so aghast. It didn’t occur to me that one of our people had done it” (p. 43, para. 5). Then, he gets the looming, but not expounded alternative background narrative of murder under control again, and – as if under an inner censorship, fighting his own experiences and feelings of suspicion – he goes on with his defensive scheme of argumentation: “I’m really sure we didn’t” (p. 43, para. 5; p. 44, para. 1).

Any background construction is empirically detectable by its impact on the main story line – it cuts the concatenation of the unfolding events. It intersperses something different. This thrown-in string of text is characterized by a totally different mode of presentation – the perspective of experiencing, the time, the line of addressed events, the way of evaluation, or even the sort of communication scheme suddenly changes. Usually, a formal device of de-focusing, contextual embedding, and presentational downgrading is used to make sure that the listener understands perfectly that now a string of talk will follow, which is just a detour from the main story line. All this is obvious at the beginning of our background structure: “[y]ou have to understand the culture of our company” (p. 43, para. 4). This “introductory” sentence turns away the attention from the main story line, addresses instead the listener, exhibits the tone of an “aside” string of talk, it changes time, topics, and experiential perspective, and – most important

in our present example – it dismisses the narrative scheme of communication and instead enacts the communicative scheme of argumentation (cf. Schütze 1987:65-79).

I have contended already that within the narrative unit under scrutiny (that about the death of the platoon sergeant) the controlling or prevailing communicative scheme of the background construction is an argumental one. Although interspersed with strings of description and narration, which serve as elements of empirical evidence, its essential presentational activities and its internal dynamics are purely argumental, except for the string of narrative talk immediately mentioned before, which depicts a chunk of recollected experience of disgust and suspicion (about the friend with a “sly grin on his face”).

In my present article, I will not undertake a meticulous analysis of the internal dynamics of this scheme of argumentation. It is enough to understand here that the basic activity of it again and again is to fight off the “haunting” proposition (not spelled out, but only implicitly being evident) that the platoon sergeant was killed by men of Rasmus’s own platoon and that his company was in a serious state of demoralization. Pursuing his argumental fight, Rasmus employs the following argumental basic activities: (a) stating counter-propositions, like: “I am sure we didn’t [kill him],” (b) formulating general reasons for the counter-propositions, which either suggest that Rasmus’s company was a normal one and had the normal amount of demoralization (“I am sure our company was typical” [p. 44, para. 2]), or point to the essential unexpectedness, irony, and

brutalization features of war experience in general, and not to the special demoralization of Rasmus’s platoon (“[a]dded to the horror of our first dead is that he’s the one all of us hated so much [p. 44, para. 1]), and (c) attempting to give empirical evidence for his repeated counter-proposition, evidence which only provides examples for the general feature of “normal demoralization” (e.g., “[w]e [i.e., our company] had X percent of self-inflicted wounds” [p. 44, para. 2]) and do not empirically back any specific refutation of Rasmus’s looming alternative “self-accusation” that the demoralization of his military unit would have been extraordinary. It might be concluded that, in this background construction, which originally started as a repair device for narrative implausibility, Rasmus desperately and unsuccessfully attempts to argue away the hurting collective-demoralization features (which are not “just normal” and relatively harmless) and personal guilt features of war he had to encounter during his presence within the European war theatre.

So far, I have dealt with background constructions as repair devices within the presentational procedure of narrative units. As mentioned earlier, the research step of structural description attempts to reconstruct the sequential and internal features of narrative units and embedded background constructions in order to accurately portray the “authentic” (“then” actual and later worked-through and reworked) biographical experiences the biography incumbent had to undergo. Dealing with self-theoretical autobiographical commentaries, too, the structural description additionally tries to spell out the argumental activities of the informant relating himself towards (parts of) his biog-

raphy and identity. Of course, the latter sub-step of structural description is only possible in relation to the narrative flow of biographical experiences reconstructed already. Otherwise, self-theoretical statements would always tend to be interpreted autonomously, that is, methodically treated and understood separately from the context of the textual presentation of the narrative. Self-theoretical statements have always to be tied (a) to their presentational function within the narrative unit and (b) through this to their genesis, development, change, and decline in former and present biographical processes. [This tying and embedding can be called the methodological principle of “pragmatic refraction.”]

The empirically most visible road signs that analytically lead to the actually experienced biographical structural processes as rendered by any extempore narrative of personal experiences are to trace down and follow up the supra-segmental markers which organize the autobiographical text in compounds of narrative units. These compounds represent phases in life where a certain structural process of biography is the dominant organization principle of how the biography incumbent addresses and handles his life and identity. Of course, there can also be a contest between several structural processes; then, the text will reveal a mixture of supra-segmental markers of different biographical processes. But, still, in most cases, one system of markers pointing to a certain single biographical process will be dominant. At least for a while, then, it reflects the frail dominance of a certain structural process during a limited, naturally segmented passage of former life course experiences of the informant.

At the same time, supra-segmental markers expose the *general* features of the temporally prolonged ordering devices of biography (i.e., the basic mechanisms of structural processes of biography), as well as the *unique*, very personal features of the life course experience and organization of the informant. As biography incumbent, for instance, throughout her or his actual life course, she or he employs a general grammar of relating to her or his self-identity and of organizing her or his life experientially, orientationally, and practically. Concurrently, the biography incumbent invests these elementary organization devices with the very specific features of her or his unique life and her or his unique orientation and style of activity towards it. Both aspects, the general and the unique, are expressed by means of supra-segmental markers. Supra-segmental markers together with the joint forces of those unit markers within the introductory and closing parts of narrative units, which as densely formulated preface and summary statements are packed with general depictions and evaluations of the essentials of the informant’s life course, exhibit the most elementary, most empirically based, and most axiomatic – and that means at least partially: most non-reflected and least controllable abstract predicates in terms of which the informant as biography incumbent envisions her or his life course.

The Most Central Outcome of Structural Description: Delineation of Biographical Processes and Their Compounds

In the very process of identifying the narrative units, the supra-segmental compounds of them are recognized, too. This is quite easily accomplished because

– in addition to the obvious fits of narrative units with each other – supra-segmental compounds are marked by very elaborate and obvious segmenting procedures of the narrator at the temporal boundaries of their presentational dominance during the course of narration. Supra-segmental boundary markers as special versions (in introductory and ending position) of the supra-segmental markers already mentioned, in addition to and beyond other symbolic means, depict the stretched out structural processes of biography very clearly. In their special way of enactment and interpretation, these biographical structural processes are the most unique and “personal” ordering devices for individual biographies. On the other hand, their basic constitutive mechanisms universally occur in biographies of all kinds. The backbones of structural processes of biography are specific activity relationships of the biography incumbent to the pertinent phases of her or his life (cf. Schütze 1981; 1984; Riemann and Schütze 1991). There are four of these basic relationships:

- a. Biographical action schemes. They represent the intentional principle of long range (“biographically”) planned social action regarding one’s own life course. By enacting a biographical action scheme, the biography incumbent does something specific with his or her own life and identity by intention.
- b. Institutionalized schedules for organizing biographies. They represent the normative principle of being oriented at and controlled by institutional expectations regarding the life course in general or certain phases or aspects of it (e.g., following an organizational career).

- c. Biographical trajectories. They represent the principle of being overwhelmed by superior, for the biography incumbent, not controllable, heteronomous, mostly “outer”¹⁵ events of the life course (as a serious disease, as the immediate impact of war, as losing one’s occupational position, etc.), and of reacting to the conditional relevances posed by them. The basic experiential mode of biographical trajectories is suffering.
- d. Biographical metamorphoses. They represent the surprise principle of unexpectedly encountering new enriching features (i.e., creative abilities) of identity, as well as enabling potentials of life course situations. They cannot be reached directly by pre-planned steps of biographical activity.

Now, here is just one part of the outcome of the structural description of the Rasmus interview – just that part, which is necessary for me to mention in order to be able to continue my overall argument how to pursue biography analysis and how to state what is the case in the life history of Rasmus. As far as it is revealed through his partial narrative account – “partial” since it does not tell his life before and after the war – Rasmus’s military and war phase of biography contains the follow-up of dominance of three modes of biographical experiencing: (1) a biographical action scheme of adventurously encountering new life situations (using the metaphor of touristic travel [p. 39, para. 3 to p. 41, para. 6]); (2) a trajectory

¹⁵ Of course, those non-controllable, heteronomous, adverse events of the life course can even start in the “inner” social and identity sphere of the biography incumbent – such as disastrous distortions of important personal relationships to significant others or serious mental disorders (as analyzed in Riemann 1987); but even then they are “strange” and in a certain sense “foreign” within, and in a relationship to, the personal identity territory of the biography incumbent.

experience (the experience of being conditioned by overwhelming outer adverse experiences caused by the war and of becoming a sufferer, this without the capacity for effective intentional planning for one’s own [p. 41, para. 6 to p. 45, para. 3]); and (3) taking part in a collective action scheme of conducting a righteous war (p. 45, para. 4 to p. 47, para. 2). [But, it is important to mention that this is just the sequence of *dominance* of biographical structural processes; as sub-dominant and, partly, latent processes all three structural processes stretch over the whole gamut of Rasmus’s war phase of life.]

The pivotal biographical action scheme that Rasmus embarks on is that of adventurously encountering new situations in life. This general type of action scheme is always invoked if and when the biography incumbent feels stuck with the shallowness and boredom of his or her old life situation in which the then dominant biographical structural process no longer delivers productive biographical meaning. Thus, the biography incumbent starts to search for new, sometimes even strange, life situations, which are creative for providing fresh or even unprecedented biographical themes, which might possibly make sense. Job changes, adventurous travels, new social worlds, new socio-cultural milieus, and new personally shaped social relationships could be such creative life situations. Very often, the biographical action scheme of adventurously encountering new situations in life serves as an open avenue to biographical metamorphosis processes. Although Rasmus does not talk about its outcome, since his narrative is thematically focused on the war only, it is quite obvious that he undergoes a dynamic and creative change of identity, a metamorphosis during

and immediately after the war – he expresses his maturation from the state of a mama’s boy into a state of a decided, circumspect “leadership” man who is able to take risks (p. 38, para. 1, p. 39, para. 1) and to look behind the facades of personal presentations (p. 40, para. 1, p. 48, para. 3); he probably goes to university what he presumably did not plan before his military service, and he develops the capacities of an extremely competent business executive.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is just a conjecture, which is based on the following phenomena:

- a) on the argumental, self-theoretical parts of Rasmus’s rendering, it is obvious that Rasmus uses the language of metamorphosis in his self-theoretical biographical commentaries, especially, within the introductory parts and in the pre-coda and coda parts of his narrative but also throughout the story line, wherever biographical commentaries come up (especially those which are tied to the explanations and argumentations within the two background constructions). Rasmus’s argumental metamorphosis rhetoric is concerned with his process of maturation allegedly accelerated and partly even only made possible through the impact of war experiences. So, he announces in his story introduction: “I was a skinny, gaunt kind of mama’s boy. I was going to gain my manhood then” (p. 39, para. 1). But, these theoretical reflections are only dimly based in the segmental and supra-segmental organization of the main story line; i.e., he can only recollect faint memories of actual identity changes of metamorphosis in that special (war service) version of adolescent maturation as formulated in his self-theoretical biographical commentaries. [There seems to be some discrepancy, too, between the factual war experiences as rendered by the strings of narrative sentences of Rasmus’s autobiographical account and his activities of self-reflection and theorizing. This does not mean that there is not any metamorphosis processes involved in Rasmus’s new period of life, but they are less obvious than Rasmus assumes himself, and they are very much tied to the *dominant* biographical structural processes in Rasmus’s life in military and war service, which are two biographical action schemes and a trajectory.];
- b) on the description which, inserted into the interview text, Terkel gives of the personal appearance of Robert Rasmus (p. 38, para. 2); and
- c) on the general metamorphosis perspective of Terkel’s introduction to his volume, where the Rasmus case plays a central role as an example for the collective “growth change,” which the war allegedly caused on the American society (Terkel 1984: 6-12, 15-16).

Of course, the last two groundings of the metamorphosis thesis are just Terkel’s point of view: his interpretation and typification. And the assumption of Rasmus’s going to college is even less grounded. About that there is no hint in the text. But, we know from many other narrative accounts in the Terkel’s volume, and in my own corpus of narrative interviews, how decisive the GI Bill was for the college education of the homecoming soldiers, which in many cases had not been expected before the outbreak of the war.

Biographical action schemes of adventurously encountering new life situations are paradoxical insofar as the focus of their intentional planning and forecasting is very vague, although a grammar of action is employed for their organization and handling. [This grammar of action provides an activity sequence of formulating and announcing goals, of attempting to get consultation and legitimating from significant others, of considering the means for realizing the action scheme, of choosing one way of realization over others, of beginning to perform the core activities of the action scheme, of assessing the initial effectiveness of performance and its impact on identity, of performing further steps of the core activities of the action scheme and assessing their effectiveness, of formulating the results of the action scheme, and of evaluating its over-all performance.] The goals and steps of the biographical action scheme of adventuring into the world are only vaguely sensed, but as soon as they have been grasped, the biography incumbent starts to think that she or he had always known clearly what was going to happen (cf. Schütze 1981:70-88, 133-138).

Rasmus wants to escape from the narrow confines of his protected and parochial adolescent life. The war and the military service offer creative life situations for finding new biographical themes, although Rasmus does not know what these themes will be. Rasmus's biographical action scheme of adventuring into the world is expressed explicitly in the introduction to his narrative: "I had this great sense of adventure. My gosh, going across the ocean, seeing the armies, the excitement of it. I was there" (p. 38, para. 6). Rasmus invests it with subjectively unique biographical features by interpreting the action scheme as his becoming a tourist. Of course, here, again, Rasmus uses an ele-

ment from the common inventory of American (and European) culture, but it is used in a personal, original, and creative way. This evaluation is based on the consideration that Rasmus has to realize his touring, paradoxically, via going to war as a soldier, haunted by the risk of death, and via the bureaucratic army organization. He remarks, for example: "[i]t was wonderful. I was preoccupied with staying alive and doing my job, but it seemed, out of the corner of my eye, I was constantly fascinated with the beauty of the German forests and medieval bell towers" (p. 39, para. 5). On the one hand, Rasmus symbolically schematizes his going to war as a touristic trip, on the other, he himself characterizes the impact of this schematization on his daily life and his biographical experience during his presence within the European war theatre as paradoxical, theatrical, schizophrenic. Just one of several possible quotations: "I was sort of schizophrenic all through this period. I was a participant, scared out of my wits. But I was also acutely aware of how really theatrical and surreal it was" (p. 41, para. 5).¹⁷

¹⁷ At first glance, at least from the European point of view, the symbolic schematization of one's going to war as a touristic trip seems to be extraordinary. But, I also found this stylistic feature in several of my American narrative interviews. Here is the example of the extended narrative interview with Joe Martini: (a) traveling to the training camp: "I went through lot ... of the southern part of the U.S. ... I'm fascinated by things, you know, I see and hear—and things I had read about—(eh) either—seen in movies, or—read in books, or—people had told me about. So I was very interested in ... the whole trip" (13, 21-34), (b) traveling to the embarkation harbor: "[a]gain, this was another—major experience, 'cause again, we were traveling.—And again, there was a s-sight-seeing trip" (16, 52-54), (c) being in a preparation camp in France: "[a]nd we were out in many parts of the countryside, which was again, was another—tremendous experience for me, which I ... just—felt this was—wonderful! But—/ wonderful, yes, but with some, you know, reserve feelings" (18, 40-45), (d) being an occupation soldier in Germany after the war: "I liked what I was doing ... (ah) Again, because of the—variety of things, and the—the fact, that it was, you know, it was—a lot of things to see, and—i—it was a certain amount like, like a, like a *tourist* type thing, up to a point" (38, 20-24). Of course, Joe Martini, too, experiences the particularly *paradoxical* character of this adventuring action scheme, which is framed by trajectory experiences. He, too, encounters these paradoxical phenomena as subjectively unique.

The trajectory experience of war is provoked by the impact of overwhelming collective events on the biography incumbent, events which were not expectable, controllable, or accountable, and which do not obey the usual reciprocity rules of social interaction. Of course, the pivotal aspect of experiencing war events is the always felt danger that they can cause one's own death and that of fellow interactants. [In this aspect, war experiences are comparable to life-threatening illnesses.]¹⁸ The feeling of non-controllability and of constant fear downgrade the capacity of the biography incumbent to plan – be it every day affairs or stretches of the life course. The paralysis of formerly commanded action capacities renders the subject strange to himself or herself – he or she is unable to control situations which had been formerly controllable; he or she does not understand what is happening, and starts to lose self-esteem. Being trapped in such a trajectory situation for a long time without escape can cause transmutations of the trajectory process. Now, its impact on the life situation and identity of the biography incumbent widens – he or she starts to doubt his or her own moral integrity, starts to suspect that the bonds of social solidarity, even in his or her *own* social collectivity, have been destroyed and no one can be trusted, and starts to act towards others on the basis of stra-

¹⁸ The sociological trajectory concept was developed by Anselm Strauss, Barney Glaser, and Shizuko Fagerhaugh when they analyzed work activities of nurses and medical doctors dealing with the control of terminal and chronic illnesses and the respective care of patients. [See especially: Strauss and Glaser 1970; Strauss et al. 1985, chap. 2]. Later on, Riemann and Schütze (1991) applied the trajectory concept to biographical processes proper, and Schütze (1989; 1992:96f) utilized it for the analysis of processes of collective disorder and moral deterioration, as well as of the entanglement of one's individual biography and identity in it.

tegic suspicion and calculation, or even on the basis of symbolic or literal violence, and not on moral rules.¹⁹

Not only Rasmus's experiences in the framework of the biographical action scheme of adventuring into the world but also his trajectory experiences are addressed within the introductory part of his narrative. For example, "I was acutely aware, being a rifleman, the odds were high that I would be killed. At one level, animal fear" (p. 38, para. 6). Rasmus's narrative account of his (individual) trajectory experiences is especially enlightening insofar as it demonstrates that most sub-processes of the (individual) trajectory organization of biography that I have alluded to are happening even in cases where the shaping of *collective* events is not that of an all-encompassing collective trajectory (as it was for the already defeated German enemy), but that of a quite controlled and successful collective action scheme involving the fighting and winning of a perceived just war (as it was for the Allied Forces).

The core of Rasmus's extempore narrative of his biographical encounter of war is the presentational intermixture between the style of rendering experiences in terms of both a biographical action scheme of adventuring into the world and a biographical trajectory. This stylistic intermixture

¹⁹ The *demoralization* transformation of collective trajectory of war, on the one hand, and the *moral-distortion* transformation of it, on the other, are meticulously dealt with in Schütze (1989). See also: Shibutani (2000, chap. XI). The term "moral distortion" (*Entmoralisierung*) means the intentional, radical, and systematic breaking of moral principles in contrast to the more ordinary demoralization phenomena of losing hope and courage, of starting mistrust, of feeling paralyzed.

reflects that in Rasmus's course of actual life experiences the action scheme and trajectory modes of organizing biography were fighting each other. At the beginning the "travel scheme" reigns; after facing possible combat contact with the German enemy (this was symbolically marked for Rasmus by the crossing of a pontoon bridge, perhaps across the Rhine), the trajectory mode dominates. And after the interlude of Rasmus's taking part in the collective action scheme of fighting the just war as a prevailing biographical experience, the biographical action scheme of adventuring into the world becomes dominant again, at least in the sense that it is declared finally dominant by virtue of the evaluations and biographical commentaries connected with the coda of Rasmus's account. The latter does not mean that the biographical action scheme was the more intense and the more lifetime covering and live experience carrying structural process in Rasmus's biography. It only expresses the fact that in later life Rasmus did work through his war experience mainly in terms of a biographical action scheme of adventuring into the world and that he then tended to fade out the trajectory aspect from his biographical attention.

What is most interesting for our ongoing discussion of the Rasmus narrative, too, is that the (trajectory type) conditional mode of experiencing the war, which is so overwhelmingly evident in many German autobiographical narratives – although it is somewhat marked as important in Rasmus's narrative, too – does not overshadow and dominate the other (i.e., the intentional) modes of his biographical experiencing.

Comparing Background Constructions as Unintended Expressions of Disorders of Experience, on the One Hand, and Global Argumental Commentaries and Evaluations as Self-Theoretical Devices for the Interpretive Ordering of Biography, on the Other

Turning now to the sub-units of Rasmus's story line: its two background constructions are especially interesting. The first tells the story of the group of peers to which Rasmus should have belonged, but from which he was separated because of quite an ordinary sickness (p. 39, para. 5 to p. 40, para. 1). Its members underwent tragic experience: many died. Even today, the narrator has the feeling that something very important, that is, a truly fateful, tragic experience, is missing in his life. Possibly, there is some envy for the comrades, envisioned as heroes who underwent their fateful experiences, and some guilt feelings that, as compared to them, things were too easy for him, which is lurking behind the facade of his storytelling.

The second background story deals with the death of the hated platoon sergeant (p. 43, para. 3 to p. 44, para. 3). Although Rasmus stresses that he has no doubt the sergeant was killed by the Germans, he cannot really dismiss his doubts in this direction. This particular background story deals with the possibility of dirty, guilty hands in the American army, and with the gloomy outlook that the conduct of at least some American soldiers (or "nice boys" as seen by the general American public) during the war was not as good as it ought to be. Background constructions very often deal with faded out (cf. Schütze 1992) or even repressed experiences and

mental activities. Questions not to be asked would be: Am I lacking heroic experiences and virtues which many of my dead and my living comrades are able to possess? And, was the war even for "us" dirtier than I would like to think of it?

Now, it is interesting to compare the biographical evaluations of the beginning and the end of the storytelling (p. 38, para. 1 to p. 38, para. 2; p. 48, para. 3) with the two background constructions just discussed briefly. In order to recall the tone of these evaluations, I will quote (again) one sentence both from the introductory part and from the closing section of the Rasmus narrative: "[i]n business, there'll be times when I say, this really worries the heck out of me, but it's really minor compared to having to do a river crossing under fire" (p. 38, para. 1), and: "[i]n a short period of time, I had the most tremendous experiences of all of life: of fear, of jubilation, of misery, of hope, of comradeship, and of the endless excitement, the theatrics of it" (p. 48, para. 3). Comparing the background constructions and the central biographical evaluations of Rasmus's war account, an interesting question is: Do these argumental evaluations (carried out by means of generalized reflective sentences of argumental character representing the "subject theory" of the informant) really cover the factual flow of biographical experiences as actually, at least partially, recapitulated within the concatenation of narrative units?

One gets the impression that the biographical evaluations cover the whole gamut of Rasmus's (two) intentional action schemes enacted and carried out during his time in the war – experiences of adven-

ture, of community, of encounters with the "truth features" of reality, and of righteousness can be found in the argumental evaluations of the story announcement and in the coda commentary. On the other hand, the argumental evaluations of the story preface and the story coda defocus Rasmus's experiences of severe suffering and his encounters with guilt and evil within the "we"-community of fellow American soldiers.

Especially intriguing is Rasmus's theoretical commentary in pre-coda position (p. 47, para. 3 to p. 48, para. 2). As I mentioned already, pre-coda biographical commentaries normally reflect central self-theoretical concerns of the informant as biography incumbent, not only during the present period of his or her life but also during the time span depicted in his or her narrative account. They can even reveal the informant as biography incumbent quarreling with himself or herself. The first third of Rasmus's pre-coda biographical commentary is (p. 47, para. 3 and para. 4):

I've reflected on why people my age and with my experience don't have that spontaneous willingness to be part of the nuclear freeze. It's the sense that the Germans were willing to lose millions of men. And they did. Every German house we went to, there would be black-bordered pictures of sons and relatives. You could tell that most of them died on the Eastern front. And the Russians lost twenty million.

Later, we were back in the States being retrained for the Japanese invasion. The first nuclear bomb was dropped. We ended halfway across the Pacific. How many of us would have been killed on the mainland if there were no bomb? Someone like me has this specter.

Rasmus's pre-coda self-theoretical biographical commentary might be sketched roughly as follows: we, Americans, are not fighters and sufferers of endurance. Because we cannot win a conventional war against a nation of enduring fighters and sufferers (like the Russians and the Vietnamese would be), we have to resort to technological substitutes of classical war (with its unavoidable encounters of man against man) in order to build America into an unconquerable fortress. The most obvious technological substitute, of course, would be a machinery of nuclear weapons. Throughout his argument, Rasmus seems to be lacking an ability to "take the role" or experiential perspective "of the other" (Mead 1934: chap. 20, 33, and appendix III), that is, of the potential victims of such a technologized war machinery which is prone to mass destruction. Yet, he has been able to take into account the sufferings of wounded and dead Germans as individual combatants sufferings he could realize as soon as the helmets of the enemy soldiers were off (cf. p. 44f). But, he cannot translate this experience and its related emotional and cognitive conclusions into notions on the level of conflicting collective aggregates or even conflicting we-communities, that is, mental in-groups such as whole nations that are – and here his thinking lacks both some down-to-earth sense and cohesion – still consisting of individual members, mostly non-combatants, sentenced to death by technological war. In addition, he cannot transfer another important result of his war experience – a result derived from many encounters with suffering or dead Americans and Germans – that every victor might become a victim soon, onto the level of interaction between collective social units (e.g., nations as America and Russia) in nuclear war.

Analytical Abstraction of the Rasmus Narrative

The research step of analytical abstraction is meant as an endeavor to extract systematically the general and the distinctive features of the narrated life history and of the experiential, theoretical, and evaluative relationships of the informant with his own life history. There are two explorative questions to be asked:

- a. What (rather general) portions, aspects, features, and socio-biographical mechanisms of the analyzed stream of experiences in the scrutinized autobiographical text or interview would supposedly occur in other autobiographical texts or interviews, too? This is the question of *common generalities shared with* the life experiences of other biography incumbents.
- b. What are *distinctive* features and generalities of the stream of biographical experiences revealed by the autobiographical text – distinctive for this specific biography incumbent? This is the question of notable specificities of the analyzed case.

Normally, the text material of the case as embodied in the autobiographical account or interview repeatedly reveals the notable specific features in some sort of self-generalization within the case. What is here in operation is not just the "personal style," but in addition the specific "construction principle" of the case. [And the very fact of recurrence shows that the phenomenon addressed is not just one accidental happening.] It is plausible that a first step in answering the second explanatory question would therefore be to pull together the recurring case specific features and elements of the text materials (including self-theoretical statements)

and to conduct systematic "generalizations within the case" (Geertz 1973).²⁰ After this, in a second step, the stable phenomena as results of generalizations within the case should be studied more closely. This is done to discover the less obvious, the abstract²¹ underlying general mechanisms, which this case still shares with others (in addition to the obvious ones, which were already stated in answering the first question), as well as to detect the distinctive features, which make the case really special. A closer examination can then come up

²⁰ Cf. Geertz (1973:26). Of course, Geertz applies this concept not to single biographies (or single autobiographical texts), but to the "theoretical peculiarities" of "clusters of symbolic acts" of local societies or cultures as collective identities. Although Geertz's cases are collective identities, his methodological concept of generalization within the case is applicable to individual, biographical cases, too. The interpretive procedures or analytical acts of (a) "inferring (presumptive) signifiers" from the empirical case materials and "placing them within an intelligible frame," which makes the order of symbolic activities understandable as partial patterns of (collective or individual) identity and its subareas, as well as of (b) "scanning" the empirical case materials for additional "theoretical peculiarities" on the base of the symbolic patterns, which have already been inferred and understood, are pivotal in biography analysis, too.

²¹ "Abstract mechanisms" in the sense that they are not obvious and only detectable through the systematic comparison of repetitive, similar, and contrastive phenomena within the case. Some are tied to specific paradoxes of the unfolding case, e.g., being at the same time an enchanted touristic traveler and a sufferer particularly prone to death. Abstract mechanisms are here, i.e., the openness of adolescent identity to biographical and social otherness, as well as its proneness to the fading out of possible suffering and death. An additional abstract mechanism connected with it is the (specific historical state of) the informant's (open or closed) symbolic universe of the (national or group) collectivity at the very time in former life when she or he, as actor and biography incumbent, enthusiastically has encountered the otherness of social life in the form of living in foreign countries, of meeting culturally different interaction partners, of getting into strange situations, of exploring one's own unexpected inner developments, etc. Generally speaking, the term "abstract mechanisms" refers to the self-generalizing processes of biography and autobiographical work which imply or even demonstratively unearth "underlying" (i.e., formerly unnoticed or even unseen, "unconscious") patterns, which appear again and again during the life course of the biography incumbent herself or himself, as well as partially, too, in the life courses of other persons (being real or possible interaction partners). Not only the impact of collective (social and historical) processes but also patterns of generality (which are abstractable from single interaction situations, single periods of life, single life courses, and even single collective cultures) occur in any particular biography (as the unique history of an individual) and its autobiographical rendering. Also see footnote 28.

with some abstract conclusions about what is really unique in the case under scrutiny – "unique" at least in the subjective experience and interpretation of the biography incumbent – and the general conditions for this uniqueness should be stated hypothetically. A related question, which should also be faced, is what is openly or covertly shared with other, in many aspects, different cases as members of the same social category. The distinctiveness of this social category as compared with alternative ones should be stated in terms of its abstract and generalized contrastive features as distinguishers between the different single cases of the general social category.

Common Generalities Shared with Other Biographies

Regarding the Rasmus case, answers to the first question might be as follows. The mixture of adventure and sense of mortal danger might be a common feature of (especially) male war accounts. As a concatenation of central collective events impinging on nations and their sub-units, war changes social situations of life, enhancing the feelings of community and offering combatants the chance to enact (or in the case of war experiences probably better termed as: to succumb to) biographical action schemes of adventurously experiencing new aspects of life especially what one could name the "truth features" of life. It is somewhat a sad conclusion, but at least parts of war experiences seem to yield opportunities for enhancing the sensitivity for life and for encountering the truth-values of life, of nature, of social relationships, and of biography.

In this positive regard of encountering the truth-values of life, the war experience can become

a pivotal, intensively experienced time in life, or even the turning point in biography (which, on the other hand, could possibly result in early death. A moving literary account of this is Hemmingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*). Of course, it could also become a turning point of life in many other, much sadder senses: losing the husband, becoming inflicted by serious injuries and diseases, losing faith in life and in mankind, getting killed before "real," self-autonomous, life has started, et cetera.

I have seen the impact of war experiences on enhancing one's sensibility for life even in many German autobiographical narrative interviews with old German informants who had been young adults in World War II and who had experienced – contrary to Rasmus – a collective trajectory of the systematic moral-distortion kind.²² It is not confined to the experiences of those who have won a war. Even in the thematically not war oriented, but differently thematized (e.g., on unemployment, illness, alcoholism, etc.) life-course spanning narrative interviews or topically totally unfocused, "broad scale" autobiographical interviews²³ with

²² This even was the case when intensive suffering and entanglement in collective moral deterioration had taken place. Cf. the analysis of the interviews of Georg Fulda in Schütze (1989) and of Hermann in Schütze (1992).

²³ My narrative interviews normally cover to whole life-span of the informant. Even if the interview is thematically focused on war experiences (or other peculiar experiences), I, nevertheless, invite the informant to tell her or his *whole* life story since otherwise, the biographical meaning of those experiences and their impact on the later life of the informant would not get transparent (e.g., the Georg Fulda interview in Schütze [1989]). This explanation in the course of the interview introduction is always plausible to the informant. In addition, I conducted many narrative interviews (of full life-span length) thematically focused on other topics than war (e.g., becoming an artist, becoming an alcoholic, etc.), which, nevertheless, draw heavily on war experiences. Even in later parts of these interviews, there was no stimulation from my side to thematize war experiences (e.g., partially,

Germans who had been young adults in World War II, the war experiences are told in a very lively ("episodic") mood with inserts describing interaction situations, ongoing conversations, personality characteristics of persons, et cetera. Instead, earlier and later parts of the biography incumbents' lives *before and after the war* are told in a quite condensed style and depressed mood. [In some of these cases the recollection of war experiences may take two-thirds of the whole autobiographical account or more, whereas their actual extension in lifetime was just one-seventh or less.]

Distinctive Features of the Rasmus Account

A remarkable distinctive aspect of Rasmus's autobiographical account of his life during World War II seems to be his tendential de-focusation of the aspects of combat "dirty work," of encounters of immorality and brutality within the boundaries of the community of "we-people," of becoming guilty oneself, of personal suffering and fear as a human being especially "prone to death," and expecting in anguish to leave behind persons who would suffer desperately. I do not contend that these tragic and

the Hermann interview in Schütze [1992]; see footnote 4 of Schütze [1992:206]). In methodological terms, especially *their* narrative rendering of war experiences is most valuable because by this it is proven that the high biographical impact of war experiences, its "watershed character" in many autobiographical accounts of old people is by no means an interview artifact caused by the interview introduction and/or by an assumed public interest. Thirdly, I did narrative interviews in which the informants were just asked to tell their complete life because it would seem to be very interesting for me (to a certain degree, that happened in the Hermann interview, too, in Schütze [1992]; see footnote 4, p. 206 of that article). Those interviews demonstrate that the life course as such is a cognitive gestalt which can be told, i.e., is a narrative topic. [But, in normal social science research projects, except projects on aging and of oral history, which might naturally deal with the "whole life course," such a broad thematization of the interview topic is not possible since the informants generally expect a substantively specified interview topic.]

fateful aspects are not observable in the Rasmus account, but they typically occur in embedded background constructions as reflections or repercussions of unsuccessful tendencies of de-focusation, or in narrative stretches which are ramified by the presentation of dominant experiences of adventure according to the enacted biographical action scheme of adventuring into new situations and aspects in life. And what is most conspicuous about the treatment of fateful and evil war experiences is that they are not dealt with in Rasmus's biographical evaluations and commentaries in a significant and straightforward way. The latter constitute the textual representation of Rasmus's autobiographical self-theory.

A related twofold question is: a) what is the impact of personal war experiences as such on biography? and b) what is the imprint of the symbolic universe²⁴ which Rasmus did *formerly* orient to in certain phases of his life (especially, during the war) or presently orients to?

It is obvious that symbolic-universe categories of society at large and/or of specific social units or social worlds furnish cognitive and evaluative grids, screens, and frames for the personal interpretation of war experiences. Narrators very often differentiate by their style of rendering and by their

²⁴ According to Berger and Luckmann (1966:88-90), symbolic universes provide ultimate and integrated meaning for a person's collective life and biography. They are the integrative structure of the collective stock of knowledge shared by the members of an inclusive (group, milieu, societal) life world. As social facts and social forces (*faits sociaux*, in the sense of Durkheim), they provide the ultimate meaning and "logic" of the collective stock of knowledge since they deal with the relationship between the course of personal identity, on the one hand, and the course of society (as well as other inclusive collectivities) and its (their) collective history (histories), on the other.

formal representation techniques between, on the one hand, "then" interpretations and evaluations (in the Rasmus case, conclusions having been effective during his time in World War II) and, on the other, the "now" elucidations and assessments (i.e., conclusions being valid during the time of the interview) within an encompassing and systematic self-theoretical framework. Categories of symbolic universe feeding into biographical interpretation and self-theorizing might possibly be the community and collective self-understanding of "we, the Americans" as a nation, set apart from other nations by spatial distance and technological cultivation; the "we" feeling and community of the comrades as members of the same generational age group, raised under the same collective socio-historical conditions (e.g., the Great Depression), and having been imbued with the same type of cultural values and orientations; the community and tradition of the army as an encompassing organization to which one belongs and which might even become one's home; et cetera.

Such "solidarity" categories of symbolic universe, which are relevant and functional for the biographical interpretation and theoretical explanation of certain personal and collective experiences, in our case – war experiences, should not be stated axiomatically, but explored empirically in the text material of the case, for example, in the Rasmus material, the universe categories of "we, the Americans," and "we, the comrades" are empirically present, whereas the universe category of "we, the army" is missing. [The latter is also missing in many of my German materials. The fact that for many soldiers, especially private soldiers and non-commissioned

officers, bonding mechanisms of peer relationship were much more important than the membership in the army organization as such, was of pivotal relevance for maintaining the *esprit de corps* of the army (cf. Schütze 1989).]

The idea which comes to my mind after looking into the Rasmus material is that categories of symbolic universe might play some important role in the overall theoretical interpretation and “working through” of war experiences, as well as in the focusing and de-focusing of important sections of biographical war experiences. [This perhaps more than in the respective treatment of other life experiences because the feelings and emotions in war are extremely intense.] And the theoretical interpretation or reinterpretation by means of symbolic universes could feed into attitudes towards policies on international affairs, multinational cooperation, and defense. My first, very preliminary, expectation is that for present-day European informants it would be much more complicated (i.e., implying more explanatory and legitimatory work) to draw neatly organized, self-assertive, and self-contained, as well as action-oriented and strongly-minded policy conclusions from biographical war experiences than Rasmus does because in Europe there is not such an efficient symbolic universe available of the kind as “we, the people set apart”.²⁵

But, that is just a crude speculation, which can only be differentiated and tested by systematically

²⁵ But, see the category of European mental space (Schütze and Schröder-Wildhagen 2012) as derived from the joint “EUROIDENTITIES” research project conducted during the years 2008-2011. The “EuroIdentities” research project was funded by the EU’s 7th Framework Program under Grant Agreement no. 213998. General Publications: Robert Miller and Graham Day (2012); Kaja Kaźmierska (2011).

comparing autobiographical materials of American and European informants. And the outcome would surely reveal a rather complicated picture, without any simple contrast propositions about “there the Americans” and “here the Europeans.” The respective theoretical model would deal with different types of personal and collective biographical experiences of war and how they shape the categories of symbolic universe for orienting and legitimating social life and politics; with the different types of symbolic universe categories and systems themselves and how they, in turn, exert their impact on biographical interpretations of war experiences; and with the orientational, explanatory, and legitimating power of biographical interpretations of war experiences to shape, in turn, the attitudes towards policies on international relationships, multinational cooperation, and defense. Very different webs of relationships between personal and collective war experiences, symbolic universes, biographical interpretations, and attitudes towards those large-scale policies would be found in each country under scrutiny. But, the more specific questions of the alternative orientational and legitimating functions of symbolic universes are partly beyond the step of analytical abstraction already since the whole systematics and the structural conditions of these functions of symbolic universes need contrastive comparisons in order to be studied in their alternative social contexts.

The Sub-Steps of Analytical Abstraction

The step of analytical abstraction always starts with spelling out the overall biographical structuring of the life course as revealed in the autobiographical

narrative account. One cannot do this elaborately with the Rasmus material because it is basically confined to the war experiences of the informant. But, looking at the segmental and supra-segmental markers of the narrative, it is clear to me that the overall experiential frame of Rasmus’s encounter with war, which has much impact on Rasmus’s later biographical sense-making practices, is a biographical action scheme of adventurously searching for new situations and aspects of life, that is, to open up metamorphosis processes. This type of biographical action scheme is noted for its capacity to reveal new sources of creativity, to furnish new personal capacities, to let the biography incumbent find a “red thread” in life. Rasmus states that his personal war experiences had a great positive impact on his life; through it he detected his own personal strengths, “matured,” and was later probably much more decided regarding his further education and civilian career.

The next sub-step of the analytical abstraction is to spell out the relationships between biographical processes and social (interactional and collective) processes (Kłoskowska 2001; Bertaux 2006). In this regard, we learn from the Rasmus material that the social processes in the American army of World War II allowed for encounters with oneself – for individualization and personal growth; at least in the (very real) personal experiences of Rasmus, the army did not function as a depersonalizing total institution.²⁶ [These attributes could quite frequently be found in autobiographical narrative accounts of West-Germans telling about their experiences of having been drafted into the *Bundeswehr*, before it

²⁶ But, see as a counter example Shibutani’s analytically dense report on the collective demoralization of a Japanese American (Nisei) military unit in World War II (1978).

became a professional army without conscription,²⁷ although in other autobiographical interviews the army service by conscription was also experienced as a valuable moratorium for biographical searching on one’s biographical – educational and occupational – potentials and related capacities of creative developments.] The reasons for the contrast between the army as a suitable social arrangement for biographical development and work, on the one hand, and the army as an mighty and harsh organization barring or even crushing personal development, on the other, can be manifold: such as organizational and leadership differences, differences in biographical preconditions, differences of symbolic universes, differences in the *esprit de corps*, and the collective, especially macro-historical, sense-making potentials of soldier life (that are quite different in post-fascist and long-term democratic states). The reasons for experiencing the army as depersonalizing or not can only be formulated via meticulous and systematic contrastive comparisons of various autobiographical materials. In addition, the Rasmus material reveals that, according to Rasmus’s experiences, comradeship can be a core element for the biographically relevant action orientation in everyday soldier life – the social relationships among fellow soldiers can be pivotal for conduct and comportment in army life, perhaps much more than any formal organizational control or officially inculcated values of “our army” or “my country” categories of symbolic universe.²⁸

²⁷ See, e.g., the case study of Felix in Schütze (1994).

²⁸ This is elaborated in Schütze (1989), which compares an American and a German case (the American one, Red Prendergast, also taken from the Terkel volume of “*The Good War*” [1984:48-66]). In this article, the category of (non-ideological) devices for tying the soldiers to the small solidarity groups within the army (and not to the army organization as such), which was sophisticatedly exploited by the army leadership, has been specified.

A third sub-step in the analytical abstraction is the task of reconstructing the self-theories of the informant from the several argumental commentaries spread out over his or her autobiographical narrative (especially, in preface, pre-coda, and coda positions), and relating them to the factual life course experiences of the informant as revealed in the detailed passages of extempore narration proper. The latter has already been analytically dealt with via the research activities of structural description of the narrative and of spelling out the overall biographical structuring of the life course of the informant (sub-step 1 of the analytical abstraction). But, in addition, a “local analysis” of self-theoretical activities, sub-unit by sub-unit, has already been done within the research step of structural description; now, the task is to find out the overall systematics of these self-theoretical activities stretched out over the narrative and biography at large and to depict their systematic relationship to the overall biographical structuring of the life course. Not so much the question of possible “contrasts” itself between self-theorizing and factual experiencing is interesting. Much more the following issues are at stake: What are the socio-biographical functions of certain self-theorizing concepts (such as finding the key to oneself, legitimating difficult phases in life and their questionable activities, rationalizations, etc.)? Under what concrete life course conditions did they develop? And how (possibly) were they changed later on? Related to this are the questions: What was de-focused (faded out, repressed) in the story line and in the autobiographical commentaries? Under which situational and biographical conditions did those de-focusings occur? What is their impact

on biographical experiencing and self-theorizing? What was re-focused in later phases of life and regained dim or clear awareness by parallel second experiences and/or reflection? And what are the specific stabilizing or destabilizing functions of de- and re-focusing (fading out and recollection, repression, and working-through) for the overall biographical structuring?

In the Rasmus case, one might come to the conclusion that some parts of the informant’s self-theory are roughly “congenial” with his factual biographical experiences, for example, Rasmus’s self-theory about his personal war experiences as the “peak of life” that deals accurately with his “actual” war experiences (the latter reflected in the narrative) as a sequence of inner and outer events within the orientation framework of a biographical action scheme of adventuring into new situations in life. Nevertheless, other parts of Rasmus’s self-theory cannot be envisioned as fitting the experiential base of his life in World War II as rendered by his extempore narrative, for example, he – by means of his self-theoretical biographical commentaries – has not dealt adequately with his other (trajectory) experiences of demoralization and suffering. Moreover, his memory seems to have faded out²⁹ some of his actual experiences, for example, the harassment administered by the platoon ser-

²⁹ The category of fading out is much broader than the Freudian category of repression. Whereas many phenomena of fading out are “seen but unnoticed” (Garfinkel 1967:36), repression is always linked with experiential contents being fallen into oblivion and with socio-biographical processes being unconscious. There are different social and inner-psychic devices of fading out, which are discussed in Schütze (1989; 1992). Of course, devices of fading out were particularly efficacious within the millions of German life courses, which were entangled in the collective trajectory and moral deterioration of Nazi Germany.

geant, which surely must have made the lives of the young novice soldiers very difficult. These episodes are never told in Rasmus’s narrative.

Conclusion

The preceding article demonstrates steps of qualitative or interpretive analysis of autobiographical extempore narratives. It uses as an example one case of Terkel’s volume “*The Good War*.” The article stresses the point that, to a considerable extent, extempore narratives retrieve the actually ongoing experiences during past phases of life. But, since extempore narratives express some important aspects of former life experience only indirectly – and that means through allusions, style, or even partially non-intended and unnoticed paraverbal symptoms of talk – research has to start with the sequential analysis of the *formal* structures of narrative presentation. Knowing the formal structures of the presentational activities of extempore narratives, it is also possible to assess the literal authenticity and experiential validity of edited autobiographical texts,³⁰ such as those in Studs Terkel’s volumes or such as the “subjects’ own stories” of the Chicago tradition of sociology.³¹ The assessment of authenticity is grounded on the empirical criterion of how closely the edited text resembles the structures of extempore storytelling in their presentational orderliness (e.g., in the employment of devices for introducing new narrative units), on

³⁰ In terms of expressing the flow of former socio-biographical experiences.

³¹ Cf., e.g., the Władek autobiography in Thomas and Znaniecki’s *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1958), the Stanley autobiography in Clifford Shaw’s *The Jack-Roller* (1966), or the Wallace Baker diary in Ruth Shonle Cavan’s *Suicide* (1928).

the one hand, and in their seeming disarray (e.g., self-corrective devices like background constructions), on the other.

Interpretive sociological analysis quite often gets caught within the methodological limbo of either to take self-theoretical claims of the informant automatically at face value *or* to ignore them on the grounds of general methodical mistrust. The essay demonstrates how to identify self-theoretical activities of the informant, depict their partially self-deceptive and/or self-enlightening power, scrutinize their socio-biographical genesis or borrowing, and study their change (and their being influenced by other people, and by the modification and substitution of categories of symbolic universe) over the life course, and their practical functioning in organizing biography and everyday life.

Besides exceptions in symbolic interactionism (e.g., Strauss and Glaser 1970; Riemann 1987; Schütze 1991; 1992; 1993; 2012b; Riemann and Schütze 2011), community studies (e.g., Lynd and Lynd 1937, chap. X), ethnomethodology (e.g., Garfinkel 1967:116-185), cognitive sociology (e.g., Cicourel 1968, chap. 5, 6), and phenomenological sociology (e.g., Hildenbrand 1983), interpretive case analysis in the vein of the Chicago tradition of sociology and comparable traditions was not practiced in the social sciences after the 30s. One important reason for the decline of single case analysis was the methodological neglect of general process mechanisms, which are expressed in formal structures of interaction and communication. Through conversation analysis (e.g., Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Kallmeyer 1988; Sacks 1989), narrative

analysis (e.g., Labov 1972; Sacks 1978; Schütze 1983; 1987; 1992; 2008; Riemann 1987; 2000; Riemann and Schütze 1991; Schröder-Wildhagen and Schütze 2011), sequential analysis of professional work (e.g., Strauss et al. 1985; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Riemann 2000; Schütze 2000), and new research procedures and approaches in cultural anthropology for analyzing communicative styles, knowledge systems, as well as scientific interaction and work (e.g., Turner 1973; Gumperz 1982; Geertz 1983; Mondada and Schütze 2004), it is now possible to delineate these formal structures and the constitutive activities which produced them. With such new research capabilities in our hands, we are able to resume the approach of the Chicago tradition of sociology towards the analysis of single cases. This is particularly promising since to quite a large extent the practical problems in our world are illuminated by single cases or even consists of them. Certainly, there are many problems of social collectivities to be encountered in social life, such as questions of war and peace, but these questions – looked at carefully – very often are *collective single case* problems, too. One ought not to confuse “single case” as opposed to “case comparison,” on the one hand, and “individual predicament” as contrasted with “collective phenomena,” on the other.³² Perhaps sociology can

³² I have somewhat oversimplified my text in the hope that the epistemological differences between the aspects of individuality and single case, as well as between collectivity and generality, will be clear. Of course, they are quite often intertwined in a complicated way.

On the one hand, collective phenomena have to be experienced and enacted through individual biographies with their horizons of finiteness and “terminality,” otherwise these phenomena would not have their special sense of uniqueness, historical totality or gestalt, and decisiveness. In addition, the individual biographies exhibit the potential for coming into literal social contact and dynamic interaction with each other. And many of the subjects realize this potential, and then they get into factual contact with each other in order to produce and change collective phenomena by intention. Here, the methodological

offer new contributions to the analysis and solution of practical problems in personal life, interaction and/or society by a resurrection of single case analysis. It is methodically crucial to be able to extract general and unique (reoccurring) features from the structural processes of single cases.

It is my contention that when grounded on the sequential analysis of textual phenomena of extempore narratives, the extraction of general and unique features from single cases can unequivocally and thoughtfully be accomplished. For this, the research steps of structural description and analytical abstraction must be harnessed. But, of course, one has to keep in mind that single case analysis can only go as far as these research steps of structural description and analytical abstraction really carry the researcher: whereas it is possible to develop new theoretical ideas, notions, and hypotheses on the empirical base of single cases, and, in turn, to apply established theoretical concepts and models in use to single cases, it is not possible to construct new systematic and integrated theoretical models of qualitative sociology on the empirical ground of just one single case. For this, it is additionally requested to undertake contrastive comparisons of various cases. In order to reach at quite general (substantive or even formal) theoretic-

task is to depict the literal interaction of individual (and not of single) cases in order to analyze the production and change of collective phenomena – this done completely within the framework for single case analysis.

On the other hand, collective processes not only contain several *individual* but several *single* cases. That is, in order to reach the level of collective phenomena, the researcher has to compare single cases of collective experience since collective phenomena are also *general* phenomena, which symbolically dramatize features of collectivity experience organized by mechanisms shared many times by many individual members. Through this symbolic schematization the members typify their collective unity as an abstract entity, expecting it to be a set of general features imprinted on unique situations and events, wherever and whenever the collective unit will be encountered.

cal concepts and models, it is obligatory to compare highly different cases, too (i.e., through the research strategy of maximal contrast [cf. Glaser and Strauss 1973:55-58]). It is indispensable to continue the study of additional cases and to compare the analytical results gained from it with the insights received from the analyses of the formerly accomplished (partial or full scale) case studies, until the theoretical variance within the field under study is exhausted (cf. Strauss 1987:35, 36).

In later stages of the research, it is not obligatory any more to carry through *full scale* analyses of all the additional cases left to scrutiny (i.e., to continue to present overall structural descriptions of *complete* narrative interviews). One is then allowed to focus on *partial* aspects of socio-biographical phenomena. However, the deeper meanings of socio-biographical phenomena as revealed in autobiographical renderings are rooted in the *overall* biographical structuring of the life course of the biography incumbent. Hence, in later phases of the research, *shortened* procedures for the assessment of the overall biographical structuring have to be utilized. They must not be neglected or even skipped regarding those additional cases, which are planned to be studied just aspectually.

In my personal understanding at least, scientific methodology is only interesting to the extent that it helps to address basic theoretical and substantive questions of social reality (Schütze 2005). The preceding essay has attempted to depict some of the relationships between individual biographical processes and collective socio-historical processes. It is not just a methodological paper but the first step on

a ladder of additional studies (on additional single cases and/or on several cases compared contrastively) about the impact of war experiences on the life courses and biography constructions of individual members of several societies in order to address more and more contrastive features and case-transgressing socio-biographical mechanisms. Such additional studies could also scrutinize how the life historical impact of war on biographical identity unfolding and reconstruction shapes the ways in which biographical subjects address national and international collectivities and their symbolic universes (e.g., how it is possible to say “we” towards national and other “we-groups” and what follows from that in terms of moral obligation, protest, and sensitivity). Such additional studies (including some on collectivities of all sorts regarding their relevance for biographical identity construction and reconstruction) and how, in turn, these biographical relations to large collectiva (important societal institutions, like school and history education, local community and other territorial legal bodies in their relationships towards the national government, national army or voluntary associations and NGOs, of ethnic communities, of nation and national society and/or of supra-national entities and mental spaces like Europe) influence the underlying practical philosophies of the symbolic universes of national societies and supra-national entities to be compared regarding their policies towards international affairs, multi-national cooperation, and defense.³³

³³ The last paragraph of the present article is the only one that was amended considerably. In the meantime, together with others, I worked on studies about the biographical impact of war (Schütze 1989; 1992), on the biographical relevance of Europe (Schütze et al. 2008; Miller and Schütze 2011; Schütze 2011; Schröder-Wildhagen et al. 2012; Schütze and Schröder-Wildhagen 2012; Schütze et al. 2012), and on the biographical work regarding ethnic membership (Schütze 2012a).

Because these questions require new insights into the basic relationships between the biographies of individual members of societies, on the one hand, and societal collectivities and their symbolic universes, on the other, new research methods and steps – both sensitive and systematic – for analyzing biographical processes are required (cf., e.g., Schütze 2008, as well as Schröder-Wildhagen and Schütze 2011).

Postscript

There is some elective affinity or *Wahlverwandtschaft* between Studs Terkel and the Chicago tradition of sociology and their respective production and use of documentaries, although Terkel does not talk about it specifically. Nevertheless, in one of his interviews he mentions that his three years at law school of the University of Chicago, which by the way he finally finished successfully with a degree in 1934, “were three wasted years.” [In his written statements in books he is more cautious in his assessment of his University of Chicago law education, but he never practiced law, although he had intended to enter law school in order to become an advocate and attorney of the “damned and underdogs”.] To this negative assessment in the quoted interview he immediately adds:

I could have done something else. I could have gone to the Chicago sociology department; they had the great work on the streets, on the street gangs. In those days, I could have gone to anthropology or history or something. Instead, I was stuck with the law.³⁴

³⁴ Minute/second 4:50 to minute/second 5:05 of part I of the 1999 interview conducted by Karin Hermann of the *Archive of American Television* with Studs Terkel (see: bing.com/videos, retrieved January 11, 2014).

The elective affinity of Studs Terkel’s documentary work and that of the Chicago sociologists consists of the following features:

- A very deep going analytical interest for life histories and autobiographies as the expression and the everyday imprint of macro-history and its social processes. Although each life history and its respective autobiographical account are unique, they share important features of collective history with other life histories and their autobiographical accounts of that epoch, generation, and socio-structural setting, its epochs and their dominant socio-cultural atmospheres and outlooks on the world and the respective “construction principles,” as well as process structures of individual biographical unfoldings.
- Informants for the production of autobiographical texts have to be selected under the criterion of their expectable ability to express their personal experiences and their willingness to do this in an authentic way, that is, searching for the truth-value of their experiences. The produced autobiographical texts should be as much authentic as possible in terms of the expression of one’s own personal experiences of macro-history and its social processes, as well as in terms of one’s own dealing with them and finding one’s own way in the midst of them.
- The selected informants and their autobiographical texts should be theoretically representative for certain historical events, epochs, generations, socio-historical milieus, and/or socio-structural settings.

- The collected autobiographical texts are basically understood to “speak for themselves,” although they can be reanalyzed and then understood in a deeper way. This “speaking for themselves” presupposes some aesthetic “expression power” of the texts. [This has more import in Terkel’s documentaries than in the Chicago materials, although it can be found there, too, for example, in the documentaries edited by Clifford Shaw (1930; 1931) or in the parallel Polish publication edited by Stanisław Kowalski (1933).] The aesthetic quality is not detracting from the “authenticity,” that is, the truth-value of the autobiographical text as renderer of personal experiences, in fact, it seems quite to the contrary!
- The publication of the autobiographical texts must be in the “own language” of the informants. The wording of the original text production should not be changed as far as possible. Of course, there is always a production history of the text (in motivating the informants of Chicago sociology documentaries to start to write a text, to produce a first document and afterwards to amend to it, and, in case of Terkel’s interviews, to tell a main story line and to get prodded by the interviewer to add to it), as well as a history of necessary editing work for publication (including cuts and condensations in case of Terkel’s interviews). To the latter, the editing, with its involved cuts and condensations, is the text reliability of the autobiographical document. The text reliability should be somewhere empirically proven, for example, in publishing the first short document produced in the beginning, together with the expanded final document as it

was done in the Chicago sociology documentaries (i.e., Shaw 1966:200-205) or, for example, in putting some of the voice-recorded interviews into an Internet archive so that readers can compare the original interview with the version published before in the book. This is what was facilitated by Terkel’s move to entrust a list of his audio-recorded interviews to the Chicago History Museum, which conversely put some of these interviews into an Internet portal under the title *Conversations with America* (Terkel 2002).

- In addition, and as a corollary to the interest in life history and its autobiographical text renderings, Terkel and Chicago sociologists had a genuine interest in social settings, social milieus, and social worlds. In Terkel’s case books like *Working* (1974) or *Hard Times* (1970) are of this kind; in the Chicago sociology tradition we find books like *The Gold Coast and the Slum* by Harvey Zorboough (1929) or *The Taxi Dance Hall* by Paul G. Cressey (1932). Of course, these two interests in biography and in social contexts are deeply linked. In the case of Studs Terkel, this linkage is taken account of either by letting the informants descriptively portrait their time and life situation and, in addition, by putting especially expressive pieces of personal life-historical episodes into these portraits (as, e.g., in *Division Street* [1967]), or, as author, by doing the descriptive portraying of oneself in conjunction with using episodic interview material representing life situations, milieus, and social worlds in “memoirs of one’s times” (as, e.g., in *Talking to Myself* [1977]). In case of the Chicago sociology biographical documentaries, descriptions

of sceneries, and milieus, on the one hand, and autobiographical texts (and their analysis), on the other, are brought together in one single book (as in Ruth Shonle Cavan's *Suicide* [1928]; see Riemann 2007). However, in Terkel's production and in that one of the Chicago sociology, there are certain books in which the autobiographical renderings and the interest in the analysis of life history proper are conspicuously dominant (as in Terkel's case "*The Good War*" [1984] or *Race* [1991]). In the case of Terkel's book *Race*, there is, for example, documented the later life history of Mamie Mobley, the mother of the famous 14-year-old Chicago black boy Emmett Till who in the course of a family visit to the Deep South was killed by two white men, or the life history of Claiborne P. Ellis, a former Ku-Klux Klan high-ranking leader and, after his biographical conversion, a union leader and worker for inter-racial relationships (Terkel 1992:18-26, 271-280). In the case of the Chicago sociologists, we find this dominant interest in life history and its autobiographical rendering conspicuously manifested in the *Boy's own Story* and the *Natural History of Delinquent Career* of Stanley and Sidney Blotzman (Shaw 1966; 1968).

As I mentioned already, since the year 2002, one can easily compare some of Terkel's published interviews, especially in the volume "*The Good War*," with the original tape-recorded vocal interviews. Nevertheless, I could not find that the voice recording of the Rasmus interview in the publicly open archive of the Chicago Historical Museum was made accessible through Internet. However, the Red Prendergast interview, which I had analyzed

25 years ago, too, and which I had compared with a German interview conducted by myself (Schütze 1989), was accessible through Internet. Hence, I have instead listened to the whole interview of Red Prendergast. The interview has a length of 86 minutes and 56 seconds, and Prendergast talks very rapidly. His rapid speech production delivered at least 25 transcript pages single spaced; the length of the interview in the book "*The Good War*," however, it is just 10 pages (Terkel 1984:48-58). That means that the interview was shortened quite a lot (over the half of it) for the book publication. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that the interview is still astoundingly authentic, that is, experientially valid, and the text is reliable. In comparing the oral interview recording and the book publication step by step, I could make the following observations (and one could make similar observations on the empirical base of comparing the other seven voice recordings of interviews with the respective printed versions in the book "*The Good War*"):

- Every sentence, every phrase, and even every word which appears in the printed version is uttered in the voice recording of the interview.
- Repeated phrases are normally cut out, in case they do not have a special expressive function.
- Side stories are cut out, although they can be quite interesting. The editor, Terkel, focuses on the *main story line* of the autobiographical rendering.
- The edited written version of the interview focuses on the dominant topic of the experiences in World War II and its imprint on later life.

Longer passages of lifetime before taking part as a soldier in World War II are cut out.

- The sequential order of the narrative units and sub-units in the original voice recording is the dominant ordering principle for the editing of the printed text. However, side stories, flash backs, and detail descriptions that are occurring in the original voice interview at a later point are sometimes moved to an earlier position within the edited text, exactly to that place where they are alluded to or more explicitly mentioned for the first time in the ongoing original voice interview. In these cases, Terkel attempts to orient the sequential order of text items towards the order of the naturally occurring events in the life history of the informant. Here, a conflict of orientation between the originally expressed order of textual presentation items and the order of sequential events that are recounted can occur. In these cases, phenomena of presentational disorder symptomatically expressing disorder in the life and identity development of the informants cannot be analyzed.
- Otherwise, even some self-corrections and background constructions are correctly reproduced and not "corrected" and polished away. This can be seen by formal text markers as we could observe in the Rasmus interview, for example, the change of the communicative scheme from narration to argumentation and reverse, the change of tense, et cetera.
- In case of an interviewer-provoked essential change of textual activities of the informant (mainly: putting in a new topic after the formerly

self-driven narration of the informant has come to an end – that happens in other of Terkel's interviews, but not in the Prendergast interview – or asking for more details or asking for an explanatory background), the prodding or asking activity of the interviewer is inserted into the edited and printed text. But, on the other hand, lots of clarifying questioning is cut out when the straight line of rendering of the informant is just smoothly going on.

- There are lots of speech activities of Terkel himself in the original interview, especially setting topics, clarifying questions, asking for details, leading the informant back to the main story line, showing one's interest and pleasure in listening, giving a sympathetic commentary, doing a comparison with a similar story of oneself or in the belletrist literature (e.g., Prendergast's experience of being bombed as a prisoner of war while he was sitting and being caught in a German prisoners' train is compared by the interviewer Terkel with Kurt Vonnegut's several narrative accounts and descriptions of such situations in *Slaughterhouse Five*). Nevertheless, all these inserted voice activities of Terkel as the interviewer are activities of sympathetic circularity; they do not set a new narrative topic, while the self-driven storytelling of the main story line is still going on. Terkel as the interviewer has a tremendously good feeling for the integrity of the story line and the autobiographical rendering in general (although he does not postpone clarification questions and questions on details up to a second questioning part of the interview, which would be done by an interviewer in the course of an autobiographical-narrative interview). The question is,

however, if Terkel followers are able to feel and imagine so perfectly well the nature of the interactive and presentational order of the ongoing interview situation in a similar way to Terkel.

- Paralinguistic phenomena, like laughing, are reproduced in the printed transcript, in case it is an impressive reaction of the interviewer in the ongoing speech production of the recorded interview and/or it marks and differentiates the emotional mode of presentation and interaction.
- Very rarely can there be observed a fusion and amalgamation of separate comments into one single sentence that is slightly reformulated by Terkel. [In the Prendergast interview this happens just one time, and the amalgamated reformulation is not changing the gist of the meaning: "I don't know, if I'd have been a blue collar worker. Certainly not what I'm doing now" (Terkel 1984:58, line 1, 2). Prendergast mentions in this context that without the GI Bill he would probably had gone to a city college, since his father had already not been a blue-collar worker. But, without World War II, Prendergast admits, it would not have been possible for him to attend a quite expensive high-quality private university.]
- The editor Terkel places general biographical commentaries with deep self-theoretical insights at the very end of the interview, although these commentaries had originally occurred a few sentences and a few moments earlier in the closing-up phase of the interview.

To sum up at this point: the changes of placement of text segments within the interview are done in

order to (a) cut the interview shorter, (b) to make its rendering denser, and (c) to enhance the aesthetic quality of the interview text (in order to make it more attractive and more easily understandable for the reader). Probably, even present-day qualitative sociologists would have to work on texts in concordance with Terkel's provisions in order to get an autobiographical statement published as a documentary that is more readable for the general public. However, such changes would never be done with an original transcription. Terkel, too, has always admonished his transcribers to transcribe and/or mention every sound, including all hesitation phenomena, all self-corrections, and all paralinguistic occurrences, in order to re-imagine the original interview situation when reworking the interviews for publication (Terkel 2007:177).

Terkel's autobiographical memoir *Touch and Go* (2007) mentions the following features of editing his interviews (p. 177f):

- the total transcription of the whole interview without any cut-outs;
- inclusion of important paralinguistic and audible situational phenomena (as representations of the social surroundings: "I want to recreate in my mind exactly what it was like to be with that person...");
- cutting out most of the activities of Terkel's own questioning in order to produce the appearance of a soliloquy of the informant in order to underline the integrity of her or his autobiographical rendering; questions of the interviewer are only kept where it is essential to understand the

change of the sequential proceeding of the presentation activities of the informant as provoked by the interviewer;

- relating seemingly unrelated text items and juxtaposing them (as done in the editing of the Rasmus interview) in order "to illuminate from the unexpected quarter" (p. 177); this enhances the aesthetic quality of the text but it also transports the potential of leaving out important narrative or descriptive passages that are not that much dramatically contrastive and symbolically expressive in mode and mood. Terkel is not falling into this trap of a would-be theatre dramaturge since he has absolute respect for the structure and the elements of the original empirical document being the carrier of biographical experience – but, what about any of his non-sensible follower *à la mode*?
- doing the concentration and densification of the original interview transcript as described above for the Prendergast interview, Terkel argues that the overall shape of the book has to be taken into account, while at the same time he is sifting the interviews and cutting parts out of them. Of course, exactly here lurks the danger of destroying the integrity of the gestalt of the single autobiographical rendering and of the respective life history. This is at least true for schematic-thinking editors who are not sensible and circumspect enough for narrative and argumentative presentation gestalts as Terkel is. For the editing work of concentration and densification Terkel uses the metaphor of producing a piece of goldsmith craft or goldsmith art, starting from digging and collecting the gold ore until

displaying the golden craft or art piece within the display window of the goldsmith. Hence, the editing work of Terkel proceeds from the "prospector work" to the "sculptor work." The aesthetic connotation, which Terkel connects with his editing work, is very obvious here. Whereas Terkel has this deep sense of the integrity of the autobiographical text, some followers in his footsteps could cause lots of harm to the authenticity of socio-biographical experiences as how they have been originally recounted in the oral autobiographical text (p. 176).

In chapter 19, "A casual conversation," which I have just dealt with, and in the "Prologue" to *Touch and Go* Terkel also writes about the work of finding interview partners and of conducting the open, mostly narrative interviewing as a natural ("casual") activity of conversation. As a biographical "ethnographer" and "oral historian" of social worlds, sceneries, milieus, generations, macro-historical dramas, et cetera, one must have a social network through which one can find persons who are able to articulate their personal feelings and who have to say something about their life. Mostly, these persons would need to be the "humble," "ordinary" people since *they* are more in touch with the vicissitudes of everyday life and the macro-historical impact on. First time Terkel came across such humble people and observed their relating to the world in the rooming house of his family and later in the modest hotel of his family in downtown Chicago near the Loop in the 20s of the 20th century. The small worlds of these two accommodation places provided incipient natural social networks for seeking, observing, searching, and finding persons who

would tell about their personal experiences (chapter 3 “The Rooming House” and chapter 6 “The Hotel”). Later on, starting in the second half of the 30s, Terkel as a radio and television media person, built step by step an extremely wide social network. However, most import for finding “humble” people who would be able to recount personal experiences of social and historical relevance were his wife Ida and her friends. They got Terkel in touch with people “who can talk how they see their lives and the world around them. Who can explain how and why they became one way or another” (p. 174). These were people who changed themselves to the better and who reckoned that they would count in the world and, in addition, that they could make a change.

On the other hand, and generally speaking, many of those “humble” informants are modest people to such an extent that they yet did not realize having the potential for personal courage in order to stand up and join social movements. Therefore, the researcher and interviewer has to let them understand and believe that their personal experiences are decisively relevant for the overall picture the ethnographer, researcher, or memoir writer would like to develop in one’s documentary book and/or research about important macro-historical events, historical and/or generational phases, socio-cultural milieus, and social-structural situations, as well as their personal handling of them, their social problems, and their being attacked by social movements, et cetera. Generally speaking, the first step for the interviewer as producer of documentaries or interviewer as researcher is to encourage the interviewees to encounter their

own life by autobiographically recounting it. At the same time, this encourages the interviewees to listen to their own voice as something “objective” and “relevant,” as “instance of the outer world;” Terkel mentions how impressive the listening to their own taped voice would be for some of them (p. XVIII). The interviewer must behave naturally and cooperatively; on the moral base of this virtue, the interviews must become conversational encounters of the informant and the interviewer at eye level. In listening to the numerous open qualitative interviews recorded and preserved in Terkel’s *Conversations with America* of the Chicago Historical Museum, one starts to admire his ability to behave in such a natural way in professional interview sessions, that is, to sensitively take into account and practice the interaction postulates of natural mundane interaction in a complex non-mundane interaction situation of autobiographical interviewing (Schütze 1980; 2008:6-25, no. 3/4). This means not to indulge in orgies of emphatic emotional understanding of the sufferings of the informant, which would be a phony, pretending behavior, on the one hand, and not to behave as just a formal questionnaire administrator who is asking conventional dry standard questions that have nothing to do with the narrative gestalt of the biographical experiences of the informant, on the other (p. 176). In handling the professional paradox of behaving naturally within an artificial formal-professional interview encounter, Terkel was helped – or helped himself? – by ostensive tinkering around with his complex tape recording machines, which he sometimes could not technically handle well, as he confessed. His technical non-perfectness was not just a trick; he

really felt that way. And therefore, the more technically sophisticated interviewees would help him, and this would strengthen their social reciprocity, their mutual taking the perspective of the other, and their assumption, contra-assumption, and use of interaction postulates of cooperation (p. 176f).

The title *Touch and Go* of Terkel’s autobiographical memoir is borrowed from the evening prayer of Rev. Eli Jenkins in Dylan Thomas’ *Under Milk Wood*. Perhaps nothing else can express Studs Terkel’s critical love for mankind, his circumspect humanity better than this prayer. I quote one more stanza than Terkel himself put as a motto of his autobiographical memoir on the frontispiece:

....

And every evening at sun-down
I ask a blessing on the town,
For whether we last the night or no
I’m sure is always touch-and-go.

We are not wholly bad or good
Who live our lives under Milk Wood,
And Thou, I know, wilt be the first
To see our best side, not our worst.

....

Here, again, we can see the elective affinity of Terkel’s documentary work with that one of the tradition of Chicago sociology and its intellectual offspring, the symbolic interactionism.

At the very end one can state the following conclusions:

- Terkel’s reflective writing on his art of interviewing is concordant with his practice of qualitative interviewing.
- Collecting autobiographical renderings of life histories is done by him in a style very similar to the practice of autobiographical-narrative interviewing as an outcome of the documentary tradition of Chicago sociology.
- Terkel stresses the aesthetic character of the products of his type of interviewing in form of *edited* publications of his interviews. Such an editing work treats his mostly humble informants with great respect since they are presented as artists of their own live-histories and their autobiographical recollections. And, in addition, the aesthetic character of the documentary pieces contributes to the experiential validity (authenticity) of the published interviews. When social scientists would like to publish their own documentaries, they must do it with a similar sensibility for the aesthetic expression power of autobiographical documentaries. But, at the same time, they have to be aware of the danger of losing text reliability and experiential validity (or more generally speaking, textual and experiential authenticity) by too much tinkering around with the textual structure of the original production of the autobiographical documentary.
- The methods of autobiographical text analysis on the empirical base of extempore autobiographical narratives are a venue to assess the experiential text *validity* in terms of experiential authenticity, and to assess the text *reliability* in terms of the textual fit between the originally

taped vocal production of the autobiographical interview or documentary and its edited and published version.³⁵

- Autobiographical extempore narratives are the key empirical material for the analysis of the deeper relationships between doing biographical work in terms of personal identity development and of dealing with all kinds of collective phenomena of societies and their macro-histories and how they are shaped by decisive activities of societal members who feel that they personally count, who join together (start collective action, and who step into it).

Appendix: Two Schemes Regarding the Presentation Structure of Autobiographical Storytelling

Scheme 1. Cognitive Figures of Autobiographical Extempore Storytelling

- Global story line of narration
 - Narrative preamble
 - Coda
 - Biographical commentary
- Concatenation of narrative units: presentation of the sequence of events and related experiences
 - Narrative units

³⁵ When I conducted the analysis of the Rasmus interview 30 years ago, there was no possibility to listen to voice records of Terkel's interviews and to read of, and listen to, his reflections on his style of interviewing and editing. In my later re-workings, I did not change anything in the wording of my analysis of the Rasmus interview.

- Supra-segmental markers
- Biographical process structures
- Narrator, story carrier, biography incumbent, and their relationships to each other, resulting in, e.g.:
 - Naive self-presentation connected with symptomatic markers (as hesitation phenomena, pauses, self-corrections, laughter, etc.)
 - Reflected self-presentation interspersed with argumentative commentaries that search for the truth by comparing the differences of knowledge between story carrier and biography incumbent
 - Ironic self-presentation showing the naivete of the former story carrier from the point of view of the narrator
- Event carriers: descriptive characterization of other *dramatis personae* beyond the story carrier
- Situations or scenes of biographical importance: narrative units that present peak phases of the concatenation of events in a stylized episodic form
- Social frames: description of social relationships, social contexts, as well as institutional and structural conditions that shape the flux of life historical events and biographical processes

Scheme 2. Presentation Level of Single Narrative Units

- Falling intonation and pause as a means for “automatic” expressing the segmentation between two narrative units and the related frame switching elements

- Introduction to narrative unit
- Narrative kernel sentences of binominal character:
 - Depiction of outer event related to a social and/or biographical process that passes over a time threshold of a “before” and a “later on”
 - Expression of a change of inner state of the story carrier and biography incumbent (connected with the outer event)
- Textual sections for narrative detailing in the form of:
 - The presentation of pivotal episodes experienced by the narrator, as well as
 - The concretization of higher predicates used in narrative kernel sentences
- Textual sections for the descriptive detailing of inner states, of social frames and contexts, as well as of the characterization of event carriers
 - Explication of higher predicates regarding the inner states of a biographical unfolding
- Interpretation of unfamiliar social concepts
- Explication of enigmatic or partially unknown social contexts and phenomena
- Characterization of event carriers (*dramatis personae*, as well as non-human agents)
- Textual sections for argumentative explanations that render the narrative presentation more plausible
- Background constructions (of the narrative, the descriptive, or the argumentative sort) for the presentation of “difficult experiences” faded out of the foregoing presentation
- Argumentative biographical commentaries in final position for
 - The explanation or legitimizing of biographical developments and/or for
 - The stating of results, for reflective assessment, and for evaluation of a social process
- “Closing” intonation, frame switching element, final pause of segmentation

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