"Small Stories" as Methodological Approach. Reflections on Biographical Narratives Based on an Ethnographic Research Project With Refugee School Students

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Abstract: Based on a research project with refugee school students, we present in this article three forms of "small" biographical narratives that can be used as a methodological approach instead of the biographical narrative interview. The first form, *guided narratives* with low-threshold narrative stimuli, allows the articulation of biographical experiences and a range of participative opportunities. The other two forms are based on ethnographic observations: In contact with the research team, the students *casually* told *small stories* giving insight into their biographical situation and their everyday life, similar to what they do in interaction with their teachers. The teachers, for their part, told the researchers *stories about stories* they had heard from the students. The precondition for these narrations was an extended ethnographic field phase, during which the research relationships in the field could be successively established. The researchers became involved in the everyday narrative practices of the pedagogical field and were able to gain insights into their function. One main result is to analyze biographical narratives not only as an outcome of an individual structure of experience, but also as an *interactive work of belonging*, which is particularly relevant in schools. Finally, research with "small stories" is particularly indicated when the vulnerability of the research participants (e.g., young refugees) is high, the institutional setting (e.g., school) hinders/impedes free biographical narrating, or when the preconditions for articulating one's own perspective in a field are very unequally distributed (e.g., multilingualism).

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1. Introduction

Qualitative and biographical analysis approaches in social and educational research on refugee or forced migration have existed for some time[1], yet as recently as ten or so years ago, BEHRENSEN and WESTPHAL (2009) still referred to a "blind spot" in German-language migration and educational research. That assessment related to research on "young refugees." The authors of that particular study described the state of research as "extremely poor" with respect to the situation and educational trajectories of such refugees in the (German) education system (p.46).[2] This applied not only to research on the perspectives of young people themselves, but also to the experiences and practices of "pedagogical actors in the education and training system" (p.47). At the time, BEHRENSEN and WESTPHAL formulated a desideratum for educational research as follows:

> "How schools and their actors, teachers, students and parents enable and shape upbringing and education under these conditions, which paths and options are available at all and can be used to pursue formal educational goals and qualifications in the context of host country reception, country of origin and possibility of returning, are [sic] still completely in the dark" (ibid.). [1]

A second desideratum concerned the psychosocial situation of youths and the question of how they and their families handled their precarious life situation, which was characterized by persistent insecurity and lack of prospects. The authors referred in this regard to biographical research approaches, which rendered visible not only the negative consequences of the refugees' escape story, but also the competencies and opportunity spaces that grew out of it (see also KING & KOLLER, 2009; SEUKWA, 2006). [2]

The research situation has changed significantly since then. Refugee studies became a topic of educational research in the context of 2015, especially, when a large number of refugees migrated to European countries in the hope of asylum, and the very practical question arose as to how youths could be integrated into the respective education system.[3] The above desiderata have also been adopted

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1   ROSENTHAL, for example, studied forced migration and exile in different historical-political and regional contexts since her research on the biographies of Holocaust survivors (1997), and focused in particular on traumatization processes and the intergenerational "inheritance" of experiences and attitudes.

2   All translations from non-English texts are ours.

3   We refer here primarily to the state of research in German-speaking countries. Examples of structured research into the situation of young refugees include the junior research group on *Bildungskontexte und (Aus-) Bildungswege von jungen Geflüchteten im Spannungsfeld von Ein- und Ausgrenzung* [Educational contexts and (vocational) educational pathways of young refugees between inclusion and exclusion] and the doctoral college on *Psychosoziale Folgen*

by qualitative research and have been the subject of many investigations using biographical research methods, especially the biographical narrative interview (SCHÜTZE, 1983). The latter seems particularly suitable for making "visible" and reconstructing the experiences, perspectives for action and educational processes of the actors. In the meantime, however, there are not only a number of qualitative empirical studies on the interrelationship of forced migration and education (BERG, 2018; GARDI, LINGEN-ALI & MECHERIL, 2019; KREMSNER, PROYER & BIEWER, 2020; MORRICE, 2013; NIEDRIG, 2015; SEUKWA, 2006), but also, increasingly, methodological reflections on the methods used (e.g., AKESSON, HOFFMAN, EL JOUEIDI & BADAWI, 2018; BEHRENSEN & WESTPHAL, 2019; FICHTNER & TRÂN, 2018; THIELEN, 2009; VON UNGER, 2018). Explicitly biographical approaches were chosen for some studies (ROSENTHAL, BAHL & WORM, 2016; SHERIDAN, 2021; STRUCHHOLZ, 2021). Reflections on the role of narrative in the context of migration and refugee research (SCHNITZER & MÖRGEN, 2020) are also interesting. [3]

In this paper, we adopt the latter biographical and narrative analysis approaches. We will present and discuss variants of biographical narration that became relevant in the course of a research project with young refugees (DAUSIEN, THOMA, ALPAGU & DRAXL, 2020). Contrary to many research projects in which the method of biographical narrative interviews is used and which focus on narration of the "whole" life story (or, more precisely, on a longer, self-directed life story narrative), we worked with "small stories" and low-threshold prompts for biographical thematization. Among other means, we applied narrative-generating methods and principles of "biographical communication" as known in the area of adult education practice (BEHRENS-COBET & REICHLING, 1997). [4]

Another special feature of our study was that the research was embedded in an educational framework, i.e., communication with the youths was predominantly localized in the school/class setting and bound to the "logic" of the school (DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.70-74). The researchers were thus compelled to embed all communication and also the collection of data within the educational context, but without shedding their own role or losing their ethnographic distance in the field. Within this framework, we elicited narratives methodically, but also observed forms of "casual narration" that are not normally used in biographical research.[4] Our aim in this paper is to describe and reflect on the possibilities and problems of such a methodological approach in the nexus of research and educational settings. Thus, we aim at reflecting experiences that we encountered in the project for further research with young people in the context of migration and the flight of refugees, and we will discuss ways of expanding the repertoire of educational research based on biographical theory. [5]

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von Migration und Flucht – generationale Dynamiken und adoleszente Verläufe [Psychosocial impacts of migration and flight—generational dynamics and adolescent life courses], both funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation.

4 On this point, see the informative paper by SCHNITZER (2020), who reported on a similar combination of methodological strategies bridging biographical research and ethnography.

The paper is divided into five sections: We begin with some details on the background and methodological approach of the project (Section 2), before presenting three forms of biographical narrative that played a role in the project and which, in comparison with the frequently used method of biographical narrative interview, opened up alternative and in some cases new methodological ways of accessing the experiences and perspectives of the research participants, and which therefore required special reflection. The three forms are: Pedagogically initiated narrative, with which we encouraged "small stories" that we analyzed as empirical material in a later stage (Section 3); "casual" autobiographical narrative which "emerged" spontaneously during the research interaction in the field and only became accessible via ethnographic protocols and field notes (Section 4); and "stories about stories" which seemed to be relevant in everyday school life and above all in the pedagogical practice of the teachers (Section 5). In the final section, we state our findings and some unanswered questions for further research (Section 6). We propose that the observed narrative practices be interpreted not only as an autobiographical structuring of experience, but also as an opportunity for interactive work of belonging. [6]

2. Project Setting, Research Focus and Methodological Approach

The background to this article is the completed project *ZwischenWeltenÜberSetzen*[5] [Translating Wor(l)ds], in which we reconstructed the biographical experiences and competencies of students who had fled to Austria as refugees and gone to school together for a year in a "transitional class"[6]. The research focus centered on the experiences the young people had had in the process of joining the Austrian education system and specifically how they handled multilingualism and translation (DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.10-11). That project was subject to very specific conditions in various respects. Its conceptual design and the particular framework specified by the funding terms are described in more detail below. [7]

2.1 Theoretical approach and research focus

Our approach to the topic differed from the perspectives and approaches of empirical educational research in the field of school pedagogics in that we were interested neither in school achievements and the process of learning German as a second language, nor in curricular learning and its pedagogical/didactic support. We were primarily concerned with the *experiences* of the young people in a multi-layered biographical transition that meant not only the transition from an unstable situation shaped by the respective refugee's escape story to a new, similarly insecure, precarious life situation in a (foreign) "host country," but also the transition into a new educational system, a new school and grade, which

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5 The project was carried out under our direction at the University of Vienna from 2017 to 2019 and was financially supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and the Economy under the Sparkling Science program (No. SPA06-229).

6 From the 2015/16 school year onwards, "transitional levels" (also transitional courses or classes) were set up at selected vocational schools (later at general secondary schools as well) for young refugees who were no longer of compulsory school age, in order to facilitate their integration into the national education system (ALPAGU, DRAXL, DAUSIEN & THOMA, 2019a).

involved many different expectations and requirements of a linguistic and social nature. A particular focus was how to handle multilingualism and translation practices, with "translating" being understood not only as translation between different language systems, but in a broader sense also as a complex achievement involving "trans-position" between social worlds and horizons of experience within biographies (DAUSIEN et al., 2020). [8]

Our theoretical perspective was based on approaches in the fields of biographical theory and action theory, i.e., the students were addressed as competent subjects with their own capacity for action, who have wide-ranging experience in translating between different social worlds and who bring these experiences with them into their new school situation. School has been understood from this perspective as an institutionalized space of belonging and of education, that pre-structures, opens up or even closes off articulation opportunities for the actors[7]. [9]

Our view of language and multilingualism was also inspired by action theory, i.e., by a speaker-centered perspective that understands language in the context of biographical starting points and trajectories (THOMA, 2018) and essentially also as an interactive practice. We look at multilingualism in terms of its interplay of linguistic resources, practices and ideologies (ANDROUTSOPOULOS, 2018, p.197). We focused on multilingualism from the perspective of the young people and based our analysis on theories and methods known from biographical research (DAUSIEN, 2006; DAUSIEN, ROTHE & SCHWENDOWIUS, 2016). [10]

2.2 Research settings, handling of participative research demands

The project was funded for a two-year period through a program whose core concept was to foster collaboration between researchers and schools and to introduce school students to the world of research. Their participation in the research process was therefore an essential element, but there were no stipulations regarding participatory approaches of the kind that are now being discussed in the social sciences. The principles of participatory research, and reflection on its opportunities and constraints, especially in research with school students and refugees, was nevertheless an important source of orientation for the design of the project (VON UNGER, 2014, 2018; WÖHRER, ARZTMANN, WINTERSTELLER, HARRASSER & SCHNEIDER, 2017; WÖHRER, WINTERSTELLER, SCHNEIDER, HARRASSER & ARZTMANN, 2018). [11]

When planning and implementing the project, we thus endeavored to give the students as much space and freedom to participate as possible, including the

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7   We borrow the concept of articulation (relatively freely) from the work of HALL (2000 [1996], 2011 [1996]) and from the inspiring reappraisal of his approach for biographical research by SPIES (2009). Unlike SPIES, who understood articulation as a link between the biographical subject and discourse, we use the term to accentuate the *narrative practice* with which the subjects repeatedly "narrate" themselves anew into the respective social world and "connect" with it—not only with the relevant discourses, but also with the actions and material conditions that constitute that world. We thus associate the term with the concept of "biographicity" (ALHEIT, 1995, 2018; ALHEIT & DAUSIEN, 2000). Both concepts deal with the link between individual subjects, on the one hand, and social discourses and knowledge formations, on the other.

option *not* to participate in the activities offered. Participation in the project was voluntary, as we repeatedly made clear at the outset and in various subsequent phases. This offer was taken up by individual students on a situational basis, i.e., not all of them always took part in the project meetings and workshops. Nevertheless, it should not be underestimated that the overall framework of the project was set by the cooperation with the school, so the "voluntary" aspect ran "counter" in a sense to compulsory attendance at the school. The binding nature of the school setting was reinforced, among other things, by the fact that we were not able to hold the workshops which would have been central to our data gathering (see Section 2.3) outside school hours and premises, as originally planned. For pragmatic reasons, they were held in time slots during the core teaching hours at the school. This meant that our research activity was "synchronized" with the social setting of the school—a circumstance that had ambivalent effects: On the one hand, the school order ensured continuous participation of the group, as it allowed us to meet the students with little organizational effort and above all, without the additional need to coordinate times. On the other hand, we had to interactively "enforce" our participatory and candid research approach against the school framework of lessons and assessment routines. More precisely, we were challenged again and again to draw a sharp distinction between teaching and our own ways of working: Besides the principle of voluntariness as far as the extent and form of participation was concerned, this mainly involved that the activities and statements of the students should not be subjected to assessment. We emphasized, for example, that we were not teachers and that we were less familiar with the school than the students; that we did not want to test and assess them, but rather learn from their experiences. The design of the room, our tasks and forms of communication also differed from the usual seating arrangements and forms of work in schools. Another condition for keeping the school setting at arm's length was that the teachers be largely absent from the workshops. [12]

Measured against VON UNGER's "stage model" of participatory research (2014, pp.39-40), participation on the part of the youths in our study was in the middle range: They were involved in the research process as co-researchers and active participants in certain phases and aspects (DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.67-69). Their involvement related specifically to the production of data, where they played a significant role in deciding on the content and direction of the research process, given the very candid methods (see Section 2.3), but related much less to analysis and further steps in the scientific processing of the data.[8] [13]

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8   The time structure of the project also played a significant role here: The class we worked with was limited to just under one school year. In the analysis and reflection phase in the second year of the project, there were only a few students with whom we still had contact, so that we could have further discussions with them and involve them in the reflection process.

2.3 Methods and methodologies within interwoven ethnographic and biographical research approaches

Within the project, we applied the principles of interpretive and reconstructive social research (ROSENTHAL, 2015). As part of our ethnographic strategy, we adapted the methods to conditions in the field and to the specific life situation of the students (BREIDENSTEIN, HIRSCHAUER, KALTHOFF & NIESWAND, 2013). We knew very little about both at the beginning of the project. Similar classes had already existed at the school in previous years, which we knew about in preliminary discussions with interested teachers, but the specific mixture of students, their origins, linguistic repertoires and previous school experience and all other socio-biographical backgrounds were unknown, as the class was only put together shortly before the beginning of the school year. We therefore decided on an ethnographic approach that was very open in its design and with which we could first explore the field, establish contacts with the teachers and the students and sound out the linguistic and social challenges, while at the same time having to institute the project itself, as well as the time structures and ways of working in the specific school field (in cooperation with teachers, a social pedagogue and the school's principal). Methodologically, we pursued the basic ethnographic strategy of participant observation, which we documented in the form of observation protocols as well as field and interview notes, supplemented by audio recordings of group discussions with students, recordings of joint evaluation workshops with teachers, as well as interviews with teachers and other officials (social pedagogue, school principal) in the field. [14]

In the first phase of the project, we gradually established our field contacts and our roles as researchers in the field. Since we had to carefully approach the specifics of our planned approach, it was particularly important to keep detailed notes in the research diary and in some cases record verbal protocols from memory. These often focused on the subjective perceptions and experiences of the researchers and not, as in the protocols, on the observed interactions of other actors in the field. We considered such forms of write-up to be a useful way of exploiting the relative lack of familiarity as a potential source of knowledge when approaching the field. At the start of the project, most of the research team members had little experience interacting with young Syrian or Afghani refugees and/or with the rules and routines of everyday school life. Thus, we thought it would be useful to pursue the idea of autoethnography (ELLIS, ADAMS & BOCHNER, 2011) to some extent, and to note down the subjective experiences of the researchers not only in order to reflect on their own co-construction in the research process, but also to be able to use them purposefully as a way of accessing the field socially and culturally. We assumed, for example, that experiences we had in our first encounters with the young people, whose languages we could share only to a very limited extent or not at all and about whose history we knew next to nothing, were not dissimilar to those that the teachers in the field had. The teachers' actions and interpretational routines were at the same time very foreign to the research team, as some researchers were not familiar with contemporary everyday school life in Austria either from their training or from previous research or pedagogical practice (apart from their own

experience as a student, which in some cases had been a long time ago). Discussing and analyzing our notes thus played an independent role in the initial phase of the project, because our attention was drawn to some key phenomena[9] that we could then focus on and analyze more closely as our research progressed. However, we did not do autoethnography in the stricter sense, because we did not systematically maintain this way of including researcher subjectivity, and certainly did not expand on it in the sense of a "strong reflexivity"[10] (PLODER & STADLBAUER, 2016, 2017). In contrast, the method of participatory observation, ethnographic field notes and interviews were important strategies throughout the research process. [15]

Whereas we used the ethnographic approach primarily to understand the school as a space of belonging (DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.48-64), and to understand the functions of the school order as concretely as possible, our main interest was in the perspective of the young people, their action strategies and translation practices, and in the experiential background to their biographies. Here we chose biographical research methods as our main approach. The *link between biographical research and ethnography* seems rather obvious as both are based on common foundations of interpretive social research, and there are various disciplines which have experience in combining the two in research practice (e.g., BECKER & ROSENTHAL, 2022) and which engage in methodological reflections on the relationship between the two approaches (e.g., DAUSIEN & KELLE, 2005; KÖTTIG, 2005, 2018; LÜDERS, 2006; PAUL, 1998). While these cannot be discussed in great detail, we briefly outline below three arguments for linking the approaches and that were important for the project. [16]

First, we proceed from a social constructivist understanding of biographical research which means more than a data collection method and more, in particular, than the biographical narrative interview (SCHÜTZE, 1983). From the basic assumption that "biography" is an "orientation pattern in the social world" and a "social construct" (FISCHER & KOHLI, 1987, p.26), there is theoretical justification for assuming that "biographical knowledge" is part of the social world in various formats and practices and therefore that not only autobiographical narratives but also various biographizing practices can be empirically observed and reconstructed (DAUSIEN & HANSES, 2017; DAUSIEN, ORTNER & THOMA, 2015). [17]

Second, we share with BECKER and ROSENTHAL (2022) the argument for methodological plurality and field-orientation: "A common feature of the research approaches used in social constructivist biographical research and sociological

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9   One example of this is our alertness to the role and function of the janitors and cleaners as "gatekeepers" who regulate entry to the school and the legitimacy of forms of presence and "movement," not only of the students, but also, to a certain extent, of the researchers and teachers in the school building.

10   By positioning ourselves in this way, we assimilate the distinction between "weak" and "strong" reflexivity (PLODER & STADLBAUER, 2017, pp.422-424), even if such polarization seems very sharp. We do not understand the subjectivity of researchers as an essential "problem" that needs to be kept under control, but rather, to borrow from BREUER (2003), as an independent and necessary path to knowledge (see also BREUER, MUCKEL & DIERIS, 2019).

ethnography is that both are oriented towards the requirements of the field and operate with a plurality of methodologies" (p.369). Given their research background in the Global South, the authors pointed out the importance of openness, also with regard to the chronological sequence of methodological steps, because research plans have to be adapted, widened or even completely overturned and restarted, if necessary, depending on how access to the field and interactions within the field develop (ibid.). Like BECKER and ROSENTHAL, we also let ourselves be "more or less guided by the field [in order to] see which approaches 'work' and which methods are available" (ibid.). This was especially true for approaches involving biographical narrative (see Sections 3-5). [18]

Third, one of the basic principles of biographical research is that the interactive processes and the institutionalized framings of the interview situation be incorporated in the analysis. Narration, even semi-monological narration focused on one's own biography, is always an interactive process between the narrator and the addressee or listener. This dimension often operates more or less unnoticed in the background—particularly when the biographical narrative interview is of the kind where the interviewer remains quiet most of the time (in phases, at least). However, the process of communication is always characterized by contingency and by the possibility that the level of interaction between the participants comes to the fore, for example when a "disturbance" arises. This can occur at the level of the narrative due to events in the "outside world" or due to physical needs of the participants (WUNDRAK, 2020). The respective situational and institutional framings also play an important role for the how and what of narration (see, for example, the analyses by GUBRIUM & HOLSTEIN, 2008, 2017). Knowledge about this interrelationship, and the initial observations in the field were therefore of key importance for designing how narratives were gathered in the project. [19]

Biographical narration in an interview is always a very contingent form of communication that imposes tough demands on the design of data collection, especially the interactional relationships and the social setting. The method involves certain prerequisites that are not present in the case of research with refugees (such as trust, a sense of security, a sufficiently shared linguistic and lifeworld framework for mutual understanding), or that first have to be established. This generally requires a longer and more elaborate preparation process to set up a sustainable framework. The situation is made even more difficult when refugees have to attend officially defined "interviews" on their life history during the asylum procedure, as is also the case in Austria. They are compelled in such a context to present a life history and refugee escape story that is as consistent as possible, so they have to exert special control over their narratives (THIELEN, 2009). The methodology of the classic biographical narrative interview "seduces" its subjects to tell their life story freely and spontaneously, which in some circumstances means the "impossible" is demanded of them. This creates various kinds of problems and social/moral dilemmas for all involved. This difficult research setting is made even more difficult when conducting research with children and young people. It is essential

here to observe special principles for research ethics and maintain a high standard of reflection (VON UNGER, 2018). [20]

The institutional framework of the school also had a major impact on the research in our project, as we have already noted.[11] The school routines, especially the strict time structures and the logic of assessing every statement made by a student, made it difficult to form a confidential setting and tended initially to impede rather than encourage free narration. Since our original plan to conduct workshops with the students outside of school was not feasible for various reasons, we met with them several times inside and outside of school before the first narrative workshop[12], so that everyone could get to know each other. We made clear that as researchers we were not part of the school, that our workshops were not lessons, and that participation was voluntary, but above all that the students' stories would not be graded or assessed and that we would treat them as confidential (DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.21-23). The room situation was also important to us. We usually had access to a spacious and configurable room in the school, and to attend our workshops the students went out of their classroom, which was closely associated with the teaching setting. In order to "break down" or at least open up the school framework, it was necessary to build up trust over a longer period of time by means of regular workshops in the school and at meetings outside school. A significant contribution in this regard was also made by using cooperative forms of work and settings known from adult education, which could be designed individually and in small groups by the young people themselves. [21]

In view of these conditions and the precarious life situation of the young people, many of whom still had the asylum procedure ahead of them or had already had their first interviews, we did not conduct any detailed biographical narrative interviews in the project.[13] Instead, we used different "small story" formats (GEORGAKOPOULOU, 2015) to gather data on the topics of school, arriving in Austria or on languages and translation, which in some cases we had adopted and adapted from pedagogical contexts, but in other cases had also developed specifically for the project. In a total of twelve workshops each lasting a few hours which took place in the school, we worked with very open and "restrained" programs for generating narratives. In other words, students were not asked directly to tell their "whole" life story. Instead, they were offered a variety of themes which could be answered in the form of autobiographical narratives, but which also allowed other, equally "suitable" activities, i.e., ones that could lead to further interaction and continuing communication. [22]

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11 With regard to the relevance of institutional contexts for the production of narratives, see GUBRIUM and HOLSTEIN (2017).

12 For example, we visited them at school and invited them to join us at the university, or we went to an exhibition with them.

13 We had already made this decision when planning the project, as we assumed that at least some of the young people had had traumatic experiences that we did not want to bring to mind. Our decision was proved right in the initial field exploration and relationship building phase of the project, in which other important factors also arose, as described above.

For example, we set up playful tasks to encourage students to tell stories verbally or in writing. Stimulation was provided, for example, by a selection of pictures (photos, drawings, paintings) that were open to interpretation and which covered a wide range of motifs and styles, in response to which the young people, at their own discretion, could write stories they had experienced themselves, or stories from their own imagination (DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.30-31). Another task was to write a letter to a fictitious friend about their first day at a school in Austria. In addition to such tasks, which initially had to be worked on individually, there were group settings such as facilitated storytelling rounds on specific topics (see Section 3.1), or small unfacilitated groups in which the young people could interview each other. Methods such as painting posters on the languages used, or on their educational pathways hitherto were also used (pp.34-37). [23]

When developing and applying such methods for evoking "small" autobiographical narratives, biographical communication concepts derived from educational work with adults provided an important source of orientation (BEHRENS-COBET & REICHLING, 1997; DAUSIEN, 2011; DAUSIEN & ROTHE, 2023). However, we were also sensitized as biographical researchers to *listen* to spontaneous biographical narratives beyond those that were prompted in methodologically established ways, and to allow room for them (VÖLZKE, 2005, p.13). Such stories were often recorded afterwards from memory in the form of field notes or protocols. [24]

A wide variety of narrative material was produced in this way: Written texts and posters by the young people, transcripts of audio recordings (e.g., of the narrative rounds), as well as ethnographic protocols, field notes, etc. Their analysis was based on grounded theory methodology (GLASER & STRAUSS, 1967; STRAUSS, 1987; see also MEY & MRUCK, 2011). We were guided by the principles already described in detail by STRAUSS (1987), of permanent comparison, coding and development of categories by "breaking up" the data and by step-by-step abstraction. Above all, we used the open coding and contrastive comparison in the material to identify key themes which were then elaborated further by analyzing selected documents in detail and recording the results in the form of written interpretive texts and memos. In the detailed analyses, we applied the principle of sequentiality (ROSENTHAL, 2015, pp.76-79) and the analytical tool of narrative analysis (DEPPERMANN, 2013; SCHÜTZE, 1976, 1984) to reconstruct not only attitudes acquired from experience as well as experienced and narrated interaction processes from the perspective of the subjects, but also the contexts of action and the "social settings" that SCHÜTZE (1984, pp.98-102) identified as a discrete "cognitive figure" of autobiographical narration. All in all, given the different types of material we collected, we worked with these principles rather freely and in some cases experimentally, and also tested concepts from narrative analysis such as cognitive figures when interpreting ethnographic protocols and field notes. In addition to the ideas from narrative and biographical theory mentioned above, we were also guided, in the sense of "theoretical sensitivity" (GLASER, 1978; see also STRAUSS, 1987, pp.11-17) by ideas borrowed from MECHERIL's theory of belonging (2003). In this paper, however, the focus is not on analytical methods and results, but on describing and

reflecting on the collected material in order to show how fruitful research based on "small stories" can be. [25]

2.4 Between research and pedagogical practice

Due to the generational distance and the school context in which the project was located, the relationship with the young co-researchers also had a pedagogical dimension from the outset. This was pre-structured by the setting: By reciprocal role attributions and expectations in the interaction between adults and youths, by the interaction arrangement of instructing and informing, in which the adults (initially) played the "pedagogical" role, and finally by the school order already mentioned. On the other hand, our interest in the stories told by the young people did indeed have an educational dimension: For the purposes of the project, designed as it was to meet a variety of demands, our aim was to establish an open and trusting working relationship with the students; we felt responsible for giving shape to the communication and for ensuring that the students entrusted to us felt safe and secure in the workshops and could openly articulate their point of view; and finally, we wanted to design the research process in such a way that not only we would gain information and "data," but also that the young people themselves could gain new insights or "learn" something in exchange with each other and with us. To that end, we also used explicitly pedagogical or andragogical *didactic* methods, such as the guided narrative settings presented by way of example in Section 3. [26]

We also had a *research* interest, of course. We wanted to understand the role that biographical narration plays in everyday school life, the opportunities and limitations that are manifested under the specific conditions of such a "transitional class" for refugee students, and the biographical perspectives and experiences that they bring to what, for them, is a new school situation, in particular with regard to multilingualism. To achieve that, we used narrative formats as *research* methods. [27]

In the course of the project, the pedagogical dimension not only proved to be a *prerequisite for* our research, and therefore of precursory relevance both temporally and socially, but also played a role for the substantive focus of the research, i.e., the pedagogical interaction with the students set the "direction" of the research at various points. An example is the development of written forms of narration (such as writing a "letter" about one's first day at an Austrian school) that were not planned that way originally, but proved useful in interactions with the students, especially at the beginning of the project. They did not know each other sufficiently well by then and the basis of trust for open biographical narration in the group was not yet there. If the pedagogical frame could initially be seen from the researcher's perspective as a restriction, it turned out in practice during the project that this interlacing was also an opportunity to develop innovative methods and to discover new and interesting perspectives for research at the content level. In that connection, we made a number of observations and gained experience with narrative methods that were more of a by-product as far

as the objective of the project was concerned, but which are now the key focus of our paper and deserve to be described and reflected upon in greater detail. [28]

3. Pedagogically Guided Biographical Narratives

As already described in Section 2.3, we worked in the workshops with different kinds of encouragement and forms of guided narrative, including *storytelling rounds* moderated by the researchers[14], in which the young people could talk about specific topics and issues. This method, in which participants talk within the group about a specific theme or stimulus, is used quite often in adult education, (e.g., DAUSIEN & ROTHE, 2023; ROTHE, 2016). The aim of this method is to work on a topic from the learners' perspectives and to make experiential knowledge available as "material" for joint reflection. The participants' biographical experience and background is systematically tapped as a "learning field" (DAUSIEN, 2011, pp.117-118). Through the telling of stories and the joint reflection on them afterwards, individual experiences are brought into relation with a particular topic, experiential knowledge is linked to general knowledge of school subjects which is hereby "enriched" (p.117), and the learning process can "take new directions" (ibid.). Differences and similarities in biographical knowledge within the group can also be made "visible" and reflected on together. Apart from instructions for practitioners, hardly any thought has been given in research to the implications of applying this method in the school context. An important difference from adult education situations is that, in the school setting, the group (the class) is not something one can choose freely, and it usually has a shared history over a longer period of time in which hierarchies and rules of debate have been established and consolidated, in some cases over a period of years. Another difference is that school is primarily a place where performance is assessed and where students expect that everything they say will be assessed. Even if these aspects played only a limited role in the case of our project (the class had been newly put together and had only a relatively short history together, participation in the workshops was voluntary, and it was explicitly emphasized that there would be no assessment (see Section 2.2)—the school setting had nevertheless to be taken into consideration. (One consequence, for example, was that we did not conduct the storytelling rounds as plenary sessions with the whole class, but rather in small groups, and we again made explicit to the young people that they could participate at their own discretion—an option that was certainly availed of.) [29]

We now present the work with methodologically guided narration with reference to two examples. They are taken from the ninth workshop, i.e., from a phase in which we had already been working with the young people for several months and had established a basis of trust to some extent. The topic of this workshop was "translation" and the particular experience the young people had already had with it. [30]

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14 The moderator was responsible, among other things, for ensuring that all of the participants in a session were granted the same amount of time and attention for their narratives, and that the agreed communication rules were respected (no interruption of the narrators, no assessment of the stories, etc.).

The first story was told by Haadiah[15]. In a moderated storytelling session with five young people, she was the second to tell a longer, dramatized story. Immediately before the excerpt we present and interpret below, Haadiah told of a situation in which her counsellor faced her with the decision between a normal school and a so-called "youth college"[16]. Haadiah reported that she initially chose the youth college, but disliked both "the situation" and "the students" and for that reason decided against staying there. She did not want to decide on the school for practical everyday reasons, as it would have meant a longer daily commute. Haadiah continued:

> "I didn't know which one I should do then - accept or choose. Uh - and then I didn't want to at all. I was very nervous. Then she [the counsellor] told me - um - 'call your father and mother here - I want to talk to them'. Then I uh called the two of them. Then I had to translate - I was very nervous. ((laughs)) Although I was very nervous, I translated. [...] Yes - my counsellor told me my my counsellor told me: 'Why don't you go? It's nice there - why don't you want to? It doesn't matter if it's very far away, but - you just learn - better than sitting at home and doing nothing.' Then I translated that ((laughs)) even though I don't feel so good (there) and I was very nervous. Yes - then - my father and my mother then said uh: 'Pick one, either youth college or - school'. Then I chose the school." [17] [31]

We cannot interpret the narrated situation in detail at this point (THOMA & DRAXL, 2022) and would like to focus instead on a few aspects: Haadiah's narrative shows that, despite her nervousness, she had to interpret and was under pressure in the conversation she was interpreting, to give reasons why she did not want to choose one of the two options that were suboptimal for her. Using direct speech, Haadiah recounted her counsellor's questions and advice about her educational pathway (see also DRAXL & THOMA, 2022), although she actually wanted to talk to her parents. They play only a secondary role in the narrative, however, and it is clear that Haadiah could not count on their support. In the situation narrated, Haadiah did not respond directly to the counsellor's questions and instructions, but first translated them for her parents. At this point, the parents appeared as actors for the first time and called on their daughter to take action. Haadiah then reported that she chose the school, thus positioning herself in the narrative situation as the decision-maker and the active agent, as the one who had the last word in the conversation, despite the very limited options available to her. In reply to a question from the moderator as to whether the conversation had taken place on the phone or whether all those involved had sat together and talked, Haadiah continued:

> "[...] we sat together - yes 'I don't want to' ((laughs)). And my counselor said: 'Why don't you want to?' Then my mother asked: 'What is she saying?' ((laughs)) She says

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15 All names used in the quoted material are anonymized.

16 Youth colleges are an educational program aimed primarily at young refugees who are no longer of compulsory school age.

17 For readability reasons, we refrain in this article from more precise notation of the quoted material. We based our transcription on DAUSIEN (1996, pp.613-614). A legend of transcription symbols can be found in the Appendix.

to me: 'Why don't you go?' Then my mother asked again: 'Well, why don't you go?' [...] Well I didn't want to translate that ((laughs)) so that my mother doesn't understand what I want or that I don't want to go to the school - to go to school. Then I have to translate. There was no one (to translate)." [32]

In this passage, the scene becomes even livelier with more verbatim speech. It is clear that Haadiah adopted various roles. She was the "subject-matter" and at the same time the addressee of the conversation: The counselor and the parents (more specifically: the mother; the father did not appear as a speaking character) wanted to find out the reasons for Haadiah's hesitation and pressured her to give reasons. The student was addressed with questions from all sides and called upon to react and decide. Also, her function as a *language broker*[18] is made visible: In addition to the pressure to answer questions and make decisions, she had to explain the situation to her parents and to respond to the counselor's instructions. Her reflections on interpreting point to major challenges: Haadiah did not want to interpret, but rather to withhold information from her mother (possibly about herself and her wishes or uncertainties). On the other hand, her powerful position as interpreter is revealed, as she was the only one who had access to all the linguistic repertoires of the people involved in the conversation and could withhold or even alter information. However, there is nothing to indicate that Haadiah did this strategically and in her own interest, since she did not present the situation as an advantageous opportunity to exert influence, but as a necessary evil. [33]

This example reveals phenomena that we were also able to identify when conducting a comparative analysis of the stories about translation, and from other observations. The results shed light not only on the ways that schools handle multilingualism, but also on the biographical perspective of the youths: First, it is obviously common practice in educational institutions to use students as interpreters also, but by no means only, in situations where their own educational pathways are being negotiated, as in Haadiah's story. In other narratives, young people reported how, for example, they had to "translate" in situations of conflict between the teacher and parents of other students. Second, when analyzing the narratives, we were able to reconstruct diverse and contradictory demands that were placed on the students in such situations: These included interpreting, information management and balancing (one's own) interests and the expectations of participants. It is also striking that, in the narratives, these demands were not thematized or commented on by the adults involved. In our conversations and observations in the field, we also had the impression that the

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18 In the social sciences, the term *language brokering* (ORELLANA, 2017) refers to interlingual communication practices that differ from professional translation mainly in that it is predominantly children and young people without formal qualifications or payment who interpret and translate (for a current overview, see ABREU & O'DELL, 2017; ORELLANA, 2017). By translating, children and young people also become *cultural brokers* (MARTINEZ-COSIO & IANNACONE, 2007, p.349). While *language-brokering* phenomena were long described from a deficit-based perspective, more recent (reconstructive) work has focused on the question of how authority and power relations are negotiated in *language-brokering* processes, how children and adolescents use translation to obtain "desired" results, or how youths engage in *active citizenship* with their translation services (see, for example, BAUER, 2010; EKSNER & ORELLANA, 2012; THOMA & DRAXL, 2022).

practice we describe was apparently "taken for granted" in the school and was hardly reflected upon by the educators. Third, the situation from the perspective of the first-person narrators can be reconstructed in the narrative description of the situation. This allows us to identify how the students experience such situations, the moments they are over-challenged or take on responsibility, and their action strategies, and also to identify how these experiences are embedded in the biographical context, for example, in Haadiah's story, the precarious link between the interpreting situation and a crossroad in her educational biography. [34]

If, in the context of this paper, we now take another look at Haadiah's story at the meta-level of methodological reflection, there are two initial points to be made: On the one hand, the method of the moderated storytelling round "worked," because in addition to Haadiah, the other four young people also told similarly detailed and lively stories about specific translating situations. They listened to each other and made references to each other (especially later, when they jointly reflected on the stories they had heard). Two of the four researchers acted as moderators and were definitely present, but their position in the "round" was a decentral one compared to a classic interview situation between two people. On the other hand, the example shows that "small stories" about self-experienced situations are a rich source of empirical material. The narrative structure, particularly of dramatized narrations like Haadiah's, allows us to reconstruct how interactions involving different participants progress, which do not have to have taken place "exactly like that," but which nevertheless provide clues to social practices and how they are experienced and reflected upon by the narrators involved— especially when different narratives are compared and contrasted. [35]

The second example, which we present below, also comes from the same storytelling round. However, it is not another "translation story," but thematizes and reflects upon the narrative situation itself. This was initiated by an intervention by Ibrahim. In the storytelling session, he had told a story in some detail and with palpable emotional involvement about a life-threatening situation his brother had faced. At the border to Austria, his brother had an epileptic seizure because he had not been able to take important medicines on a regular basis during his escape. With the help of a smartphone, Ibrahim and his mother tried to translate the key details for the doctor treating him. The phase in which others could ask questions about his story was ended somewhat abruptly by Haadiah, who had just told her story above before Ibrahim. She briefly told another story, after which one of the moderators brought the conversation back to Ibrahim's story. There was a brief reflection within the group, in which Haadiah actively participated and in which she supported Ibrahim's narration. After the next person in the group had told his story and it had been jointly reflected on together, Ibrahim spoke up again. He switched to the meta-level and asked the moderators a question relating to the previous workshop and in general to the meaning of storytelling and of the whole project. Here are some excerpts from the transcript of the ninth workshop:

> "Ibrahim: What did you want as regards story or (write a picture?) and suchlike - what did you want to know - from us?" [36]

The moderators first asked questions to assure themselves that they had correctly understood his question and the reference to the last workshop (where stories had been written in response to a picture prompt and translated). They then explained in detail why they were interested in the young people's experiences with translating and why they found their stories important. Ibrahim seemed to accept this, but then asked a second question to the moderator (M1), where he again referred to the story he had just told, but opened up a completely new perspective:

> "Ibrahim: Can I ask one more question?
>
> M1: Yes, any questions at all.
>
> Ibrahim: For example - for example you have to leave your country. And you couldn't speak English - you couldn't speak German - you couldn't do something - you don't know anyone. How does that work out - (from you)? (5)
>
> M1: You're asking what it would be like for me?
>
> Jamil: Yes." [37]

With his politely asked question, Ibrahim broke out of the framework of the predefined setting: He turned the tables, so to speak, and interrupted the procedure for the storytelling round as presented at the beginning of the workshop, in which not everyone had told their story yet. He did not tell another story, nor did he put forward any questions or comments on the stories told by the others in the group. Instead, he confronted the researchers with the question of how they would act in his situation. Jamil, another school student, supported him. There was a longer sequence in which the two moderators gave an account of themselves, so to speak, by telling stories from their own biographies. An excerpt:

> "M1: I have also left my country sometimes. But in countries where there was not such difficulty with the language. But where many other things were also very difficult. Maybe not - that was sort of - I had work - that was good. Yes, and I had - people where contacts were already there before. But the question of translation and the question of how do they do it here - very different - yes. So playing differently ((laughs)) talking differently - the authorities the - institutions and offices - how - how you do things is different from what I know. I know that well too. And that (3) how do you do that? How do I do that? I always do it - as well as I can. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.
>
> Ibrahim: (No) for example, like us. We didn't at all." [38]

In this passage, the moderator used the opportunity of biographical communication to show similarities and differences between experiences. Ibrahim followed the answer attentively before addressing the difference from the situation described by the moderator: "We didn't at all." In doing so, he placed his story in relation and at the same time in contrast to that of the moderator, thus challenging her to make another statement. She confirmed:

> "M1: Yes, that's it. You have a much more difficult situation. You are - without people you know. Yes, exactly. And that's why what - you're doing - how you're doing it is a great achievement. Yes. That's very - and I think it's very interesting to hear your stories. - We can also think about this together - what does that thing about translating mean [...]." [39]

The moderator's statement gave credit to Ibrahim's story by highlighting the "much more difficult situation" of refugee migration compared to her own migration story told earlier, and referred to how they cope with it ("how you're doing it") as a "really great achievement." However, by addressing them collectively (with the second person plural), a form of expression was chosen that left open whether the speaker was still referring to the particular story and meant Ibrahim and his family, or whether she was already addressing all the students on a more general level who had to cope with the new life situation in the host country "without people you know." In the following sentence, it was clearly the participants in the storytelling round who were being addressed. It is also clear now that an effort is being made to bring the conversation back to the workshop topic of "translating" and to also include the others in the round again. The moderator begins by referring to the story already told by Haadiah, who had to provide interpretation between her parents, a teacher and a counselor, in order to encourage further comparisons and reflection.

> "M1: What you told us about - I mean talking about yourself - between parents and - the counselor - those are difficult_ they are the ones who decide about me and I am supposed to talk about myself. So - that
>
> Ibrahim: But if someone with - without family in Austria (am) - the counselor helps. But if someone with family (here) nobody helps (me/not)." [40]

Ibrahim again spoke up and also puts himself, it seems, in a relationship of difference to Haadiah's narration: He made it clear that—because he was in Austria "with family"—he did not get any help, unlike those, like quite a few from his class, who had a "counselor" because they were "unaccompanied underage refugees." When subjected to closer scrutiny, however, Haadiah's story shows that the alleged contradiction was not true in substance, because Haadiah had told of a situation in which she had to provide interpretation between her parents and the social worker responsible for her. This discrepancy can be interpreted in such a way that Ibrahim was not primarily concerned with the substantive level in his communication—in this case the comparison of the stories about translation— but with articulating his biographical experience and the social and emotional distress associated with it. By making that argument, he steered the conversation away from the topic of translation once again and focused attention on the core issue in his current life situation: "Nobody helps me." In a way, he was resisting any continuation of the task-based communication that consisted of comparing the stories heard and jointly analyzing and evaluating the interpreting situation. Instead, he insisted on the content of his narrative and thus on the biographical dimension of communication. [41]

The reactions to this objection, and the course then taken by the group discussion cannot be presented here in detail. It can be summarized that, although Ibrahim was still given a lot of space for his questions, the two moderators kept the conversation to the topic of "translating" and that the young people participated eagerly—Ibrahim included. However, his actual concern, namely to thematize his current situation, which he experienced as dramatic, and to obtain some support—perhaps even quite concrete support—in order to cope with that situation, was too much for the group and the research framework to handle. It was left unanswered and unresolved—in the workshop setting at least.[19] [42]

On the meta-level, there are three points that can be made here regarding the specific insights we gained from the scene with Ibrahim. First, guided biographical narrative can open up a communication space in which students, unlike in the classroom, can articulate as competent speakers their own biographical experiences, explore similarities and differences, and relate to each other and to a common theme. [43]

Second, this communication is highly contingent and risky. One condition is that the participants be addressed and recognized as "experts in their own life history," as BEHRENS-COBET (1999, p.62) put it (in this case as experienced translators). Another condition is the reciprocity of narration, in which the researchers, too, are challenged at least potentially, and to a stronger and differently framed extent than in the biographical narrative interview, to disclose their own biographical experiences. (The power structure of the communication framework must also be taken into account, however. Thus, it seems important to us that the impulse for this came from the young people, in this case Ibrahim, rather than the researchers or the moderators using their position of power to make their "own stories" the topic.) The communication discussed here took place during the last third of the workshops, i.e., a third condition, namely sufficient familiarity with the project framework and the team, had already been established through joint practice. [44]

Third, the example points to the fact that here a student in the biographical narration setting was querying the research framework and at the same time was using it to persistently challenge the researchers, who were addressed as privileged representatives of the host-country society, to state their position. What did they want to know from him and the group? And how would they act if they were him? By asking these two questions, he positioned himself—also and especially in revealing his powerlessness—as an autonomous subject who was entitled to a reciprocity of perspectives and also to social rights and resources. His primary concern was not narration or the joint work on the stories in a reflective, *researching* attitude; instead, he narrated primarily with the *pragmatic* intention of showing how precarious his situation was and finding a helpful solution to it. The example illustrates the dual nature of biographical narration that

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19 Ibrahim was a student who sought contact with the research team even outside the defined project times together and after the school year ended. He also took advantage of the activities we offered such as eating or doing things together.

applied to all the stories told in the setting we guided, namely its production as a *narrative* and being made the object of joint reflection, on the one hand, and on the other hand, "being" a piece of one's own biographical reality as something *narrated*. In the scene with Ibrahim, the latent conflict between the two levels becomes explicit. What it also shows is that the young person's narrative was not "heard" and found resonance in all its aspects. In the further course of communication, his question about support was subordinated to the joint thematic work and—in the workshop situation at least—was not taken up again. [45]

4. "Casual" Biographical Narratives in the Project Context

At the beginning of the project, we had invited the young people to the university to show them the place where we worked. Three of us had taken the young people on a tour around the ancient university building, where we had looked at the library, the arcade courtyard and an empty lecture hall, and had briefly "eavesdropped" on a lecture. Afterwards, we walked together to our institute, where we all sat together in a cozy atmosphere and chatted with each other for the first time outside the school. We wish to pick out two scenes from that day, based on protocols from memory taken from the research diaries:

> Scene 1: "We are on our way from the main university to our institute. I talk to Sami about the tour of the university and how he liked it there. Sami tells me that he is thinking about his future career. His father is a doctor, and there are expectations in the family that he will also study medicine. However, he actually wants to become an actor. But that is not a 'secure' profession and his father is against it. He asks me how I see it, what options I can imagine for him, what I can advise him. He seems very well informed about admission requirements to particular fields of study and obviously has a very good overview already of the Austrian school system. I catch myself being astounded by this, because as a non-Austrian it took me a long time to become familiar with the different types of schools in Austria. I advise Sami to take his time with the decision and say that he still has some time ahead of him at school and that any decision he makes can always be revised. He does not seem particularly convinced by this advice and persists by asking what kind of occupation I think would best suit him" (protocol from memory by researcher 1).

> Scene 2: "I wasn't there for the trip to the main building, but afterwards I greet the young people with biscuits and drinks in a rather informal setting at our institute. The young people look for a place to sit in the ready-made circle of chairs. I ask them what they saw on their trip and what they found particularly impressive, and I suggest first of all that they chat about that with the people sitting next to them. Sami is sitting next to me. He tells me avidly and repeatedly how impressed he was by the view into the large lecture hall, that so many students sit there listening to the professor and taking notes. He tells me how he imagined himself standing up there at the front and that he wishes to become a professor one day, from whom so many young people can learn. He looks for a photo of the lecture hall on his smartphone as a record. I can't remember exactly whether he found one, but the image he conjured up in me with his story of the lecture hall is still present to me to this day. I am also impressed by how actively Sami makes contact with me (did he purposefully choose the seat

next to me, the "professor"?) and how openly and freely he talks about his dream of becoming a professor one day. Later on, I am irritated to hear that he also said he wanted to be an actor or a footballer" (protocol from memory by researcher 2). [46]

It is clear from the examples how Sami actively tapped into communication spaces and talked to various project participants about his plans, questions and uncertainties. He told biographical stories not only in pedagogically guided situations, but he also used communicative "interspaces." Depending on his communication partner, he selected different aspects and topics which he could assume the other person would be amenable to. One could say that Sami tried out different communication spaces and focused on different aspects of his story to find out how he could tell it in such a way as to be heard. By choosing aspects that he could assume would resonate with the respective addressees, he constructed himself as an interesting interlocutor. This example illustrates a dual function of "casual" biographical narration: Biographization and identity work, on the one hand, work of belonging, on the other. These two (interconnected) aspects are explained in more detail below. [47]

The two protocols document, first of all, a *practice of biographizing*:[20] Sami and some other young people used such "small," less formalized communication opportunities on the fringes of joint activities to present aspects of their biography and thus to do "identity work"[21] (ENGELHARDT, 2011; HAHN, 2000). Unlike institutionally framed biographical presentations, which refugees are required to provide when interviewed by authorities, above all, but also in the context of (socio-)educational assistance programs (THIELEN, 2009), the control mechanisms and constraints to tell a linear, consistent and "true" story are less pronounced in such casual communication situations. The scope for what is narrated and how is greater for the narrating subject. As BAMBERG (2005)

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20 FISCHER and KOHLI (1987, p.42) spoke of "biographization" in connection with the "individualization thesis" to make the point that, by constructing biographical meaning, individuals "fill in" those "gaps" or "options" that arise in the course of modern life courses. The term has been taken up in biographical research and developed further in various ways. We also follow this idea, but focus less on the historical process of adopting biographical forms of self-construction (HAHN, 2000) than on the everyday, socially situated practices of biographization as occur, for example, in spontaneous autobiographical narration, but also in institutionally framed and in some cases pedagogically mediated forms of self-presentation (DAUSIEN & KLUCHERT, 2016), for example in the presentation of a formal curriculum vitae or in guided self-reflection in the context of school lessons or university teaching.

21 The term "identity work" used in various contexts within the discipline (e.g., KEUPP, 2020; KEUPP & HÖFER, 1997) will not be discussed in more detail here. It seems appropriate, however, to add a note on HAHN's (2000) distinction between situational and temporalized presentation of identity, the former being linked to static attributions. In order to explain biography as a modern schema for the presentation of identity which is basically characterized by temporality and specifically by the narrative structure of (one's own) life history, HAHN distinguished it from situational forms of presentation that often make do, in everyday action, with a reference to characteristics or static affiliations, and thus do without a biographical narrative. In biographical research, the focus now is mostly on autobiographical narratives obtained in interviews. In this context, identity work is described as a complex achievement that involves constructing a meaningful, coherent *interrelationship*, despite all the discontinuities and inconsistencies in the narrative or in the interview interaction (see, for example, FELDEN, 2020; LUCIUS-HOENE & DEPPERMANN, 2004). As plausible and well-documented this interpretation may also be, it conflates matters somewhat. Every day, situational forms of identity work that are equally "temporalized," i.e., that have a biographical-narrative structure, like Sami's stories, are lost from view. By systematically analyzing such "small" everyday narratives, biographical research can potentially provide new input to identity research.

argued in his research on "small stories," such "small," spontaneously produced narratives are to be read less as "true" accounts of a biographical past (and therefore less "fixed" on it) than in each case as performative positionings in a present interactional situation. Even if his contrasting of "big" and "small stories" (2006a, 2006b) may not be convincing in every respect, his analyses do also support our observation that small biographical narratives "happen" on an everyday basis and—perhaps especially in communication between young people, which BAMBERG has also studied much—perform an important function with regard to constructions of identity and belonging. This kind of narration is also "fleeting"—it is not documented[22], it can be stopped under a situational pretext, and it is not checked immediately for its veracity. [48]

The example reveals a practice that can be interpreted as an "experimental" form of biographical self-presentation. Sami varied different self-narratives to construct and test himself in the eyes of others, in the sense used by MEAD (1934). He was thus constructing himself simultaneously as a competent biographical subject who was not presenting a fixed history at all, but who appeared and wanted to be recognized as the sovereign author of his own history. This biographical work also involved a degree of normalization: Sami talked about possible designs for his biography, as many young people do. He did not refer to his escape story and was not questioned about it. Nevertheless, it would be naïve to see the casual narrative situation as a rule-free experimental space. Sami's stories had to be interactively acknowledged and *heard* in order to be told, and were thus subject to social rules and norms that had to be reconstructed for the particular case and by comparing cases. (We do not have sufficient empirical material for such an analysis, however.) [49]

The second function of such casual biographical thematizations can be referred to as *work of belonging*. In his narrative, Sami established "biographizing connectedness," to use the concept developed by MECHERIL (2003, p.218). By making recourse to the past (his father was a doctor, there was awareness of academic educational pathways and the expectation of pursuing one) and designing possible biographical futures, he showed that he "belonged"—and he also made himself belong on his own terms by "narrating" himself "into" the new social space of the university (and into Austrian society), so to speak. The fact that he actively sought out interlocutors whom he identified as significant actors in the university space is also performative evidence of his competence to act and his ability to identify the field.[23] [50]

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22 The fact that we present Sami's narrative here retrospectively in a protocol from memory could be read as contradicting the statement above. However, the focus of our ethnographic notes was on our own experiences in meeting the young people in the trust-building phase, not on the stories casually told by the students. These are glanced at somewhat randomly in the quoted protocol extracts.

23 This could be followed, with a reference to BOURDIEU (2010 [1980]), by an interpretation regarding the fit between field and habitus (see also BREMER, 2016). Our observations suggest that the cultural capital he "brought with him", owing to his family background, is a key criterion of difference in the class. However, since we did not conduct any in-depth biographical interviews for the reasons mentioned above, this aspect cannot be systematically pursued. The same applies to the question, barely investigated so far, of how inherited cultural capital, biographically acquired experiences in the education system and forced migration contexts overlap.

Sami was one of the few students in the class involved in the research who managed to stay in the Austrian education system until the end of the project and to thread their way into the institutionalized life course (KOHLI, 1985) that is processed there—and who succeed in developing a biographical construction of meaning that turns that pathway into "their" story. By means of a more detailed case analysis based on a biographical interview, it was possible to reconstruct the sociocultural background conditions for this biographization process (family background and privileges, educational pathways started, aspirations), but it was also possible to investigate how connectivity and social resonance are established in a new social context. One conclusion that can be drawn from our field experience is that Sami's "small stories" initiated further communication processes that made him "someone special" (also for us) whose story is not only of scientific interest to us, but "close to our hearts."[24] This observation is by no means just a marginal, self-referential note by individual researchers. It points to the fundamentally interactive nature of that work of belonging and to the effects that biographical narration evokes in the "listeners." The reaction of the researchers can be analyzed here—especially in the context of "casual" communication beyond explicitly created research situations—as representative of a *potential* reaction on the part of communication partners in the field. As can be seen from the interaction with Ibrahim, there are various conceivable variants of reactions and interactions. A general principle that applies, however, is that biographizing connectedness is a *reciprocal process* that depends at least as much on resonance from the field or from the specific social others as on the biographical construction achieved by the individuals. [51]

5. Narratives about Narratives—Biographical Dimensions of School and Teaching

It is almost superfluous to say that casual narration and the narrative construction of identity and belonging are not specific to the research process, but occur continuously in many forms in everyday (school) life. In ethnographic conversations and interviews with teachers, we learned that the young people told them a lot about their biographies during breaks and "peripheral times," but also in class, and that they themselves were also emotionally involved. The following example is from an interview with a teacher.

> "Well that was so strenuous for me because I - didn't know - how I should handle that in class now - - when all of a sudden such a life story crops up that is very dramatic, right? That also hurts emotionally, where I can't just take it in stride or where I can't say 'That doesn't interest me right now, that's a different topic' - but how can I still keep that out of the lessons, they were always - that I I still had to take them seriously and say 'Okay - it's good that you are telling me this - I heard it - - but we have to do [school subject] - we can't - because if I allow it then other stories will come along and I won't be giving a [school subject] lesson. That was always the balancing act [...] - -

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24 At this point, following RUOKONEN-ENGLER and SIOUTI (2016), there should also be a more detailed discussion of how biographical narration gives rise to mutual acceptance of perspectives, emotional involvement and commitment, and how social connectedness, "solidarity" and "interest" ensue from that.

to look - uh what are they telling me and where do I absolutely have to put an immediate stop to it - because otherwise it will get out of hand - - right? Uuh otherwise I'm actually it's then a [school subject] therapy lesson and not a - - not a [school subject] lesson any more - - so this balancing act between - - [...] I dunno how to say it and that was very stressful for me - I actually wanted to allow feelings - - but they are not - - feelings where I say - - - when they talk about their prison and what that was like - - how they came here and - - how they were able to tell me about it - - that was very very difficult for me to digest to be honest - I went out after those two lessons - and I don't think they told the same to the other teachers" (interview transcript, Andrea F., a teacher). [52]

In the passage quoted, the teacher expressed enormous emotional tension and uncertainty about how to deal with young people's biographical narratives during lessons. One situation was described as particularly problematic, in which, without any preparation, "a life story crops up that is very dramatic." Different aspects of the problem on the emotional, cognitive and action levels become clear in the passage. A biographical narrative in the context of forced migration is associated with strong feelings ("which also hurts") and also triggers feelings in the listeners that cannot simply be "taken in stride." The teacher felt emotionally burdened herself. At the same time, she expressed an ambivalence that arose between her own (?) wish and aspiration to provide space for the students' life histories and to conduct her lessons as smoothly as possible, which in turn meant that some narratives had to be "kept out of the lessons." Biographical narratives thus become a "disruption of purposive institutional action" (SCHLUTZ, 1984, p.95). The contradiction constructed in the quoted passage becomes particularly evident in the juxtaposition of "[school subject] lesson" and "[school subject] therapy lesson." Pedagogical action was accompanied overall by the question of how much space biographical narratives could be given in class. The teacher expressed the dilemma of not knowing how to deal with the conflict, yet nevertheless having to act, as a "balancing act" or "tightrope walk." The reference to the "therapy" lesson is also a clear sign that she was aware of hitting the limits not only of her pedagogical competence, but also of "lessons" as a framework of action in school. [53]

How insistently the students themselves demanded space and time for their narratives, or whether different needs were asserted in this regard, for example whether the thematization of life histories was also rejected by some classmates, was not raised as an issue and addressed. Furthermore, there was no mention of any guidelines for action that could have served as orientation, empowerment or restriction. Nor did there appear to be any swapping of experience in this regard among the staff—the teacher did not know whether student narratives occurred in other subjects as well, and she did not believe that "they told [...] to the other teachers." As she described it, the teacher was thus constructing herself as a lone warrior who had to deal with and "digest" the challenge individually. She saw herself at the same time as a significant interaction partner for the young people, as they confided biographical details to her that they (presumably) did not communicate to other teachers. This was accompanied by a sense of moral

obligation and professional pedagogical responsibility. The speaker was aware of this, but felt that she was left alone with these challenges. [54]

Another teacher also told us in a telephone conversation that she found it difficult to handle personal information given to her by students in her capacity as the main class teacher. The protocol on the telephone conversation reads as follows:

> "Susanne said she often faces the dilemma of how to handle information she receives from the students. The students often tell her something in confidence and it is often difficult for her then to weigh what she may and may not pass on to others. If she is told something in confidence, there is no way she can pass on that information. It is important that the young people trust her; it would be dysfunctional if she were to break that trust. It is sometimes helpful, however. At teacher conferences, for example, it would be helpful in some cases if she could describe certain situations to colleagues. Some behaviors are easier to understand if one knows the stories behind them. Susanne keeps feeling conflicted by this. I also feel that she is asking herself these questions in relation to the project. She usually tells us a lot about the young people in the class and about the situations they face. She is articulating here for the first time that she has doubts about whether she should do this so openly. At one point she tells me again about a very personal situation and thinks at the same time that nobody should know about it. That no one in the class knows it either, not even the mother of the person concerned. I therefore promise her to keep this information to myself, which is why I do not go into it in this protocol" (field note, telephone conversation with Susanne L.). [55]

Dilemmas appear on several levels in this excerpt: The dilemma that the teacher described involved the contradiction between wanting to treat in a responsible way the confidence placed in her by the students, and the fact that it was precisely what the students told her in confidence that could help explain to colleagues some of the students' behaviors, or problems in the class, or to awaken understanding for the special situation of the refugee students. The second dilemma concerned passing on narrated details to the project team. Although the latter was involved in everyday school life to only a limited extent, the question of confidentiality also arose for the research context, i.e., how to handle the content of narratives and what routes information could take once it had become known. The project team member was ultimately confronted with a dilemma that had been "passed on" to her; the teacher had given her information about one of the youths "in confidence," which she did not share with the project team and did not record in the protocol, but kept to herself. The very thing that could be interesting for the project, namely knowledge about the biographical experiences of the students, had to be kept out of the research for ethical reasons. [56]

In this example, pedagogical dilemmas (see also HELSPER, 2010; SCHÜTZE, 2000) and research ethics issues are addressed (VON UNGER, 2014) that are inextricably linked to biographical communication in institutional contexts, not just in the refugee context. Narration of life stories has substantial potential, on the one hand, as a facilitator for intersubjective changes of perspective, for getting to

know the special individual characteristics of another person and also for making them emotionally understandable. This increases the vulnerability of the narrator, on the other hand, so protective mechanisms are needed. However, the example shows that, similarly to the situation discussed previously, there were no institutionally established ways of dealing with such information, with teachers obviously developing individual strategies of their own. There does not seem to have been any professional discourse within the school context regarding this problem, of the kind that has been conducted for some time in the research ethics debate in biographical research. [57]

However, many questions remain unanswered in the research context as well, and the basic structural conflict between high ethical standards and the aspiration to produce the most comprehensive possible findings about the social reality in certain fields and life situations on the other hand remains a permanent challenge. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. In the case of the research project described here, for example, we refrained for research ethics reasons from collecting and documenting more detailed biographical information and narratives of the students at various points—and by doing so, we also excluded some important opportunities to add to our findings. We only became aware in the course of our research work that we were also unable to use, or only to a rudimentary extent, such "stories about stories" as were shared in the field itself, for example in communication between students and teachers. Our solution for dealing with this problem was not to make the content of the stories the prime object of research, but rather to note the form and function of this specific communication producing "biographical knowledge" (DAUSIEN & HANSES, 2017) and to identify it as a subject of our research analysis. [58]

6. Discussion and Conclusions

What insights can be generated from the above observations and theoretical reflections? What can we learn for further research from the experience of a single, in many respects quite specific project that unfolded at the intersection between research and educational practice? We conclude with some general thoughts about working with biographical narrative approaches in research with (displaced) young people. [59]

6.1 "Small stories" as material and methodological strategy

The first finding applies concerns to the *methodological approaches* we tested: In our research with young people, working with low-threshold and open narrative stimuli that encourage the production of "small stories" proved successful in facilitating the articulation of biographical experiences. This finding is particularly relevant for research settings where the research participants are particularly vulnerable—e.g., due to the forced migration context, the power imbalance in the educational relationship—and/or the institutional framework tends to prevent or strongly control and regulate, any free, self-directed narration of one's own life story. In our project, the dual framing—school and asylum procedure—meant that we had to assume the latter was the case. The narrative methods adapted from

pedagogical practice, and from adult education in particular, are not only lower in threshold than a direct invitation to tell one's own life story, but also offer a broader spectrum of participative opportunities. Oral and written narrative formats, and different incentives and media, appealed in differentiated ways to these young people. They made it easier to *participate* to a greater or lesser degree, depending on interest, empowerment, the interaction itself and on situational conditions. This aspect is relevant for participatory research (not only with young people), but also for other kinds of research—especially when the preconditions and opportunities to participate and articulate one's own perspective differ greatly in the respective field under investigation. In our project, such differences were particularly relevant with regard to the linguistic repertoires of the students and the researchers and with regard to the cultural capital and the (school) educational experiences available up to that point. By using different "narrative tasks," it was possible to counteract the risk of the methodology reinforcing such differences. According to our thesis, the potential benefits of "small," variable narrative methods are by no means confined to research with refugees. [60]

For all the advantages of this approach, the focus on "small" narratives also has its limitations, of course. Questions concerning biographical trajectories and experiences in the narrower sense, such as educational pathways or refugee escape stories, which are usually dealt with using biographical case analyses, cannot be explored in adequate breadth and detail. The approach should therefore be understood as more of a complementary research path, which under certain conditions can be combined with the biographical analysis approach in the sense of triangulation, but that can also stand by itself as an alternative approach. [61]

6.2 Research in the context of forced migration—research with refugees

Encouraging people who have fled from harm to provide biographical narratives is challenging in multiple ways: In addition to the risk of retraumatization, it is essential to reflect on the pressures and constraints of the asylum procedure and to minimize their influence on the research situation. Refugees are compelled to tell "their story" again and again in the course of that procedure, without getting entangled in (alleged) contradictions or telling different versions of the *one* story. The requirement to—repeatedly—tell a life history that is deemed "credible" by government officials in migration regimes of the global North and whose narrator is thus recognized as "entitled to asylum" under certain legal conditions, is sure to have implications for other forms of biographical self-thematization (see also THIELEN, 2009). For this reason also, alternative "small" narrative formats, and the openness to decide for oneself whether a story should have any biographical reference, and if so which, have proven valuable. [62]

It was also helpful to plan for an *extended, ethnographic field phase*, i.e., to create the opportunity for repeated encounters and collection of material, thus allowing trust to be built gradually. An interactive relationship with the research participants, established over the long term, provides wider options for

addressing the special challenges of refugee studies, compared to individual interviews, for example, which are generally limited to only a few meetings. [63]

This makes it possible, for example, to negotiate the "meaning" of the research communicatively, as demonstrated by the encounter with Ibrahim. The principle of informed consent, as required by research ethics and also by law (VON UNGER, 2018, pp.10-13), and which is particularly important in research with vulnerable groups, yet at the same time is very difficult to accomplish in many cases, can thus be developed jointly and as part of a process. What is interesting about Ibrahim's example is that he had formulated his question about the goal of our project in the situational context of a *biographical narrative* conversation and not, for example, in the situation at the beginning of the field phase when we presented the project and also discussed the declaration of consent with the young people. [64]

Finally, the extensive field phase allowed us to monitor the research process itself, in the form of ethnographic notes and diary records, and to reflect continuously on the interactions in the field and on the experience gained with the methods being tested (DAUSIEN et al., 2020). We were able, for example, to respond to unforeseeable conditions in the field and in the young people's life situation, and to their own response to our outreach, and hence to adjust our approach continuously within the research process. [65]

One of the things that became apparent in this process was that particular challenges are faced not only when *narrating*, but also when *listening*: Researchers—like other professionals who work with refugees—are generally in a hierarchical relationship with refugee students, not only on account of their professional role and institutional function, but also because of their national-ethnic-cultural affiliation in the immigration society. If the researchers and the students have no common language and/or if the dominant language in the host country is used for communication, the hierarchical nature of the relationship can be intensified.[25] Involving interpreters is not simply a "neutral" way of transferring content from one linguistic system to another (KENT, 2004; PÖLLABAUER, 2004). Interpreters are likewise entangled biographically and interactionally, so interpreting can make interactions, narration and listening even more complex. Thematizing one's own involvement in power relations (MESSERSCHMIDT, 2016) therefore imposes special demands on the professionalism of researchers (and educators). The above excerpts from interviews with teachers also draw attention to this aspect. [66]

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25 We were in a fortunate situation in that the students already had sufficient and in some cases excellent German language skills when the project started, which meant that we could do without the interpreters we had originally planned for. Multilingualism, moreover, was not only a central theme of the project, but also a legitimate practice in the joint work, albeit to a limited extent only (ALPAGU et al. 2019a; DAUSIEN et al. 2020).

6.3 Research in the educational field

Our project was embedded in a *pedagogical framework* in two ways: In the workshops, we managed to establish a *pedagogical mode of interaction* with the young people by guiding, facilitating, counseling, etc., and the project was integrated into the *institutional framework of the school*. This was useful in a pragmatic sense in that we could reach the young people consistently over the entire school year and thus maintain a continuous setting for dialogue and work. However, this also created problems such as the compulsory adjustment to the institutional rules and interaction arrangements of the school. Without going into these contradictory conditions any further here (see DAUSIEN et al., 2020, pp.70-74), there is one aspect of epistemic strategy to be noted: Due to our "dual role" as researchers and educators, we experienced things that provided insight into the structures of pedagogical practice. We were also able in that context to observe some biographical narration phenomena that occurred beyond any explicit invitations to narrate (whether in the research context or with pedagogical intent). As illustrated by the examples presented from our ethnographic notes, this generated new epistemic opportunities and questions, for example about the significance of "casual" narration in everyday school life. [67]

In pedagogical contexts, narrative situations are not always produced didactically, but sometimes arise incidentally, "on the sidelines" or "backstage"—and they can *disrupt* pedagogical action routines. The fundamental interest of educators in biographical stories told by students, and their attention to them, can be thwarted by curricular demands, the school culture and by economic or timetabling constraints of the institution (see also VÖLZKE, 2005). This can cause narratives to be aborted. [68]

Yet even when students are given a listening space and talk about themselves, the question arises as to how to deal with what they narrate. In the forced migration context especially, there is a potential danger that personal stories will be used in schools or in state administrations to the detriment of those who have told them, or of the group to which the narrators are ascribed. On the other hand, dealing with biographical narratives of students confronts educators with a number of challenges which they may feel left alone with and for which they are usually not trained (see also SCHÜTZE, 2009). We learned from the teachers' stories that their students sometimes also told biographical stories in class. In such situations, it was not only the teachers but also the classmates who heard the stories and who were involved in the interaction in different ways, thus increasing the complexity of the communication demands involved and requiring an additional set of facilitation skills from the teachers. [69]

Analyzing in greater detail such biographical communication situations in the classroom setting would be an interesting topic for biographical research that is not limited to autobiographical interviews, but which examines the practice of biographizing and interactively handling biographical knowledge (DAUSIEN & HANSES, 2017) in social situations and institutional contexts. Such empirical observations and analyses can also be used to derive ideas and concepts

concerning professionalization: Until now, student teachers receive hardly any preparation for guided or "casual" biographical-narrative communication with students. By pursuing a professionalization strategy that includes working with reconstructive methods and which is already applied in or required for various fields of pedagogical professionalization (e.g., DAUSIEN, HANSES, INOWLOCKI & RIEMANN, 2008; HUMMRICH, HEBENSTREIT, HINRICHSEN & MEIER, 2016; SCHÜTZE, 2021; SCHWENDOWIUS & THOMA, 2016; WIESER & KLINGER, 2020), teachers should also receive greater preparation for the ways in which the biographical is thematized. [70]

6.4 Multilingualism in the research context of flight and asylum

Multilingualism is viewed not only as a central theme of the project, but also as a shared social practice within the project: We wanted to establish a space where the students' linguistic repertoires could be seen and heard, and our plans also included the use of interpreters to facilitate communication between ourselves and the students. They were not needed, however, as some of the students already had a very good command of German and also attached great importance from the outset to communicating in German (ALPAGU, DAUSIEN, DRAXL & THOMA, 2019b). The "small stories" told by the students indicate that they explicitly linked their acquisition of German to their desire to be allowed to stay in Austria. However, acquiring a command of German also appeared as a duty and a necessity, and therefore points to the social context in which knowledge of German is closely associated both discursively and legally to notions of "integration" and "participation," and an essential requirement for access to (educational) institutions and state benefits (ibid.). We reconstructed (speaking) German as a strategy adopted by the students in order to be successful in Austria or at least be able to articulate a claim to belonging and to participation. However, the "small stories" point to the fact that German language skills can also mean a high level of new dependencies in addition to greater independence, for example when students (have to) interpret for others on a regular basis and this is taken for granted by schools as something that lies outside any sphere of institutional responsibility (see also THOMA & DRAXL, 2022). [71]

Beyond these substantive findings on the students' linguistic repertoires and the importance of multilingualism in educational institutions, it became clear on a methodological level that narration "works" even without "perfect" knowledge of German, and that "small stories" are not only suitable as a way of generating data on multilingualism in immigration societies, but also as a way of involving students linguistically and substantively (free from any pressure regarding grades), so that they can swap experiences with their peers and make their positions on multilingualism and in "multilingual situations" heard. [72]

6.5 The social significance of biographical narration

Biographical narratives are often analyzed as expressing the autobiographical structuring of experience and/or as the social presentation and production of individual identity. This perspective was also relevant in our project. The forms taken by "small narratives," as described in the foregoing, could be interpreted as variants of narrative identity work. From the perspective of biographical theory, however, we understand identity not as a characteristic or structure inherent in the individual, but—to borrow from the theoretical tradition of MEAD (1934)—as a social process that unfolds through reciprocal exchange between social subjects. Identity construction, therefore, can also always be understood as the construction of social belonging—as another side of the same process, so to speak. This postulate, expressed initially in theoretical terms, can also be investigated empirically and with rich content, according to our thesis, by applying the ethnographic approach to narratives as proposed here. [73]

The ethnographic research perspective and its associated focus on social interactions serves to broaden the analytical perspective. The focus is no longer purely or primarily on the content of biographical narratives, but also on the interactive processes in which they are produced and shared through communication. These can be interpreted as interactive identity work and at the same time as the *work of belonging*. Biographical narration enables the reciprocal adoption of other perspectives across differences. Things people have in common despite all their differences are constructed, while distinctions are made between supposed commonalities. This process of balancing the individual and the collective in the construction of identity and belonging is "experimental" in nature, in certain conditions (see the example of Sami in Section 6.2). Narration involves socially testing and exploring affiliations; it is an essential means of establishing what MECHERIL (2003, p.218) referred to as "biographizing connectedness." [74]

The research approach presented here allows constructions of belonging to be studied in their different variants and conditions on the basis of empirical material (field notes, observations of interactions, and/or transcripts). The examples interpreted above suggest that belonging and connectedness can be established in narrative in different ways: Whereas Sami "tried out" a variety of self-designs and imagined futures in different situations and with different interaction partners, thus making himself an interesting interlocutor, in Ibrahim's case a connection was established precisely by the discontinuation of pedagogically prepared routines, by the thematization of the very different positions that exist in the immigration society and in the education system, as well as by his perspective on the research project—and less so in the immediate situation than in the conversations and interpretational sessions in which the research team subsequently grappled with Ibrahim's "intervention." The teachers' stories about their experiences with students and their narratives could also be interpreted from the perspective of a theory of belonging and could be questioned, for example, as to which stories are "heard" and "resonate" with them, and in what way, as to which ones can be linked to their own perspectives gained from experience and

action and thus "permitted," but also as to which ones are rejected and cordoned off as difficult or impossible to "stomach" (see the example in Section 5). [75]

The research material gathered during the project is not sufficient to systematically pursue questions of such relevance not only for theory and methodology, but also for educational and social practice. Our aim was to develop appropriate and stimulating narrative approaches so as to learn about the everyday and educational situation of young refugees and to involve them as much as possible in the research process. In doing so, we tried out new pathways and produced a wide range of material that enabled us not only to answer research questions, but also to articulate at least as many new questions and research topics. In this paper, we have put some of them up for discussion. [76]

Appendix: Legend of Transcription Symbols

The most important special characters according to DAUSIEN (1996, pp.613-14) are as follows:

Special character	Meaning
-	Prosodic break
- -	Very short pause
- - -	Short pause, max. 1 second
(3)	Pause of several seconds (number of seconds in brackets)
diffi_	Word breaks off
((laughs))	Paralinguistic cue
/((pours in water))/	Comment on an event accompanying speech, with beginning and end markers
(translated)	Word that cannot be precisely understood acoustically, but which can be semantically decoded

Table 1: Transcription symbols

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