Conceptional Considerations and an Empirical Approach to Research on Processes of Individualization

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Abstract: With BECK's (1986) thesis of a new thrust of individualization a discussion on processes of social change in post-WW II-Germany has been unfolding since the 1980s. The occasionally indistinct terminology and its varied usages have repeatedly led to misunderstandings.

A central problem lies in the explicit or implicit assumptions: i.e., on how the consequences of action are related to the meaning ascribed to them and on the relationship of social structure to institutions and social agents. Since these assumptions address the core of the individualization theory they themselves must be subjected to empirical analysis instead of simply being taken for granted. This weakness is connected to the established research traditions in post-WW II-Germany (such as in social structure analysis, biography research and discourse analysis). Each of the different research paradigms, on its own, permits only very limited statements on the processes of individualization. This contribution shows how strategies combining qualitative and quantitative data and methods can be used to examine processes of social change as well as the thesis of societal individualization.

Starting from the differentiation between *institutional* and *personal individualization* (ZINN 2001), an empirical research design for examining subjective individualization processes will be presented. Here, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data and methods is of special importance. Using an example from life course research, it will be shown how with sampling, type formation, standardized data collection and cluster-analytical reproduction of a typology a qualitative and a quantitative research approach can be combined and how they can benefit each other.

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1. Introduction

Individualization is generally understood as a process in which fundamental social change took place in a transition from a traditional stratified to a modern society and which until today has continued to be accompanied by processes of modernization. Until now different thrusts of individualization have been identified (JUNGE 1996).[1] The last one took place in the post-WW II-Germany of the 1960s and after and has been a topic of discussion since the 1980s (BECK 1994, p.48). It started from a mixture of different socio-structural developments: a continuous economic upturn led to a rise in the average income in the 1950s and 1960s (BECK 1986[2]: "elevator effect", p.124), the general expansion of the welfare state covered more and more groups which had been excluded (LEISERING 1997, p.157) and ever larger shares of the population remained longer in the educational system.[3] Finally, a *semantics of individualization* was established spreading such terms as *self-realization*, *self-control*, *self-responsibility* and *self-management* [1].

Characteristic of the German debate is the "logic of liberating individuality on the basis of successful institutionalization" (WOHLRAB-SAHR 1997, p.25; KOHLI 1985). Individualization is considered rather as an intensifying relationship between institutional dependency and opportunities of individual choice. In this sense, especially the expansion of the welfare state is associated with processes of individualization (LEISERING 1997; WOHLRAB-SAHR 1997). As a whole, a positive outlook is prevalent in public discourse: the possibility of individual choice through new institutional arrangements even if the negative variant (poverty cycles and the failure of individualization at the actor level) is often considered as well (BECK 1986, pp.143ff.). [2]

In contrast, the discourse in the United States had largely negative connotations. In the context of comparatively less institutional *security* and a traditionally strong emphasis on individual performance, the label *individualism* is discussed largely as detrimental to community, undermining solidarity and as egotistical behavior (see WOHLRAB-SAHR 1997 for a cursory overview). Especially the communitarianism debate on new forms of community or the return to old ones

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1   JUNGE distinguishes between a primary individualization thrust with the processes of rationalization and domestication at its center, a secondary individualization thrust focused on the differentiation of action spheres, and a tertiary individualization thrust characteristic for the FRG since the 1960s and accompanied by an accelerated process of making societalization more subject-oriented (1996, pp.733f.).

2   If the English translation of the "Risk Society" (Beck 1992) deviates from the German original, the original version (Beck 1986) will be referred to.

3   Other, frequently mentioned developments are, for instance, a strongly expanding service sector, a strong increase in organizable leisure time, some effects of mass TV consumption and large parts of the population abandoning the Church.

stands for the negative connotations of a progressive *individualism* in the
American debate. [3]

In contrast to the USA, there are fewer central questions dealing with *community*
and *the means of achieving social bonding* in the German debate. Rather, it is
about the *reproduction of social inequality*, on the one hand, and the *proliferation*
and *destandardization* of life course patterns (foremost of employment and of
partnerships), on the other. In this context, the question is addressed as to
whether the thrust of individualization in post-WW II-Germany represents *socio-
structural* or *purely cultural change*, i.e. change taking place at the interpretation
level only, but not leading to the elimination of traditional social inequality
structures. [4]

Traditional macro-sociological research (e.g. socio-structural analysis, inequality
research, employment research) for a long time assumed that by using specific
structural indicators, such as educational attainment, employment status, etc., life
styles and patterns of normative attitudes could be adequately determined, since
a far-reaching correspondence between social position and orientation patterns
was thought to exist (ESSER 2000, p.139). Precisely this relationship is
challenged by the individualization thesis, making new research efforts beyond
traditional socio-structural analysis necessary. If it is to be ascertained to what
extent socio-structural change is connected to changes in meaningful action
modes of members of society, to changes in formal and institutional action
contexts or to an economic upturn, then the dominant institutional and social
structural perspective has to be extended to the micro-level to include respective
actors. Only then will differentiated analyses of individualization processes be
possible. This concerns, for example, the questions to what extent individual-
ization processes in different social sub-systems (e.g. economy, family, leisure
time) assert themselves in different ways, whether individualization is expressed
exactly at those lines of entanglement between the different sub-systems or to
what extent effects related to region, class, milieu, gender, occupation, and other
effects can be observed. [5]

Accordingly, the central empirical-conceptional question of this contribution is:
How can *individualization* be measured and operationalized at the actor level? [6]

To complement the theoretical perspective with a separate micro-level of
individualization demands a change in the empirical research approach. An
example from life course research shows how the relationship between
institutional arrangements, consequences of actions and their meanings can be
analyzed with the assistance of a typology of different kinds of action and
structuration logic[4]. As will be shown, this analytical approach was based on
qualitative and quantitative data sources. Moreover, the combination of qualitative
and quantitative research approaches has proven to be useful to ensure that the

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4   The terms "structuring logic" and "action logic" are distinguished from the observer perspective.
    Either the structure perspective or the actor perspective is taken; action results are either the
    result of a certain constellation of existing structures or a context-specific sequence of action
    patterns and habits generated individually.

typology is substantively representative in an optimal way. If, finally, the aim is to examine questions in connection with the individualization thesis, it will be helpful to use the typology constructed on the basis of qualitative research as a standardized instrument. Such questions would be, for example, to what extent different kinds of biographical action and traditional social structural indicators are related to one another, how the manner in which individuals act is influenced by institutional change, or if a pattern of action should be compared intergenerationally. [7]

Clarification of a few concepts in the of the contribution shall help sort out the multiple uses of the term individualization. Main difficulties arising from certain views and usages of the individualization thesis refer to the relationship between objective events and subjective interpretation, on the one hand, and between social structure/culture and institutions and actors, on the other. The application of assumptions which cannot be empirically verified concerning the relationship between objective events and subjective interpretations and the relationship between socio-structural changes, institutions and kinds of individual action have been criticized in the discourse on individualization. It calls for the broadening of the theoretical perspective in research to include the actor so that the individualization thesis can be applied to the practical actions of members of society. [8]

On the basis of these conceptual considerations, the *second Section* of the empirical part continues with an example from life course research. It will be shown how the thesis of a new "societalization mode" at the actor level can be investigated by using qualitative and quantitative data. At the time of selecting the qualitative sample for this analysis, using standardized quantitative data, it can be determined whether certain seemingly theoretically relevant (structural) features and subjective interpretation patterns are related to one another. Thus the substantive representativeness of selected features of a sampling of qualitative data can be made optimal (Section 3.1). Furthermore, qualitative and quantitative data can be related to each other systematically in order to create a typology of different kinds of biographical action logic among young adults (Section 3.2). By constructing types of action logic (i.e. *linking* an analysis of interpretation patterns and resulting actions), specific attributes of the individualization thesis can be understood (Section 3.3). For example, the lack of clarity in regard to resulting actions (particular action results cannot be inferred from *individualization*) or the influence of action contexts. Lastly, for the standardization of qualitatively derived typologies, it is also an advantage if qualitative and quantitative data can be referred to (Section 3.4). The contribution ends with a summary of the work presented and an outlook for research done in this area. [9]

2. Conceptional Considerations on the "Individualization Thesis"

Many difficulties in connection with the discourse on individualization can be
attributed to differences in how central sociological problems are
conceptionalized. On the one hand, this concerns the question of the relationship
between *actor* and *structure* or, more precisely, between *individuals*, *institutions*
and *social structure*. On the other hand, the question of the relationship between
social structure and *semantics* or, on the level of the individual, between *resulting
actions* and *subjective interpretations*. [10]

The following distinction between three analytical levels (macro-, meso- and
micro-levels) as well as the differentiation between *objective* and *subjective* data
or subjects of study, respectively, shall serve as an application of heuristics to the
diverse interwoven relationships between various data and levels of cognition
(see Table 1).

Data: Level:	Objective	Subjective
Macro	• Social structure, accumulated action results (e.g. rates of divorce and unemployment)	• Societal semantics, culture (e.g. normative ideals in regard to family)
Meso	• Formal institutions (laws, formalized regulations) • Formal organizational structure (e.g. organigram, laws)	• Institutional interpretation (e.g. in a certain family) • Organization's culture
Micro	• Resulting actions and consequences of actions (e.g. employment status, marital status)	• Interpretations, orientations, individual interpretations (e.g. of certain family members)

Table 1: Heuristic for the analysis of processes of social change[5] [11]

At the *macro-level*, one can differentiate between *objective* social structures and
generally valid interpretation patterns or social semantics. In this manner, the
social structure becomes visible in accumulated action results as expressed, for
instance, in divorce, unemployment or fertility rates. On the other hand, the
subjective side finds expression in normative models, notions of normality or
common interpretation patterns with regard to employment, family, partnerships
or gender-specific roles. At the *meso-level*, different aspects must be considered.
From an *objective* perspective, formal institutions are understood in terms of laws
and formalized regulations, from a *subjective* perspective, as specific institutional
or organizational meanings. Finally, at the *micro-level*, one finds the *objective*
action results on the one hand and, the individual's *subjective* interpretations,
orientations and ascriptions of meaning on the other. [12]

Depending on the level that *individualization processes* are taking place at, which
interactions, relationships or mixtures of levels are implicitly assumed or explicitly
studied, different understandings result of how the individualization thesis is to be

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5 See WOHLRAB-SAHR 1997, pp.30f. on the very similar distinction between "cultural
   ascription", "institutional embeddedness" and subjective experiences and ascriptions which,
   however, does not make use of the distinction in practical research between
   objective/subjective at the level of people to be examined.

interpreted (for instance, in terms of pluralization, isolation, subjectivism,
ideology, an increase in options). Since preliminary assumptions are not often
made a topic of discussion, the arguments in the discourse occasionally seem to
run at cross-purposes.[6] [13]

However, the terminological and conceptual differences are not accidental.
Rather, they can be traced back to certain sociological research traditions of
post-WW II-Germany that find expression, above all, in a different empirical
approach to the research question: as in the basic difference between a
quantitative socio-structural analysis (MAYER 1989) and biography research
based on relatively few cases (e.g. FISCHER-ROSENTHAL & ALHEIT 1995,
DIEZINGER 1991). [14]

Referring back to BECK's individualization thesis (1992), the following elaboration
will be limited to selected central problems which are continuously addressed in
the discourse on individualization and are largely responsible for discussions
which are not always very productive. In addition, it will be clarified which thematic
level the individualization thesis refers to in the author's opinion: namely to a
changed social *reproduction mode* or, in BECK's words, a new "*societalization
mode*" (BECK 1992, p.127). How that is to be understood, will be expanded on
first. This will be followed by an elaboration on how to empirically ground the
hypotheses at the micro-level of the individual actor. [15]

2.1 The macro-sociological starting point of the individualization discourse

A few problems in the discourse of individualization processes stem from the
formulation of the individualization thesis and the strategy used to provide for its
empirical foundation. For the time being, however, we should remember BECK's
definition of an "ahistorical model of individualization" (1992, pp.128f.). With this
concept, he would like to specify a "new societalization mode" (BECK 1992,
p.127). He assumes that three main moments of individualization have to be
differentiated: *liberation*, *destabilization* and *reintegration*:

- "*Liberation*" refers to the phenomenon of being freed from historically
  predetermined social forms/structures and social interrelationships in the
  sense of traditional relationships of domination and provision ("*dimension of
  liberation*"). Here one could, for instance, consider the nuclear family and
  social class structures.
- The "processes of *destabilization*" refer to the loss of traditionally determined
  certainties that go hand in hand with liberation in regard to knowing what
  choices are to be made and actions to be taken and in regard to being guided
  by beliefs and dominant norms ("*dimension of disenchantment*"). Such
  certainties are lost with the erosion of ideas about what is normal in one's life
  course, the family, employment or gender-specific division of labor.

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6   On the other hand, WOHLRAB-SAHR (1992) discusses various preliminary assumptions of a
    "social structure of life courses" (K.U. MAYER, W. MÜLLER, H.-P. BLOSSFELD) in contrast to
    the "life course institution" (M. KOHLI).

- With the third dimension (dimension of "control" or "*reintegration*") new forms of social integration are considered. On the one hand, the constraints of the labor market and the compulsory nature of subsistence by consumption are targeted. On the other, this concept includes the increasing dependency on secondary institutions (such as the labor market, welfare state) as well as institutional interventions and stipulations (e.g. in state regulation for the length of time dedicated to education and for ways of getting to educational institutions, for childcare facilities or insurance provision in partnerships). [16]

Additionally, BECK distinguishes at each level between an objective life situation and a subjective consciousness or identity. This further differentiation also has consequences for his argumentation. In Risk Society (1992), he dedicated the concept exclusively to the objective dimension, while questions concerning consciousness and identity were largely left out[7]. [17]

The difficulty arises to infer, without any trouble, individual patterns of interpretation from objective life situations (institutional regulations, social structure, normative rules). At least the proof of a relevant relationship would have to be empirically provided. However, BECK relates the relationship between the macro- and the micro-level to a unidirectional strategy of explanation in accordance with his logic of separation between objective and subjective dimensions of individualization. Assuming changes in social structure (e.g. rising divorce rates, prolonged periods of time for entering the labor market) and generally accessible semantics considered to be generally valid (e.g. interpretation patterns of self-control, self-responsibility or self-management), specific demand structures are derived for the subject:

> "In the individualized society, the individual must therefore learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of himself or herself as the center of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on. [...] What is demanded is a *vigorous model of action in everyday life*, which puts the ego at its center, allots and opens up opportunities for action to it, and permits it in this manner to work through the emerging possibilities of decision and arrangement with respect to one's own biography in a meaningful way. Beneath the superficial intellectual shadow-boxing, this means that in order for one to survive, an *ego-centered world view* must be developed, which turns the relation of ego and world on its head, so to speak, conceiving of and making them useful for the purpose of shaping an individual biography. [...] The institutional conditions that determine individuals are no longer just events and conditions that happen to them, *but also consequences of the decisions they themselves have made*, which they must view and treat as such" (BECK 1992, pp.135f.). [18]

Since *individualization* has been conceptualized as a structural process of change that, ultimately, no member of society can escape[8], evidence and the specification of the postulated relationship between structural change and

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7 To this day, BECK emphasizes the "objective" side of the analysis scheme.

8 This is not an unusual argumentation strategy. Similarly, SCHIMANK (1985) infers identity forms from general structural changes.

individual change need not be proven or specified for the time being[9]. Deviations
from assumed patterns of normality or average forms of behavior which have
been determined for individual *special groups* or *pioneers* can, therefore, serve
as indicators of the postulated social change. [19]

A further difficulty follows from the strategy to support the individualization thesis
with data on social structures (BECK 1992). Untested assumptions on the
relationship between institutional and individual changes, especially on changes
in individual ascriptions of meaning and institutional assignments of importance
must then be used as a basis. The aspect of how the meso- and micro-levels are
related to one another must be empirically verified as well. This is just as
important as the influence of the different dimensions on the main changes in
society at the macro-level (considering all difficulties which such statements on
general developments pose). [20]

By limiting oneself to the macro- and meso-levels as well as to the *objective
dimension* of individualization, the micro-level and the *subjective dimension* of
individualization remain theoretically or conceptually underexposed and,
therefore, call forth criticism. [21]

2.2 Uncoupling of subject and structure? "Multiple individualization" and "semantic individualization"

Criticism of the thesis that in post-WW II-Germany individualization regained
momentum frequently does not overcome its conceptional weaknesses. If the
individualization thesis is refused at the same empirical level that already proved
inadequate to confirm it, then cognitive progress is threatened. Hereafter, the
terms *multiple individualization* and *semantic individualization* will be used to
designate these problem areas. [22]

2.2.1 Multiple individualization

Particularly in the context of a development-oriented analysis of social structures
(or quantitative research on biographies, families and employment), the
pluralization or diversification of biographies (i.e. the development of partnerships
and work relations) can be observed, and this observation is enlisted to make
individualization processes more plausible. The lack of diversified biographies is
seen as an indication that individualization processes must be refuted (see
MAYER & BLOSSFELD 1990, p.313). As a rule, pluralization, in this context,
signifies no more than a multiplication of observable feature combinations or
development patterns (see HUININK & WAGNER's definition, 1998, p.88). If
pluralization, in this sense, is to verify the individualization thesis, then it must be
based on the other thesis that pluralization is directly connected to

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9   The special research area 536 "reflexive modernization" (Research Area B: Political Sociology
    of Ambiguity: Social Positions, Identities and Their Formation), founded in Munich in 1999, took
    on the task of examining the results of individualization processes or their constitution at the
    subjective level (see BECK & BONSS 2001).

individualization processes (*multiple individualization*). Only then can
individualization processes be directly inferred from observable pluralization. [23]

If, however, individualization is not characterized by *the result of actions*, but by a
specific kind of classification (e.g. WOHLRAB-SAHR 1997)[10], this form of
operationalization fails, since the second essential component—the level of
interpretation—, which would qualify pluralization as individualization, is missing.
The same data could be linked to different interpretations, and a decision on
which interpretation is more plausible could not be made. To be able to answer
the question to what extent discontinuous employment relations result from
individual decisions or must be attributed to general globalization processes that
descend upon individual employees, the results of actions and attributions of
meaning must be analyzed in the context of what constitutes them. [24]

2.2.2 Semantic individualization

If rapid changes at the level of observable action fail to materialize, this is seen as
evidence that the individualization thesis is wrong. It is then criticized as being an
individualization *ideology*, since practical action and social inequality patterns did
not really change (e.g. KOPPETSCH & MAIER 1998). Other authors speak of
"wishful thinking" or of changes in the way a certain social class describes itself
(which is argued by FRIEDRICHS 1998, p.7, and MAYER 1991, p.683).
Consequently, *individualization* can only be interpreted as *semantic
individualization*. [25]

Separating actions and their meaning in this way does not take into account that
actions are constituted by their meaning. If meaning changes, actions are no
longer the same[11]. For actions have no definite objective identity, but obtain this
identity in that an actor or observer is ascribed to them (DILTHEY 1989, as early
as 1959, p.51). However, social change is not only expressed in terms of
observable *objective* actions or new interpretation patterns, but also through
different kinds of logic of actions, i.e. the way in which actions are generated. [26]

If, for instance, an unchanged division of labor is realized in a partnership in spite
of changed interpretation patterns, it can be less and less accounted for today in
terms of traditional gender roles. New *negotiation processes* (beyond traditional
assumptions) are required, making use of new justifications (such as institutional
conditions, differences of income, personal preferences). In this manner,
alternative division-of-labor patterns are conceivable which were previously

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10 A changing ascription mode is understood to be "a qualitative change of relations between the
individual and society" in the course of social individualization processes directed towards an
interpretation pattern "emphasizing self-control, self-responsibility and self-management"
(WOHLRAB-SAHR 1997, p.28): "Accordingly, individualization is interpreted here as ... moving
the ascription of biographical events to individual actors who, with regard to their biographical
arrangements, can no longer refer to an—assumed—collective consensus, i.e. generally
accepted self-evident truths." (WOHLRAB-SAHR 1993, p.88; see 1997, p.28 and 1993, p.62;
see also the discussion between BECK & BECK-GERNSHEIM 1993 and BURKART 1993)

11 Ultimately, the authors KOPPETSCH and MAIER (1998) see it like that, too, but they interpret it
as evidence of the ideological nature of the individualization thesis.

excluded because of what partners considered to be normal in their division of
labor and because of the *nature* of men and women.[12] [27]

In the case of *multiple individualization*, observed pluralization, diversification and
biographies no longer leading back to formal structural indicators are understood
to signify that structural influences are retreating in favor of *autonomous*
individual decisions. They would constitute themselves *beyond* existing social
structures, for the traditional correspondence between the interpretation of
meanings and structural premises would break down (e.g. ESSER 2000, p.139).
In the same sense, there doesn't seem to be a connection between individual bio-
graphical meanings and structural influences in the case of *semantic
individualization*. Structural inequalities reproduce themselves "behind the back"
of actors—unnoticed and uninfluenced by meanings ascribed to them (see
WOHLRAB-SAHR 1992). [28]

Hence, both concepts bypass the individualization thesis—in the sense given to
them by BECK when he determines a connection between increasing
dependency on institutions *and* the need to create one's own circumstances or
"the contradictory double face of institutionally dependent individual situations"
(BECK 1992, p.130).[13] [29]

On the one hand, members of society are becoming more dependent on
provision and certificates of the educational system, the distribution mechanisms
of the labor market and welfare state benefits. On the other hand, these
institutions generate new decision-making pressures and opportunities, leaving it
up to the individual to take action or not to take action. [30]

That can be the decision in favor of a certain kind of school, the decision to finish
high school, have a family, get divorced or start an academic career in spite of
impending university reforms. Or to do none of all this. Simultaneously, structural
premises can be recombined or organized more thoroughly, previously separated
factors can be mixed or reassessed, the *unusual* can be joined to the *normal*.
However, this does not mean that anything goes or that all normative premises
are eliminated, thus leaving the individual behind in a space without structures
(see BURKART 1997, p.271). Rather—according to the individualization thesis as
understood here—the institutional impact on members of society has changed
and so has the *individual logic of taking action*. The exciting question, to be
answered empirically, then is how these facts connect with the distribution of
resources, old and new inequality indicators and actors' actions. [31]

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12 See, for instance, the temporary revival of such nature constructions in the term of "the female
    ability to work", BECK-GERNSHEIM and OSTNER 1978 and its criticism: KNAPP 1987.

13 See WOHLRAB-SAHR's argumentation 1993, pp.40ff., as well.

2.3 The analysis of socio-structural change at the meso- and micro-level: institutional and personal individualization

To be able to interpret socio-structural changes at the macro-level in the sense of general social individualization processes, the underlying processes will have to be examined more closely. Since institutional changes and individual action strategies cannot be assumed to relate unambiguously to each other, *institutional* and *personal individualization* must be clearly distinguished. [32]

2.3.1 Institutional individualization

The well-known arguments of the individualization thesis start from an institutional perspective. Individuals are *compelled* to accept individualization because of their *liberation* and *disenchantment* (e.g. BECK & BECK-GERNSHEIM 1994, pp.14f.). As a result of social change, basic security notions are lost, and each individual must cast about for new forms of social integration. Individualization could then be understood as a kind of institutional determinism or *institutional individualization* similar to the concepts of SCHIMANK (1985) who infers new identity types from changed social contexts. Institutions set the basic conditions to which all members of society can only respond with individualized ascriptions. [33]

If *individualization* is to be understood as a process of change for society as a whole, arguments must go beyond the level of *objective* institutional changes—for instance, in the sense of legislative practices adapted more strongly to individuals. Corresponding to the dictum of the *duality of structure* (GIDDENS 1984, p.25), it should then be possible to indicate changes in the logic of actions and structuring processes that members of society use to reproduce and modify social institutions in practical ways. This is based on a dynamic and practical understanding of institutions that does not reduce them to the perspective of regulating actions formally by means of legislation and its implementation. Instead, the institutions are traced back to the ways in which individuals act (GIDDENS 1984, p.25; 1988, p.69, p.77). [34]

2.3.2 Personal individualization

With regard to the ways in which members of society act, there is another important distinction to be made in the analysis of social individualization processes. Since, without an empirical examination, it cannot be assumed unconditionally that *institutional individualization* leads to only one particular variant of individual action, it must also be investigated at the micro-level to what extent *personal individualization processes* can be observed. Accordingly, the question would have to be addressed to what extent individuals see themselves as "a planning office with respect to their own biographies" or develop a

> "*vigorous model of action in everyday life* which puts the ego at its center, allots and opens up opportunities for action to it and permits it, in this manner, to work through emerging possibilities of decision and arrangement with respect to one's own biography in a meaningful way" (BECK 1992, p.136f.). [35]

Finally, a method would have to be found to examine, in a comparison of cohorts, this kind of behavior and its changes. First, the problem areas addressed—how institutions, actors, social structures and objective events relate to subjective interpretations—will be examined more closely. On this basis, the concept of *the logic of actions independent of the situation they occur in* will be introduced and, in turn, be the basis for the empirical analyses and conceptional considerations to follow. [36]

2.4 How institutions and actors relate to each other[14]

Social individualization processes express themselves in a growing dependency on institutions and, simultaneously, the need to organize oneself. In this context, the increasing importance of "secondary institutions" is often pointed out—such as the labor market or the welfare state (BECK 1992, pp.131ff.)—making *individualized* action possible and forcing it. For example, the expanding welfare state after World War II is supposed to have led to the fact that groups which had previously been excluded from the process of individualization were now included: old people owing to the consolidation of pension plans and health insurance, women owing to the growth of educational opportunities and the group of the poor owing to modern welfare aid (LEISERING 1997, p.157). To what extent changing formal premises, such as social welfare legislation, lead to social individualization processes, cannot, according to the argumentation supported here, be decided on the basis of institutional change alone (in the sense of spreading social welfare legislation), but must be complemented by the actions of individual actors.[15] On the one hand, institutional change can be the expression of changing individual practices which are appreciated and regulated in corresponding laws. On the other hand, legislation may precede a new social practice: e.g. when, for dogmatic legal or political reasons, new regulations are introduced which then have to be integrated into everyday actions and the biographies of members of society. As a rule, both things happen: pioneers or forerunners push the introduction or change of formal regulations which, once they are in place, can be the starting point for new practices. *Which* new practices result from such formal changes, remains an open question which has to be answered empirically. The same is true when changing or diversified social models (e.g. in public discourse) are used to explain progressing individualization processes. Without relating the idealization that models represent and practical actions of members of society to each other, it remains unclear to what extent models contribute to the structuring of individual actions. [37]

For practical research, this means that it is not sufficient, in an analysis of general social individualization processes, to examine the socio-structural and formal-institutional conditions and results of actions. The analysis of *institutional*

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14 The use of the term institution is often inconsistent and unclear. Therefore, in the context on hand, "formal institutions" referring to formal arrangements such as legislation or formal organizations are distinguished from "institutions" without further specifications designating the meaningful actions of social actors (organizations, individuals, networks).

15 In this sense, LEISERING (1997) establishes a connection between an individualization thrust caused by the welfare state in post-WW II-Germany and the coping strategies of people on welfare.

individualization processes must be complemented by the analysis of the logic of individual actions (to be deduced from action and interpretation patterns), so that *personal* individualization processes can be specified. Socio-structural changes at the macro-level (e.g. growing divorce rates or an increase of irregular employment patterns) result from activities of members of society (micro-level) having to cope with their social contexts (meso-level). Socio-structural feedback effects from the macro- to the micro-level have to be considered, as well, e.g. in the sense of experiences with a tight labor market. To what extent changes at the macro-level can be put down to personal or institutional individualization processes, is an empirical question. [38]

To be able to show empirically a changed reproduction mode of social structures, actors have to be examined and their way of reproducing and changing social structures in dealing with structural premises (e.g. *doing gender, doing family, doing social structure*). Since substituting individual voluntarism for structural determinism is not the issue, it has to be shown to what extent a reproduction and action logic in the sense of the "duality of structure" (GIDDENS 1984, pp.25ff.; 1988, pp.77ff.) can be represented as a medium and result of actions and how it is connected to specific action conditions and contexts. [39]

What, then, is meant by *reproduction and action logic* at the micro-level? To answer that question, it is necessary, first of all, to clarify the relation of *objective* events to *subjective* interpretations which can be deduced from them. [40]

2.5 How "objective" events and "subjective" interpretations are related to each other

It has been argued here that attempts to support or refute the individualization thesis with data pertaining exclusively to the level of objective events and characteristics[16] or to the level of individual actions and interpretation[17] patterns must fail: since the individualization thesis is based on linking both sides. Attempts to do it, anyway, imply hypotheses about certain connections (e.g. between action/interpretation patterns and events, on the one hand, and their individual ascription, on the other, or between social semantics and individual interpretation patterns) which have to be reviewed before the validity of the individualization thesis can be either confirmed or disproved. [41]

This logic of separating *objective* and *subjective* or macro- and micro-levels is not accidental, since the discourse, in this manner, follows the traditional division of labor in German social research. On one side, there is an *analysis of social structures*, relying on *formal indicators* (e.g. gender, school certification, employment status) and deriving meaningful actions from distribution factors,

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16 "A person's history determines to an ever increasing extent what chances he/she has later in life. The mechanisms of social selection are becoming more rigid, but the social structures are not becoming more open and mobile. They are becoming less and less so." (MAYER & BLOSSFELD 1990, p.311; see also MAYER 1991)

17 For instance in youth research: LENZ 1988, p.155; HORNSTEIN 1989, p.243; ALHEIT and GLASS 1986, pp.11f.

instead of focusing research on the significance of actions from the perspective
of the actors performing them. This means that statistical relationships between
variables or action patterns are examined on the basis of large amounts of data
and with the help of structural indicators such as employment status, income,
gender, age etc. By reverting to general assumptions about the rational behavior
of actors, available to academic researchers through their own experience or
specialist literature, the quantitative results are then made plausible. This
procedure is successful to the extent that the assumption of stability concerning
rational behavior is not jeopardized by social change or the rational behavior of a
specific sub-culture is not unknown (KELLE & LÜDEMANN 1995 on the
"heuristics of habit in everyday knowledge"). Whenever no certain knowledge
about the rationality of the actors is available, further research efforts are
necessary focusing on the connections between interpretation patterns and
feature combinations or action practices. [42]

On the other side, there is research, informed by interpretation patterns, on
attitudes, identities and biographies. It is undoubtedly more suitable for examining
the inner perspective of actors, their understanding of social reality and
interrelations with different kinds of socio-structural conditions. Conversely, the
relevance of actions for the investigated structures of meaning is sometimes lost
from view. For instance when, in biographical research, only people's stories, but
not other *objective* material is used to reconstruct biographical processes.
Various attempts to overcome this logic of separation by correlating patterns of
behavior and patterns of socio-demographic features (e.g. VESTER 1997) have
shown that identities or interpretation patterns, as determined in biographical
interviews or with standardized instruments, do not always have an unambiguous
connection to biographical actions (e.g. BAETHGE, HANTSCHE, PELULL &
VOSKAMP 1988, pp.190ff., p.247). The logic in which subjects relate context
experiences[18] to their own wishes and eventually bring them down to the level of
action is not taken into account. [43]

How, then, does one get from action results and interpretation patterns to a
general logic of actions and structures? How can a "new mode of societalization"
(BECK 1992, p.127) be analyzed at the individual level? [44]

2.6 Actions and their general logic

What is meant by a general logic of actions? It is the logic that regular actions,
action patterns or routines are based on.[19] Action results (including non-action or
failure to act) and their interpretations in different contexts and under different
conditions can be traced back to a logic of actions. However, one specific logic of

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18 The terms *context experience* or *action context* are used here in the broadest sense
    conceivable. They include individual awareness (which does not necessarily mean the reflexive
    process of becoming aware) of socio-structural action conditions (e.g. an unfavorable regional
    labor market can mean that individuals find an occupation adequate to their education and
    training only with great difficulty), government regulations, (company) cultures, working
    conditions, life circumstances etc.

19 Actions entirely unrelated to rules or patterns can, of course, be described as patterns of
    irregularity.

actions is never sufficient to predict particular actions. Depending on the action
context and conditions related to certain situations, the results vary. [45]

Analyzing actions (and not only identities, wishes, orientation patterns and life
plans) and, thus, analyzing observable results is supposed to ensure the
connection to structural phenomena at the macro-level. Referring simultaneously
to the meaning of actions, the connection between actions and their meaning is to
be kept indissoluble. Accordingly, not only action results, but also the logic of
actions can only be understood or deduced with reference to individually ascribed
meanings. The same action results can be achieved in very different ways, and
very different meanings can be ascribed to them. Conversely, different action
results can be put down to the same logic. In terms of double hermeneutics (e.g.
GIDDENS 1984, p.284), an *overall logic of actions* is, therefore, a second-degree
construction (SCHÜTZ 1980). It is an observer-dependent construction, and a
variety of different actions in different situations can be ascribed to it. [46]

Only a comparison of actions at different moments can lead to an overall logic of
actions. Only then does it show how changing interpretation patterns or
biographical narratives and life courses (especially employment and partnership
careers) are entangled with each other. It becomes clear that new events do not
only change the present and future, but also interpretations of the past (e.g. when
choosing a career, HEINZ, KRÜGER, RETTKE, WACHTVEITL & WITZEL 1987,
p.185). [47]

What has to be examined, therefore, are, on the one hand, action contexts or
more generally expressed: formal action conditions and, on the other hand,
individual interpretations of action conditions. How are they dealt with? What
conclusions are drawn? How are they related to one's own ideas? To what extent
are individual ideas influenced by action conditions? Relating biographical actions
to action contexts helps decide to what extent single actions that might deviate
from a general logic of actions cancel that logic or must be interpreted in terms of
specific situations only. Clarification is needed, for instance, about whether the
decision to change one's job is the result of being obviously underpaid, thus
making it a situational response, or whether income is a central criterion for all
biographical decisions, in which case a general non-situational logic of actions is
expressed. [48]

The research issue is: who can similar ways of dealing with context experiences
be grouped together to form a general logic which whole bundles of context-
specific action patterns of different people can be related to? (See Table 2.)

Stages	*I*	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*V*
Action results, e.g.:	(First position)	(Second position)	Being made redundant/ Unemployment	(New company)	(Academic Studies)
Meaning/ Interpretation, e.g.:	Positions appear as the first and second stage of a predictable company career.		New orientation, career strategies are seen as too risky	Company and job are seen as temporary stages of a non-company qualification strategy with academic studies to follow	
Action logic, e.g.:	Non-situational action logic I Career involvement		Transition to new action logic	Non-situational action logic II Optimizing opportunities	

Table 2: Example of relations between different kinds of non-situational action logic and individual biographical decisions [49]

In the context of the individualization discourse, there are not only those dangers, explained above, that lead to wrong conclusions about the meaning of actions by referring exclusively to institutional and personal individualization, but also the danger of inferring action results from changed socialization modes or an individual logic of action. If the individualization thesis and, consequently, the thesis of a fundamentally changing socialization practice are correct, the question arises *how* these changes show in actors' logic of actions. Is it only a question of ascribing actions to oneself or to other factors? Is the core of the question a "vigorous model of action in everyday life" and an "ego-centered world view" (BECK 1992, p.136)? Can entirely new ways of dealing with structural experiences be observed, different from anything previously known? Or is it rather a modification of what we know that is at issue here, whereas, essentially, the logic of actions is not changing? Thus, one no longer devotes oneself to the Christian faith, but chooses any faith that corresponds to one's personal ideas and stays with it.[20] [50]

The preceding Section emphasized that a new, individualized logic of actions can only be identified if the *results* and the *meanings* of actions are analyzed simultaneously. This possibility to identify a specific individualized action practice is the prerequisite for tracing structural phenomena at the social macro-level back to *personal* or *institutional* individualization or to certain entanglements of both levels or to completely different social changes (as, for instance, collective processes, temporary fashions or an economic growth phase). The question arises what concrete empirical research strategies should be employed. How can, on the one hand, an action and structuring logic from the perspective of actors be identified and, on the other hand, how do we ensure that it can be generalized, so that the individualization thesis as a general social process of change is verified.

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20 WOHLRAB-SAHR's example (1995) of converting to the Islamic faith can be interpreted in this sense.

Data: Level:	Objective	Subjective	Kinds of logic
Macro	Social structure, cumulative action results (e.g. divorce and unemployment rates)	Social semantics, culture (e.g. normative family models)	Reproduction-of-social-structure logic
Meso	Formal institutions (laws, statutes, formal organizational structure (e.g. organigram, corpus of laws)	Institutional interpretations (e.g. in a certain family), organization culture	Logic of institutional practices, organizational processes, legislation
Micro	Action results/ consequences (e.g. employment status, marital status)	Interpretations, orientations, individual meaning (e.g. related to individual family members)	Logic of meaningful actions

Table 3: Qualitative and quantitative data and their connection at three levels of analysis [51]

3. Empirical Research Strategies

In the preceding Section, it was argued that, at the level of data, an integration of action results and meanings was essential for examining individualization processes. Only with reference to an individual logic of actions is it possible to distinguish to what extent socio-structural changes (e.g. increasing divorce rates or de-standardized professional biographies) can be put down to *institutional* or *personal* individualization processes or other social changes. Thus, it seems necessary to combine qualitative and quantitative research strategies in different research phases. Quantitative studies alone, based on formal structural indicators (e.g. MAYER 1991, MAYER & BLOSSFELD 1990) that specify pluralization and destandardization processes, say nothing about the underlying interpretation patterns of actors. These, however, can no longer be inferred from a hitherto divided fund of social knowledge, since the individualization thesis, along with the thesis of a new socialization mode, aims at change—and precisely the structural change of this *common knowledge*. Therefore, it is necessary to give special attention to facts which have previously been taken for granted wherever the connection between action and interpretation patterns is at issue.[21] [52]

This problem cannot simply be solved with a quantitative strategy correlating formal life course patterns and behavioral issues. Statistical correlation says little about an individual logic of actions generated by protagonists as they deal with biographical contexts. This logic which cannot be deduced from individual action patterns or behavioral patterns alone, but only from their combination over time, would have to be specified first in a qualitative study under the present-day conditions of supposedly changed circumstances. Only then can the attempt be made to transform it into a valid standardized measuring instrument, thus allowing it to be examined in its quantitative significance as well (see Section 2.4 for further reference).[22] [53]

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21 What has to remain open at this point is if and to what extent the assumption of a store of knowledge shared by all was not a strong simplification of social reality even in the past.

Qualitative case studies—provided they refer to biographies and biographical
narratives and not only to the reconstruction of behavioral patterns, value
attitudes or life planning—open up possibilities to re-establish the connection
between interpretation patterns and action results in people's biographies. It is
doubtful, however, if such studies can be generalized where they lean on
individual cases, special groups (e.g. pioneers, elites, people excluded from parts
of society) and on assumptions of normality derived from theory or the everyday
knowledge of academic researchers—instead of contrasting *special* and *normal*
groups systematically.[23] A systematic selection of qualitative samples is
necessary in order to maximize the probability that findings (constructs or
typologies) derived from relatively few cases[24] (in comparison to quantitative
studies) can be generalized and to keep the danger of *unobserved heterogeneity*
as slight as possible. Therefore, when gathering qualitative samples (features:
representativity of content, targeted choice of cases, analysis of individual cases),
it is advisable to combine them with a quantitative selection logic (features:
statistical representativity, random selection or comprehensive survey). If, for
instance, features considered to be important, such as formal structural indicators
(e.g. gender, social origin, school graduation) or certain life experiences (e.g.
divorce, unemployment, drug consumption, abortion), are determined in a
standardized (statistical) representative or layered preliminary survey, this
information can be used for qualitative sampling. By means of the *optimal placing*
of cases and their deliberate *contrasting* in the context of features considered to
be important by research, the probability of systematic distortions can be clearly
minimized, if not eliminated altogether (see KLUGE 2001). [54]

Moreover, standardized and qualitative survey procedures can be combined if
employment and partnership developments or entire biographies are to be
reconstructed (as is common in life course or biographical research). If a series of
qualitative interviews is preceded by a standardized survey having already
gathered life course data, these data can be used not only for the selection of
cases, but also for specific questioning in talks. Conversely, qualitative interviews
can be used to review and correct formal processes. Consequently, the quality of
data collected by standardized means can be more efficiently evaluated (see
KLUGE 2001). [55]

In the following, an example from life course research will show how the
combination of qualitative and quantitative data and methods can be used to
examine individualization processes more thoroughly. [56]

In a study of *Status Passages to Employment* (HEINZ, BOGUN, HELLING,
MÖNNICH & WITZEL 1991; HEINZ, WITZEL, KELLE MIERENDORFF & ZINN

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22 It can also be examined, for instance, to what extent certain standardized items are suitable for
determining specific types of action logic.

23 See, for instance, the research strategies and basic methodological assumptions of objective
hermeneutics (e.g. REICHERTZ 1997).

24 This contrasts with a larger number of qualitative studies, as computer-aided evaluation
techniques (e.g. programs such as "Atlas", "NUDIST" or "WinMax") are increasingly being
applied, including 50 cases or more in the analysis. See publications of various projects from
the special research area Bremen (KLUGE 2001).

1996; KÜHN & ZINN 1998; MÖNNICH & WITZEL 1994), quantitative and
qualitative research strategies were systematically related to each other to
investigate subjective orientations and typical forms of coping individually with job
experiences during the first few years of employment—against the background of
socio-structural context requirements. Qualified young employees were selected
from two labor market regions with different opportunity structures (Bremen and
Munich): they had successfully completed their vocational training in 1989/90 in
one of six among the ten most frequently demanded occupations requiring
training (bank clerk, office worker, industrial mechanic, car mechanic, retail sales
person, hairdresser). In the macro-panel, the same qualified young employees
were interviewed four times using standardized questionnaires: at the end of their
training (1989, n = 2230), as well as two, five and eight years later (1997. N =
989). Parallel to the first three series of interviews by the macro-panel, the young
adults were interviewed in a micro-panel using qualitative, guideline-supported
questions. The sample of the first series (n = 194) was systematically reduced in
the second series (n = 113). In the third series, 91 people could still be inter-
viewed who, therefore, provided interview material across all three series. [57]

During the time survey was done and evaluated by micro- and macro-panels, the
combination of qualitative and quantitative data and strategies proved to be
useful at three levels, in particular, which are also relevant for working on the
individualization thesis:

- During *qualitative sampling*, which was to be the basis for research findings
  that could be generalized (HEINZ et al. 1991, pp.19ff.),
- when developing a typology of subjective orientations and actions related to
  job biographies during the first few years of employment—the typology of
  "biographical action modes" (in German: BGM)—systematically relating action
  results and interpretation patterns to each other (e.g. WITZEL & KÜHN 1999,
  2000) and
- when quantifying the qualitative typology of biographical actions using
  statistical correlations and qualitative types to mutually check and evaluate
  results, thus permitting statements on the quantitative distribution of types in the
  macro-panel (see SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001). [58]

The following will show to what extent this strategy of combining qualitative and
quantitative data and methods can also be used to examine the individualization
thesis: [59]

First of all, in Section 3.1., the question of what is relevant for sampling will be
looked into if general statements about overall social development processes are
to be derived from the results. Next, in Section 3.2., the question will be
discussed to what extent the longitudinal typology of an action and structuring
logic developed in this study in the context of life course research, i.e. the
typology of *biographical action modes* (BGM), can be seen as a strategy to
access *personal* individualization processes empirically and, in Section 3.3., the
question will be raised which statements can be derived from BGM with regard to

social individualization processes. Finally, in Section 3.4., the issue will be what advantages are involved in the combination of qualitative and quantitative data when a typology, produced by qualitative means, is transformed into a standardized analysis procedure, and what perspectives such a standardized typology opens up for investigating social individualization processes—the relationship between institutional and personal individualization, in particular. [60]

3.1 Sampling

Sampling strategies in qualitative research follow a different kind of logic than in quantitative research where random selection is seen as the best solution (e.g. SCHNELL, HILL & ESSER 1999) to infer a qualifiable totality from samples (*statistical representativity*). The question in qualitative research is rather whether results can be generalized[25] in the sense of a *content representation* of problems (MERKENS 1997, p.100) or *theory-guided representativity* (PREIN, KLUGE & KELLE 1994, p.6). In this case, qualitative sampling does not represent the quantitative distribution of features, but a specific problem constellation,[26] so that results can be transferred to similar problems in other groups or areas. Therefore, sampling attempts to ensure a great variety of problem constellations by means of features considered to be relevant (see PATTON 1990, p.172; KÜCHLER 1983, p.26) in order to sufficiently understand the typology of effects and their interrelations (see KELLE & KLUGE 1999, pp.46ff.). *Theoretical sampling,* well-known in qualitative research, follows the same logic (GLASER & STRAUSS 1970): one does not start from a predetermined sampling plan, but research explicitly provides for the theory-guided extension of samples. By adding contrasting cases, areas where the theory can be applied are specified and made safe, i.e. recurrent theory consolidation is driven to the point of *theoretical saturation* (GLASER & STRAUSS 1967; STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990).[27] [61]

3.1.1 An example from occupational socialization research

Topic of the research project *Status Passages to Employment* described above were the subjective orientations and typical attitudes of qualified young employees during the first few years of their employment against the background

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25 This applies even more if one does not only try to understand the subjective meaning of what certain people say, but aims at reconstructing the rules of social action—as has been done in research with an ethno-methodological and interaction-logical orientation (e.g. BOHNSACK 1984)—or at reconstructing structures that generate interpretations and actions, as in objective hermeneutics (OEVERMANN, TILMAN, KONAU & KRAMBECK 1979).

26 The issue can be, for instance, how existing structures in a skilled occupation and individual wishes to organize one's career interrelate, these wishes varying according to gender, ethnic background, social origin, region etc. Instead of looking for different statistical relations, the quality of a relation has to be questioned and to what extent the relation changes, when people with other characteristics are examined, e.g. Turks instead of Germans, women instead of men, people from Bremen instead of people from Munich, women from the educated class instead of women from the working class.

27 On the other hand, studies in the tradition of early objective hermeneutics, whose goal was to uncover the objective structure of meaning in texts (REICHERTZ 1997, p.31), emphasize the importance of as heterogeneous a mixture as possible in interpretation groups in order to achieve high-quality analyses. The possibility to generalize results is derived more from the quality of an individual case analysis (or the analysis of a few cases) than from a comparison with several other, systematically selected cases.

of basic socio-structural conditions. The project was designed, from the start, to
contain a quantitative and a qualitative research element (HEINZ et al. 1996),
either of which was useful to the other in all research phases (see Paragraph 57).
During qualitative sampling, it was possible to refer to the standardized survey, so
as to implement a *two-stage sampling procedure*. [62]

The project's research design (see HEINZ et al. 1991, p.15ff.) was based on the
theoretical assumptions that region-, job- and gender- specific structures have an
effect on the beginning of young people's careers, and having successfully
completed the first stage—the transition from school to vocational training—was a
decisive prerequisite for realizing one's opportunities in the second stage—the
transition from vocational training to employment. To be able to take into account
different *regional labor market conditions*, two urban labor markets were chosen
on the basis of a *comparative regional structure analysis* of the training and
employment situation (see BAUMEISTER & BOGUN 1991): one with good
(Munich) and one with bad labor market conditions (Bremen). Another important
preliminary assumption was that the labor market situation reflected specific jobs.
For this reason, the sampling distinguished between occupations with high
employment risks (car mechanic, hairdresser, retail sales person) and those with
low employment risks (bank clerk, office worker, industrial mechanic). Simultane-
ously, gender was taken into consideration, i.e. typical female occupations
(hairdresser, office worker) as well as typical male occupations (industrial
mechanic, car mechanic) and typical mixed types (bank clerk, retail sales
person). [63]

On the basis of these theory-guided considerations, and applying standardized
questionnaires, educational and occupational biographies were examined as well
as other formal characteristics—such as finishing school, gender, year of birth,
participating in job-oriented measures, the training company's offer to employ the
trainee etc. To obtain as many data as possible recording the whole range of
experience of vocational trainees in Bremen, in the six selected occupations and
one particular age group, a comprehensive survey of all trainees in Bremen going
to vocational school on a certain date was carried out; a comparable sampling
was done in Munich (see HELLING & MÖNNICH 1991; HEINZ et al. 1991). [64]

Standardized questionnaires can be seen as the first step in qualitative sampling,
because standardized surveys obtain people's commitment to participate in qual-
itative interviews, and these people are then the initial group from which qualitat-
ive interview partners are selected. On the basis of recorded characteristics and
biographies, the second stage of qualitative sampling ensured the optimal placing
of cases along characteristics and individual biographies classified as
theoretically relevant. From each occupational group, 30 people were selected
according to certain criteria for the first series of interviews, and these 30 people
were evenly spread out in the two regions with good and bad labor market
prospects. Further indicators varying case selection were: gender, transition to
vocational training (direct or not), graduation (from what school level) and a
company's statement concerning employment of trainees (yes, no, conditions).
Finally, additional cases were selected, showing striking forms of transition or

unusual combinations of features, so as to optimize the range of the qualitative
typology strived for by confronting as many anomalies as possible (see ZINN
2001a; MÖNNICH & WITZEL 1994, p.266; HEINZ et al. 1991, pp.20ff.). [65]

By means of the (preliminary) quantitative survey, qualitative sampling referring to
selected features (gender, kind of schooling, region, occupation, kind of transition
at the first threshold etc.) could be varied systematically. To what extent
conditions in the two labor market regions and the selected occupations can be
transferred to other labor markets or occupations or continue to be valid as the
survey progresses, remains to be seen[28]. The way the sampling was designed, it
guaranteed that systematic distortions referring to the structural indicators
examined were unlikely. [66]

What, then, does an adequate sampling design for examining the
individualization thesis look like? [67]

3.1.2 Sampling design for examining the individualization thesis

To examine the individualization thesis systematically, it is necessary, for
instance, not to concentrate exclusively on *special groups* such as the so-called
pioneers or *forerunners* (e.g. BONSS & KESSELRING 1998) if it is intended to
examine the entire social range of individualization processes. Rather, such
special groups must be integrated in a *comparative* sampling. Only then can it be
decided to what extent potential individualization processes are *area-specific*
processes referring, in different ways, to the employment system, partnership
organization or leisure time activities, *group-specific* developments concerning
certain occupations, age groups or social strata, or *general social* development
processes noticeable at all levels in similar ways. This is not meant as a plea for
all-embracing surveys, the real issue being to take into account, according to the
topic involved, a sufficient number of contrast or control groups, so that special
developments can be distinguished from general social development processes
and, with regard to changing action requirements, be put into the context of a
certain area or group (institutional individualization). [68]

When examining the individualization thesis, the question must be considered,
before sampling is done, which phenomena related to individualization processes
should be examined. As far as l*abor market individualization* is concerned, the
question of theoretically relevant features would have to be addressed and the
features varied accordingly. For instance, the question could be investigated to
what extent the increase in temporary employment figures is connected to
personal individualization processes. Sampling would then have to be structured
according to the feature *employment status* (e.g. with its elements *normal
employment, temporary employment* and *unemployment*). If the thesis of

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28 For example, it showed in the course of the survey that the supposedly good labor market
    prospects for the industrial mechanic profession became more and more unfavorable as the
    general crisis of mechanical engineering in Germany deepened. With regard to the
    transferability of results, as determined for certain occupations in selected regions, this study
    also follows a replication rather than a selection logic (see YIN 1989, pp.53ff.).

redefining work were to be examined, the question of *voluntary work* and *housework* could also be addressed. [69]

If, however, a survey aims at individualization processes in the area of partnerships—divorce rates could be considered here, implying a gain or loss in the importance of the institution *family* (see FURSTENBERG 1987) and seen, accordingly, as connected with the processes of *being released into freedom and deprived of mystique*—sampling would have to be structured according to relationship types, e.g. with the elements *steady partnership* or *marriage* and *single*, which could be combined with the question of having to, or not having to, mind children. Other features assumed to be connected to attitudes and action modes, such as divorce experiences or different types of partnership, could be additional criteria to be examined by means of a standardized questionnaire. Later, they would be available for specific case selection. [70]

If the assumption is that labor market individualization or changes in the area of partnerships are *stratum-* or *milieu-specific phenomena* (e.g. FRIEDRICHS 1998, p.7; TREIBEL 1996, p.431), sampling can also make distinctions with the help of a social affiliation indicator (e.g. what professions and qualifications do parents and/or interviewees have). Correspondingly, the thesis of *gender-specific differences* would have to differentiate between men and women. [71]

If such factors, and similar ones, are to be considered systematically in the (qualitative) survey and systematic distortion of samples by other factors is to be minimized, the combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures in a *two-stage sampling design* is the obvious course to take.[29] In order to limit the effects of *unobserved heterogeneity*, for instance by means of organization-specific, stratum-specific, regional or some similar field access, *random sampling* is still the best solution. If it is to be feared that certain, theoretically significant, special groups are under-represented (e.g. single parents, the unemployed), sampling can be layered further to include a sufficient number of people with diverse feature combinations. That is important, because, in a second step, the heterogeneity of quantitative sampling will be referred to in a *theory-guided* approach. Following a qualitative research logic, as in *Theoretical Sampling* (GLASER & STRAUSS 1970), cases can then be selected from quantitative samples according to feature combinations seen as theoretically relevant (e.g. social origin, gender, age). In such a design, quantitative sampling defines the limits of problem constellations and their effects which theory-guided case selection and, later, research findings refer to. If certain groups of people were not included in quantitative sampling, they remain excluded from the analysis unless a new way of accessing the field is found.[30] [72]

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29 However, a standardized survey can also be used for other evaluation strategies going beyond sheer sampling, e.g. by examining the interrelations of career or partnership developments and behavior patterns.

30 This might be impossible in practice if the investigation of life courses is longitudinal. If, after ten years, it becomes apparent that an important survey group has been ignored, the deficit cannot be corrected.

The basic idea of combining qualitative and quantitative research strategies, which are then used in *two-stage sampling*, can also be applied when the thesis of increasingly discontinuous or fragmented biographies (patchwork biographies), a topic of discussion in the ongoing individualization discourse, is to be examined as an indication of increasing social individualization processes. For that purpose, formal employment biographies would have to be examined in a standardized survey and, in a first quantitative evaluation, be arranged according to types of life course patterns[31]. In a second step, interviewees (an equal number of men and women) would be selected from relevant life course types to do the qualitative analysis, and again, distinctions should be made with regard to other features (see ERZBERGER & KLUGE 2000 and KLUGE 2001). In this manner, the relationship of life course and interpretation patterns could be expressed by combining quantitative and qualitative research strategies. [73]

To what extent interpretation patterns change or the socialization mode remains the same at the individual level, can be examined more appropriately in a *panel design* than in individual retrospective narratives as they are common in biographical research (see KLUGE 2001). If biographical narratives are told as close in time as possible to the various situations and phases of one's life, their changes can be controlled better than in a single interview. Correspondingly, the parallel implementation of a quantitative and a qualitative panel is recom-mendable for examining the individualization thesis. When comparing interpretation patterns and types of action at different moments during the survey, general biographical integration modes and situation-specific types of action can be better distinguished from each other. This also applies to the borderline case where a *non-situational* pattern cannot be observed. Thus, a frequently addressed issue can be examined: whether individualization finds expression in a specific mode (e.g. by listening to one's *inner voice* and making situation-specific decisions), or a specific mode can no longer be maintained, and people often alternate, instead, between various *common* modes (e.g. from a traditional pattern to a situational-contextual one, from a rational one to a metaphysical-magical one and back). [74]

At all times, it is the goal of the sampling strategy supported here to avoid systematic distortions or gaps in the selection of certain features considered to be theoretically relevant, so that the range of statements provided is not restricted in an unnecessary and uncontrolled manner, or the thesis of generalizing qualitative results, difficult enough as it is, is not jeopardized from the start. However, examples show that the possibilities of qualitative sampling to control a range of features with many variants are exhausted very quickly. If one were to distinguish between two genders (male, female) and three employment states only (*normal employment*, *temporary employment* and *unemployment*), six fields would have to be filled. If at least ten cases were interviewed for each combination of features, that would already be 60 qualitative interviews. Therefore, it is recommendable—keeping in mind the ideal of best placement—to vary other features within the cells even during the process of selecting cases in order to

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31 In this regard, the procedure of "optimal matching" paid off (see SCHAEPER 1999, ERZBERGER & PREIN 1997).

exclude an accidental lumping together of relevant features (e.g. social origin,
age, marital status). Although, in this way, the problem of uncontrolled influences
(*unobserved heterogeneity*) cannot be completely excluded, it can be minimized,
and the sampling quality maximized, by means of a systematic sampling plan
(see KLUGE 2001). [75]

It has been argued in this Section that a combination of qualitative and
quantitative research strategies is indispensable, even when planning the
sampling design which serves to examine processes of general social change as
postulated by the individualization thesis. Thus, the relevance of, and the
possibility to generalize statements (content representativity) derived from
qualitative sampling can be optimized. That is particularly important if,
furthermore, it is intended to transform a qualitative typology into a standardized
instrument and to be tried out on a larger population. [76]

3.2 Creating a typology of different kinds of biographical action logic

How, then, can a typology of integration modes be developed that is suitable for
describing personal individualization processes? This will be demonstrated with
an example from the study of qualified young employees, mentioned above, the
typology of *biographical action modes* (BGM)[32]. Since that typology has not been
developed with the intention of examining social individualization processes,
certain restrictions will have to be accepted. In particular, that concerns limiting
the topic to a certain field—the way qualified young employees *having finished
their vocational training successfully* organize the first few years of their
employment—and establishing certain typology dimensions[33]. If the
individualization thesis is correct, there should, nevertheless, be indications of
individualization processes in the life phase being examined and in the primary
examination field (first few years of employment). [77]

For the time being, it is the construction logic of the typology that will be
emphasized, on the basis of which it should be possible to access *personal
individualization processes* empirically before showing to what extent the typology
can be used to describe individualization processes. [78]

The research project, whose sampling strategy has been described in the
previous Section, examined qualified young people's transition to the employment
system and the course of their careers during the first few years of employment
by using qualitative interviews and standardized questionnaires. That made it
possible to achieve standardized analyses of how qualified young people's
careers and partnerships unfolded, as well as the development of a qualitative

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32 See WITZEL and KÜHN 1999, as well as WITZEL and KÜHN 2000, ZINN 2001a, KÜHN and
     ZINN 1998, WITZEL and ZINN 1998 for more details.

33 The dimensions that the formation of types is based on (kind of work, qualifications, career,
     income, company) are explained in great detail (see, for instance, SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001,
     WITZEL & KÜHN 1999, pp.30f.), but it does not become clear for what reasons they were
     selected.

longitudinal typology concerning biographical attitudes during the first five years of employment. [79]

The qualitative interview material of three surveys was evaluated by referring back to an axial coding scheme (the so-called ARB-scheme) (see WITZEL & KÜHN 2000). With its help, the material could be initially structured according to biographical events, realized and unrealized actions (*realizations*). Simultaneously, interests, goals and preferences (*aspirations*) as well as the evaluation of action results (*stocktaking*) were assigned to the events they related to; which does not mean that this scheme reflects the *actual* sequence-of-events logic of biographical decision-making processes. Rather, aspirations can also be assigned to corresponding realizations in retrospect, or other reasons, not reflected at all, can play a crucial part in the decision-making situation. That, however, was not what mattered most. The main task of the ARB-scheme was to structure the qualitative interview material that, as a rule, expressed the compulsion to tell a consistent and well-founded story. The *situational logic* of individual biographical events could be reconstructed from the interview material structured in this manner. Beyond that, however, a sequential structure of biographical events resulted that contributed to the understanding of situation-specific attitudes and, at the same time, constituted a general, non-situational sequence-of-events logic.[34] The systematic comparison of aspirations, realizations and stocktaking measures in an individual case, following the *Grounded Theory* (GLASER & STRAUSS 1967; STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990), and the comparison of biographical case patterns with one another, led to a limited number of general, non-situational, biographical ways of coping with problems classified as *biographical action modes* (BGM). [80]

3.2.1 Types of biographical action logic among qualified young employees

Interviews with qualified young employees showed quite different organization modes and ways of coping with occupational requirement structures which were classified in six different modes of organizing biographies or BGM (see WITZEL & KÜHN 2000): [81]

At the core of the biographical action modes *optimizing opportunities* and *career involvement*, we find *career organization*. Qualified young employees who organize their biographies according to *optimizing opportunities* consider it as very important to have a certain amount of scope to act and to organize their work. They strive for different, new challenges in their work, leading to more experience and an improvement of their qualifications, which strengthens their position in the labor market and provides the conditions for professional advancement. They try to acquire many qualifications, one after the other. To develop a wide range of competencies, they do not tie themselves down to

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34 This did not mean a step-by-step interpretation process going in one direction only. The general non-situational action types, supposedly recognized, were tried out again to explain the different types of "situational logic" of an individual case, until a conclusive relationship was established between a type of situational logic and a general non-situational type of action logic.

certain careers in the company, but keep their options open: as many as possible, and as long as possible. [82]

Qualified young people who keep their career perspectives open differ from those whose biographical actions were assigned to the *career involvement* mode. The latter, when looking after their career options, commit themselves to existing career structures in their profession or company. Accordingly, they develop concrete ideas about their goals at an early stage. They consider predictable advancement in the framework of predetermined paths to be important. As in the *optimizing opportunities* mode, they tend to subordinate their private lives to work requirements. However, investments in human capital are not geared to a wide range of options, as they are in the *optimizing opportunities* mode, but stay close to the requirements and necessities of the career strived for. With the *career involvement* mode, young employees prefer practice-oriented strategies, closely related to their specific field of work, to qualify themselves. [83]

The biographical action modes *personal autonomy* and *self-employed habitus* can be characterized by the *autonomy benefits* they are connected with. In qualitative sampling, however, they were rarely found. Qualified young employees with the *personal autonomy* mode, when making biographical decisions, give precedence to personal demands and needs which often conflict with the behavior expected at the actual workplace or in the milieu they come from. They demand that work should not only secure material reproduction, but also be *meaningful*. To realize their ideas, these young employees accept biographical discontinuities as well as long qualification periods. Difficult compromises are often necessary. As for the *self-employed habitus*, professional autonomy plays a central role there, as well, but goes hand in hand with the rejection of dependent work. To be "one's own boss" is seen as a chance to earn more and secure one's future. Business success is the main ambition. [84]

Qualified young employees with the biographical action modes *company identification* and *wage worker habitus* are characterized by lacking career orientation and reveal a comparatively slight degree of self-initiated career organization. *Status arrangement* is their central motive for organizing their occupational biography. The *wage-worker habitus* mode occurs mainly among interviewees in occupational contexts with unfavorable employment opportunities and career structures. The interviewees seek to come to terms with the conditions, mainly strive for occupational continuity and, pointing out in-company requirements, make do with a low level of income and responsibilities that do not leave much scope for action. Work is seen as necessary for material reproduction and as a necessary evil in direct proportion to its financial return. Current income is the central evaluation standard for what one does. Consequently, these qualified young employees are also willing to do jobs no longer in keeping with their qualifications if it raises their income. [85]

Young adults with the biographical action mode *identification with company* believe they have reached the end of their occupational development possibilities. They consider the company primarily as a sort of home in which they hope to

have found a definite and permanent workplace. They offset low income and
lacking occupational perspectives with a *family* atmosphere in the company seen
as highly positive and giving them a feeling of security. These young employees
try hard to establish themselves and achieve continuity in the occupational status
they have reached and show no ambition to change or advance. [86]

The six biographical action modes give an ideal typology of how qualified young
employees cope with individual career wishes and existing structural conditions.
However, the typology does have some unusual features: [87]

Through the parallel survey done by a standardized and a qualitative panel,
qualitative and quantitative data could be related to each other. Thus,
standardized data on employment and partnership developments as well as a
number of formal data had some influence on qualitative sampling (see previous
Section). They could also be used to reconstruct the course of people's lives and
important occupational and partnership events during the qualitative interviews.
Consequently, the life course data obtained from interviews are less determined
by the selective memory of interviewees in the *individual* interview situation. At
the same time, the life course data already available during the interviews could
be used to make specific inquiries about events not mentioned. [88]

By combining qualitative and quantitative procedures in the examination of
occupational and partnership developments, not only the validity of life courses
can be improved. It is much more important that a different research interest is
expressed here in comparison to many qualitative case studies which refer
predominantly to (biographical) narratives at a certain time. Since *personal
individualization* has been considered as a socialization mode that can be
expected to show in different kinds of action and structuring logic of life courses,
it is the meaningful *action practice* of actors that matters here, in line with the
typology presented above. [89]

In addition, the *panel design* made it possible to compare narratives at a certain
interview time with statements made at other times (see BÖTTGER 2001 on this
aspect). In this manner, contradictions could be pinpointed even during inter-
views, and changes or consistencies of self-presentation could be observed. [90]

In contrast to cross-sectional studies, it was possible to understand to what extent
ideas about one's employment biography were *action-relevant* during the survey
period of time. GEISSLER and OECHSLE (1996) had already made it clear that
life course designs and *life course planning* are not related to each other
unambiguously. GEISSLER and OECHSLE consider *life course planning* to be
those plans that become relevant in current biographical decisions, whereas the
action relevance of life course designs can vary considerably. Accordingly, the
biographical action modes refer to orientations that transform into action during
the time of the survey, and not to general behavior patterns or life course
designs. [91]

The point here is not only to control an imagined future with regard to its action
relevance. Rather, the biographical action modes are aimed at reflexive decision-
making processes (*reflexive awareness*)[35] as well as routine practices (*practical
awareness*). A reason for the latter can usually be found, but they do not have to
be preceded by reflexive decision-making processes. Thus, the two points can be
distinguished analytically: that in the course of a stable biographical organization
practice the interpretation patterns fall in line, or conversely, that changed
interpretation patterns lead to a new organization practice. What remains open is
to what extent individualization becomes effective as a self-reflexive biographical
decision-making practice, or at the level of routine practices that individuals get
involved in either to prepare for new action contexts or to continue their activities
on familiar ground. [92]

Do biographical action modes depend more on individual factors or on the
context experience (see Note 18) of qualified young employees? To what extent
do young adults with biographical action modes make themselves depend on
action contexts or disregard them? How can biographical action modes be
interpreted as an indication of individualization processes, and which of them are
especially suitable for this purpose? [93]

3.2.2 Stabilizing different kinds of biographical action logic

Types of action logic during the first few years of working life are the result of
self-socialization *on* the job, i.e. in the *serious situation* of gainful employment
(HEINZ, KELLE, WITZEL & ZINN 1998) and, as such, differ from socialization
processes for the job as they take place at school and during vocational training
(HEINZ 1995). Since biographical action modes are the result of structure
experiences in (occupational) action contexts, they describe types of *situational
logic*[36] as well as action modes that actors use to reproduce and modify existing
structures (GIDDENS 1984). Thus, they are also the place where it should be
possible to observe changing assignment modes, ways of coping or *personal*
individualization processes. [94]

The qualitative data show that neither do action contexts determine how qualified
young employees act, nor are their actions completely independent of structure
experiences in specific action contexts. Rather, action contexts and biographical
action modes are loosely related to each other. Biographical action modes and
contexts must go together or be "viable"[37]. Three short examples from the retail
and banking business can illustrate this: [95]

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35 See GIDDENS (1984) on the distinction between reflexive and practical awareness.

36 What is not meant here is an "objectified" situation logic as in POPPER (1974), but a situation
logic interpreted by individuals and reproduced in their meaningful actions.

37 By speaking of "viability" rather than "adaptation", the attempt is made to clarify that a one-to-
one adaptation in the sense of correspondence is not the issue here, but "compatibility" in the
constructivist sense (see von GLASERSFELD 1980).

The *retail business* is a highly differentiated field according to gender, along horizontal lines[38] (areas of specialization) and vertical lines (occupational rank and career perspectives). As a rule, career structures in larger department stores, retail chains or supermarkets are reserved for men.[39] hat is why qualified young women experience again and again that their efforts to take advantage of career structures in the retail business are in vain. As the interviewee *Thea* says: "For a woman, it is incredibly difficult to make progress. I've worked hard, I've worked my ass off—but men. They just walked by and ignored me. And it wasn't just me who felt like that." Or they already know from others how slight their career chances within the company are. Thus, *Anne* said: "I think the company F has 5000 employees ... and I don't know a single woman in that company who has managed to get herself promoted." [96]

Young women come to different conclusions about this fact. Some, like *Thea* with the biographical action mode *wage worker habitus*, look for a better-paid job in another work field. She cannot be persuaded to stay even when she is offered a promotion to an assistant manager position she had wanted for a long time. In *Thea*'s estimation, the work situation would not really change (low income, high pressure). Instead, she went to local public transport and became a streetcar driver, with the promise of less pressure and a higher income. [97]

Other women do not see any chances for themselves, either, to link up with career structures in companies. But they draw other conclusions from their occupational experience than women with the *wage-worker habitus* mode. Women like *Anne* try to make use of further educational resources and to realize their claim to a better-paid job after all. They keep themselves thoroughly informed about different options with all their advantages and disadvantages, choose the one they think has the best prospects and opportunities, and make efforts to maintain or expand their scope for actions. They stabilize the *optimizing opportunities* mode accordingly (see Paragraph 82). [98]

It becomes clear why, in the context of the research project, no young retail saleswomen with the *career involvement* mode could be found: this mode not being compatible with action contexts, since career structures in the retail business are reserved for young retail sales*men*. [99]

An example from *banking* also shows how biographical action modes and action contexts refer to each other. In banking, on-the-job training and the attempt to get higher qualifications are a norm that mainly young *male* banking clerks find themselves exposed to in the competitive struggle for higher positions. When *Heinrich* broke off a higher qualification measure that, in addition to his work, would have restricted him too much timewise, he tried to stay in his profession

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38 Undeniably, horizontal segregation according to areas of specialization also implies vertical inequality structures as in lower wages or more unfavorable career prospects.

39 Not least, that finds expression in how the work is defined. The under average pay in positions designated for promotion often goes hand in hand with an above average workload. That tacitly presupposes another person in the background who does the reproductive work. Such positions are frequently accepted only, because they are seen as a passing episode on the way up the career ladder (ZINN 2001a).

without further qualifications (the *wage-worker habitus* mode). After changing
banks several times, however, and having to compete with others, he failed to
realize a lasting professional perspective in the banking business. Instead, he
was squeezed out of this specific labor market and changed his job to avoid
being unemployed. [100]

These examples showed clearly that qualified young employees react to their
context experiences in different ways. They can use the *enabling character*
(GIDDENS 1984) of social structures to make wishes come true in spite of
adverse circumstances, or to "do their best" in prevailing conditions, or come to
terms with the professional status they have achieved. [101]

3.2.3 Linking biographical actors to their action contexts

Biographical action modes are not just loosely connected to their action contexts
—with them, qualified young employees bind themselves to contexts in different
ways (e.g. gender-specific behavior expectations, the situation in regional and
professional labor markets): [102]

The ways in which qualified young employees cope with the *optimizing
opportunities* mode are relatively independent of their action contexts. They use
multi-optional strategies to avoid being dependent on certain employers or career
positions, but also on their current ideas about jobs. They often see their own
wishes and notions as variables, as well. If they are disappointed with one option
or their wishes and notions change, they can choose from several other
possibilities. [103]

Those young people with the *career involvement* mode already commit
themselves quite strongly to one company or employer. Action strategies vary
between "I'll see how far I can get" and a committed "striving for a particular
position". Because qualification strategies are closely linked to existing careers,
they can advance by *learning-on-the-job* and, thus, do not depend so much on
acquiring formal training qualifications, but it costs them the price of depending
more strongly on their employer. In case of a crisis (e.g. bankruptcy), or when the
career is "jammed", there is a strong possibility of their uncertified, in-company
qualifications being devalued. [104]

With the *wage-worker habitus* mode, qualified young employees do not depend
on particular employers, but they do depend on the opportunities of the regional
labor market. They imagine that their relationship to the labor market will remain
the same over time. On the one hand, they see their own qualifications as being
largely constant (no long-term qualification strategies seem to be necessary). On
the other hand, they assume relatively stable labor market conditions which they
rationalize with comments like: "If you want to work, you'll find some". [105]

Unlike qualified young employees with the *wage-worker habitus* mode, those with
the *company identification* mode compensate for unfavorable career prospects or
low income with a good company atmosphere. This attitude can be found mainly

among young women who do not have to feed a family with their work, who are
often anticipating their role as housewives and do not strive for (further)
advancement. [106]

Unlike the *self-employed habitus* mode that makes young adults depend on their
own business success in the context of economic evaluation criteria, the *personal
autonomy* mode shows a form of committing oneself according to personal
values and needs. Qualified young employees disregard traditional orientation
patterns such as status, income or behavior expectations in the milieu they come
from. Beyond the well-worn orientation patterns, they can overcome the
standards of behavior that prevail in their milieu of origin. On the basis of
personal evaluation criteria, even those career developments can be evaluated
positively that, from another perspective (e.g. financially), would be considered a
social decline (*the art of living*) [107]

In a working world characterized increasingly by lifelong learning and rapidly
changing qualification requirements, with predictable career structures being
increasingly swept away, biographical forms of commitment win different kinds of
prizes: It is with multi-optional organization strategies in their job biographies that
qualified young employees can react most flexibly to changes in the employment
system. Consequently, they are the least exposed to the danger of their qualifica-
tions being rapidly devalued. Relying on the careers that companies offer and on
company-specific qualification strategies does not only produce opportunities, but
also dangers if one's qualifications are devalued after switching companies.
Finally, those who no longer invest in their human capital, or do so only a little,
remain at the mercy of the (regional) labor market situation and are threatened by
marginalization. The consequences of an increased orientation according to
personal criteria for organizing one's biography can be quite different. The
chances of advancement are counterbalanced by the risk of social decline. On
the other hand, completely new forms of employment can be found. [108]

It will be shown below to what extent forms of self-commitment that qualified
young employees get into are related to changes from one kind of biographical
action mode to another. [109]

3.2.4 Consistency and change in types of action logic

Once qualified young employees have established a biographical action mode
during the first few years of employment, it usually remains stable for the rest of
the observation period. In some cases, however, modes which were stabilized
early on are called in question again and changed because of occupational
events or a different relationship to the employment taken on. [110]

Basically, two variants of mode substitution can be observed. On the one hand,
the change is triggered because of different action conditions in a new job,
leading either to fundamentally new work experiences and opening up new career
perspectives, or closing down such perspectives. On the other hand, changes go
back to different subjective demands on employment, leading to a search for

career perspectives that are personally *meaningful*. The change from one biographical action mode to another can be observed mainly among qualified young employees with few formal educational resources. [111]

Thus, the interviewee *Kuno*, for example, changes from the *wage-worker habitus* mode to the *career involvement* mode after giving up his dream job (retail salesman) in favor of employment in a bank. According to the *wage-worker habitus* mode, he uses the opportunity that changing jobs gives him to optimize the relation of workload to income opening up for him in the expanding Munich labor market due to a regional staff shortage in the banking sector. In the new occupational environment that gives him career perspectives corresponding to his abilities, he develops a biographical behavior in keeping with the *career involvement* mode. [112]

The opposite is true for *Marco*, who changes jobs for the same reasons that *Kuno* did. However, he gets into a commercial work context that—unlike the retail business—blocks further in-company career pathways because of his formally low educational resources (graduation from the *Hauptschule*). To get on, he would have to invest in further educational resources (graduation from high school, college studies), which he does not feel able to do because of having to provide for his young family. He changes from the *career involvement* mode to the *wage-worker habitus* mode. [113]

In both cases, there is a relatively close connection between mode changes and spontaneously changing one's occupational action context. The situation is quite different in another case. [114]

In his choice of a job, *Johann* orientates himself according to the employment behavior specific to his origins and stabilizes the *wage-worker habitus* mode in the banking profession. He quickly realizes that working in a bank does not meet his expectations, despite good pay and career perspectives. Instead, he develops the notion that employment "must get you somewhere" personally. Looking for that kind of work, he acquires the intermediate school certificate (*Mittlere Reife*) and the academic standard required to study at a higher education institution (*Fachhochschule*). Thus, *Johann* changed to the *personal autonomy* mode. [115]

That a change of organization modes can be determined, above all, among young adults with the *wage-worker habitus* and *career involvement* modes, and that mainly those with *personal autonomy* and *optimizing opportunities* modes disregard limiting context conditions (milieu of origin, company and occupational action conditions)—does not seem to be accidental. Rather, these factors are all connected to forms of self-commitment in biographical action modes and go hand in hand with various kinds of dependence on action conditions in companies and regional labor markets. Qualified young employees with the *wage-worker habitus* mode react more directly to changes or opportunities in regional labor markets, and those with the *career involvement* mode depend on in-company career struc-tures. On the other hand, qualified employees with the *personal autonomy* mode *assemble* their employment biography according to their own criteria, and those

with the *optimizing opportunities* mode do the same thing with a view to business-wide and inter-regional opportunity structures (see previous Section). [116]

As young adults make different biographical decisions in spite of the same formal educational resources and comparable social origins, it becomes clear that, even where structural and institutional factors have a continuous influence, a certain amount of scope for action remains[40], which interviewees make use of in various ways and with different consequences for their further job biographies. To what extent can different forms of behavior and self-commitment to occupational contexts and normative behavioral expectations, as characterized by biographical action modes, be interpreted as an expression of collectivization or individual-ization processes? [117]

3.3 Individualized modes of biographical action

If it is true that individualization aims at the "disintegration of existing social life forms" and that "wherever such disintegration tendencies appear, the question must be asked what new life forms emerge when the old ones assigned by religion, tradition or governments break down" (BECK & BECK-GERNSHEIM 1994, pp.11f.)—then the concept introduced here can be applied to investigate structuring processes, types of action logic and organization modes that actors use to implement something new, at the same time reproducing, aggravating or reconstituting old inequality patterns.

> "In the individualized society the individual must therefore learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of himself or herself as the center of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on." (BECK 1992, pp.135f.) [118]

If that is so, then the question arises—if the individualization thesis argument is not to remain at the level of ideology—what consequences are translatable into action—consequences that refer to the logic of their genesis and not only to certain life course patterns. With the typology of biographical action modes, a difficulty that is typical for the individualization thesis can be demonstrated. Individualization as a diagnosis at the institutional level (*institutional individual-ization*) gives only limited information about which types of action logic at the level of actors correspond to institutional change. Does *one* new *individualized type* emerge and dominate in reflexive modernity? Do previous attitudes become modernized under the impression of ongoing social change? Do the relationships of types shift, so that in different historical eras different organization modes dominate? Since a theory of historical development trends cannot really be sup-ported empirically without a direct comparison of former and current attitudes and types of action, the discussion below will be limited to the question how far these types correspond to attitudes compatible with the individualization thesis. [119]

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40 In the sense of the dictum on the enabling character of social structures (GIDDENS 1984).

At first glance, a comparison of the various biographical action modes suggests that the rare *personal autonomy* mode (WITZEL & KÜHN 2000, p.20) should be interpreted as an individualized mode. Because of its slight connection to occupational action contexts, it appears to have the strongest correspondence to the individualization concept[41]. Institutionalized offers such as the *Zweite Bildungsweg* (evening courses for gaining extra qualifications) are used, and new avenues are looked into, for instance by changing jobs or leaving a job. Sometimes, costly educational careers are tackled, but it might also happen that existing qualifications are casually ignored. The standard for organizing one's biography are personal criteria which are pushed through against institutionalized —here mainly occupational—norms. One's own standards as the criterion for organizing one's biography, beyond social career structures and compared to traditional employment- and income-oriented standards, can lead to success, but also to a *rude awakening*. Thus, the *personal autonomy* mode shows the ambivalence of individualized strategies for organizing biographies whose *success* is uncertain: to what extent they lead to careers that can be observed as vertical or horizontal mobility remains open. The biographies of qualified young employees, occasionally to be observed as patchwork or discontinued biographies, obtain their consistency through personal organization and evaluation standards. [120]

Young adults with the *optimizing opportunities* and *self-employed habitus*[42] modes seem to be well prepared for modernized modernity, since, in the course of rapid social change, *multi-optional career strategies* receive a bonus. From the perspective of socialization theory, they are the logical answer to action conditions trying to give the impression that professional success and social status can be achieved predominantly through one's own willingness to perform. In this respect, they follow the different types of reproduction logic of an occupational system that still functions on the basis of educational certificates and the willingness to perform, even if careers and the *job for life* in relatively stable career structures are losing their significance. [121]

For women with the *optimizing opportunities* mode, their occupational careers are often closely linked to the question of how occupational *career* and family can be combined. It is plausible that women without a family realize occupational careers or those who organize their marriages more in terms of a partnership and do not limit themselves to family activities according to the role model of the *good mother*. If they are not content with work at a simple qualification level, thus stabilizing the company-identification or *wage-worker habitus* mode, but pursue occupational career perspectives, they are obliged to optimize their chances in a double effort: on the job where, as a rule, they have no career structures at their disposal which they can fall back on, and at home where they have to juggle their

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41 See, for instance, GIDDENS (1991), who believes that reflexive modernization can be seen increasingly as the act of people managing their own lives.

42 The self-employed-habitus mode as a biographical way of coping with work experiences during the first few years of employment must not be confused with the employment status "self-employed". They do not coincide in content, nor do they have to coincide in one and the same person.

own resources (e.g. partnership, family background, income) and state-run benefit institutions in order to combine employment and family wishes. They are not only dependent on their own resources, but even more on the availability of state provision in case their own resources are not sufficiently available. State provision, however, is still based predominantly on the model of the housewife available at all times (KRÜGER 1995). What shows here is that the effects of individualization processes, considered to be positive, depend on substantial institutional changes (here mainly in the sense of a legal framework, see VOBRUBA 1992) if they are not to remain just the phenomenon of a few pioneers or of privileged groups with plenty of resources. [122]

Finally, how can the *wage-worker habitus* and *career involvement* modes be interpreted from the perspective of modernization theory? Coming to terms with a comparatively low qualification level and binding oneself to a career that seems reliable and predictable are attitudes that remind us of action conditions in first modernity. A patchwork biography resulting from a *wage-worker habitus* or *career involvement* mode depends on business and regional context conditions that qualified young employees commit themselves to. Those with a *career involvement* mode depend to a large extent on the continued existence of the company and its *vacancy chains*, whereas occupational chances and risks with the *wage-worker habitus* mode follow directly from the regional labor market situation. As the examples of switching between biographical action modes have shown, it is probably no coincidence that young adults with the *wage-worker habitus* and *career involvement* modes change their attitudes even during the first few years of employment. [123]

The qualitative analyses have shown that biographical action modes are tried out by qualified young employees in different occupational action contexts (e.g. companies, labor market regions, further-education institutions, professions, career structures), but can lead to different, though not just any, action results depending on the resources available (e.g. educational certificates, biographical experiences, social networks, competencies and skills, but also ascriptive features such as gender), various contexts and biographical priorities. Because of the fact that biographical action modes were formulated in this manner, independently of contexts and resources, the question can be examined empirically to what extent biographical action are connected to traditional inequality indicators of first modernity (social background, kind of schooling, gender etc.). A look at how biographical action modes are connected to schooling and social background in qualitative interviews (see ZINN 2001a) leads to the suspicion that a high correspondence still exists between biographical action and traditional inequality indicators. However, it was shown on other occasions that even young adults with modest formal educational resources[43] can optimize their chances by catching up on educational qualifications and applying multi-optional career strategies. Using the example of young industrial mechanics (KELLE & ZINN 1998), it could be shown to what extent the *optimizing opportunities* mode can be stabilized by means of specific occupational experience constellations and

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43 High school graduates were compared to qualified employees with lower formal education certificates

more pressure on selection, while remaining relatively independent of educational
resources and social backgrounds. [124]

The result demonstrates that background, education and biography resources
are mediated by biographical action modes which become effective both as
action routines and self-reflexive biographical organization modes, as the starting
point and the end result of biographical actions. Action results which, later on, can
be measured in the form of traditional inequality indicators (e.g. MAYER &
BLOSSFELD 1990) do not clearly depend on biographical action modes, but on
further action requirements such as resource provision, ascriptive features,
biographical experiences, social networks and individual priorities. Thus, it is clear
that personal individualization is not so much a question of failure or success,[44] as
it is a question of action logic. To what extent an action logic can help reduce
social inequalities depends essentially on other factors (labor market competition,
the economy, normative orientations etc.). Neither formal resource provision nor
action results or action logic alone are adequate criteria for explaining social
change. [125]

By standardizing different kinds of action logic, as demonstrated with the typology
of *biographical action modes*, different modes can be constructed to describe
personal individualization processes. The interactions of biographical action
modes and immediate action requirements during the first few years of
employment can be investigated. Hypotheses can be generated with regard to
the appearance of a new individualized type and its social branching out (e.g. in
certain milieus) or the individualization of traditional modes. To make sure that, in
the relatively small sample survey, observable types of action logic and their
interactions with existing structures can be transferred to social processes as a
whole, their quantitative importance must also be determined. A way must be
found to transform the typology into a standardized instrument. [126]

3.4 Quantifying standardized types of action logic

The argument, so far, has been that, in order to examine the individualization
thesis, not only changes at the institutional level have to be considered, but
individual types of action logic among members of society have to be looked at,
as well, so that socio-structural changes can be ascribed to individualization
processes or other phenomena. In this regard, it has been suggested, and
illustrated with the example of biographical action modes, that individual types of
action logic should be deduced from meaningful actions and, subsequently,
standardized. Before that, it was demonstrated how a typology can be
constructed on as broad a basis as possible (*content representativity*) by
systematically combining qualitative and quantitative strategies in the sample
survey. [127]

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44 See BECK 1986/1992. At the same time, the criteria for judging failure are unclear: is it
    monetary criteria that count, or criteria applied by the researcher, or those of the individuals
    observed?

Finally, the issue is how a qualitative typology, which standardizes types of action
and structuring logic from the actor perspective, can be made available for
quantitative analyses. That is necessary to address quantifying questions which
usually become virulent in connection with the individualization thesis. One of
these is the question of the quantitative importance of individualization processes,
which could be investigated by finding out how far *individualized* modes are
spread out, or to what extent changes of formal context requirements (e.g.
training ordinances and further education opportunities) affect forms of life course
organization or their distribution. Furthermore, it would be possible with a
standardized typology to examine the connection between certain biographical
attitudes and formal indicators for class and stratum affiliations as well as social
milieus. One could then, for instance, investigate the thesis that class affiliation
has a decreasing influence on biographical organization modes. [128]

How, then, would one have to proceed to transform a qualitative typology for
different kinds of action logic into a standardized, and therefore quantifiable,
survey instrument? A look at the relevant literature shows that, so far, relatively
few attempts have been made to quantify qualitative typologies.[45] In particular,
that concerns typologies trying to integrate qualitative *and* quantitative data, as
well as qualitative longitudinal typologies which, in comparison, have been rarely
developed because of the considerable research effort involved.[46] That is true for
biography research, as well, which still produces life course typologies quite often
—in the sense of narrated life stories—but has been concentrating, most of the
time, on detailed individual analyses and small samples. In that regard, few
individual cases are considered to be examples of actor-specific manifestations
of, or patterns of coping with, social action contexts. A quantifying empirical
examination of individual types of action logic would, on the other hand, be
inconsistent with the basic methodological and epistemological assumptions of
the underlying research paradigm.[47] [129]

Using the example of a typology of biographical action modes, and following
insights from other research fields, it can be shown, however, how qualitative and
quantitative data and research strategies can be usefully related to each other
when reconstructing such a typology: for instance for the development of a
standardized survey instrument or for the cluster-analytical reproduction of the
typology. [130]

In the study on *Status Passages to Employment* (HEINZ et al. 1996; KÜHN &
ZINN 1998; MÖNNICH & WITZEL 1994), the first three qualitative series of
interviews led to the development of a qualitative typology of biographical action
modes, and then it was attempted, in the fourth quantitative series of interviews,

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45 For instance, FUCHS-HEINRITZ complains about that as early as 1990 in his summary on the
state of youth research.

46 On the other hand, there have been in the meantime many attempts in life course research to
create typologies for entire life courses by applying less formalized status categories—such as
the "optimal matching"-technique (see ERZBERGER & PREIN 1997; SCHAEPER 1999).

47 See, for instance, argumentations in "objective hermeneutics" (SOEFFNER 1989) or in "the
analysis of narratives in biographical self-representations" (FISCHER-ROSENTHAL &
ROSENTHAL 1997).

to transform the biographical action modes into a standardized instrument (see SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001). [131]

In the *first step*, the dimensions underlying the typology (kind of work, qualifications, career, income, company) and the significant expressions the various types revealed had to be transformed into standardized items. For this purpose, common scales for measuring work-, profession- and further education-orientations could be used, as is done in the *General Population Survey of the Social Sciences* (ALLBUS) and the *German Socio-Economic Panel* (GSOEP). On the basis of the qualitative information material, they were modified and expanded for the investigation. Moreover, items that were especially characteristic for the various types were derived from the data material. Finally, there was a collection of items (five-stage rating scale) for general work orientations, the place value of employment in relation to other areas of life and to reasons for participating in further education measures. Action practices or *realizations* were determined with a number of questions about career development, further education activities and partnerships. All in all, this procedure was the most practicable possibility to record orientations in regard to work and further education or the individual organization of one's life and action practices by means of a questionnaire which was easy to understand and to deal with. [132]

In the *second step*, by means of cluster-analytical procedures, biographical action modes developed qualitatively were to be reproduced in a data set determined in a quantitative survey. When the attempt was made to include both realizations (action results) and aspirations[48] in the cluster analysis at one and the same time, unexpected difficulties arose. Behavior variables determined the cluster structure in a way that could not be interpreted (see SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001), so that action types were taken into account exclusively as description variables, i.e. the connections between action practices and orientation patterns could only be reproduced in correlative terms. Accordingly, the explorative cluster analysis that followed referred exclusively to work-, career- and further education-*orientations*. That is why the resulting typology (7-cluster-solution) was called a typology of biographical action *orientations* (BOM) in contrast to the biographical action modes. [133]

Finally, in the *third step*, the issue was to what extent the six biographical action modes converged with the seven biographical orientation patterns: i.e. how did the typology of meaningful actions differ from the typology of general orientations? What showed was that the various types corresponded to a large degree—three types that were quite similar to the biographical action modes *company identification*, *wage-worker habitus* and *career involvement* could be constructed by means of cluster analyses. However, there were fundamental

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48 Interestingly, it was not considered to make assessments operational. Instead, it was assumed that assessments generate aspirations. However, if past experiences lead to new ways of coping with occupational action contexts, then action practices (in the past) and aspirations (notions about the future, not yet realized) fall apart. Thus, it is no longer meaningful practices that are being examined, but the difference between existing wishes and aspirations, on the one hand, and past action results, on the other.

differences between the organization and orientation modes, as well. Three of the
orientation modes had no organization-mode counterpart (*security-oriented,
undemanding necessity-oriented, demanding holistically-oriented*). The largest
cluster of the so-called *security-oriented* persons, which about 25% of
interviewees were assigned to, is an average type characterized by the great
importance given to workplace security. The small group of *undemanding
necessity-oriented* persons (9%) all have a negative orientation. All aspects—
company atmosphere, career, autonomous *versatility* and personal autonomy
have, slightly to strongly, below average values, which was considered to be a
consequence of disillusionment and the undemanding attitude of interviewees
(SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001, p.237). The *demanding, holistically-oriented* type
can be seen as its counterpart. It is characterized by above average values for
nearly all dimensions. Only employment as a means of securing one's livelihood
has below average significance. Three of the organization modes (*self-employed
habitus, personal autonomy and optimizing opportunities*) could not be
reconstructed distinctively by means of cluster analysis. They belong to the mixed
type of *chance-optimizing personal autonomy* (SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001).
The men and women with this orientation mode are characterized by a strong
willingness to educate themselves. They consider their work as a whole to be of
particular importance, the aspect of what they are currently doing as well as the
aspect of career development (see biographical action modes, pp.82ff.). [134]

How, then, can the differences between the two typologies and case ascriptions
be explained? (Also see SCHAEPER & WITZEL 2001, pp.239ff. in this regard).
[135]

Methodological questions about how suitable the selected cluster procedure is for
reconstructing a qualitative typology will be put aside here in favor of conceptional
considerations and decisions. To minimize the risk of methodological artifacts, it
is advisable, especially with regard to the instruments for cluster analysis, that
preliminary theoretical decisions or criteria for establishing qualitative types be
systematically converted into a statistical tool, because individual decisions can
have a considerable influence on subsequent cluster solutions.[49] Moreover, many
decisions in the context of cluster analysis cannot be made with statistical *rules of
thumb*, but only by justifying them with content-specific reasons referring to
preliminary theoretical reflections and, possibly, qualitative interview material (see
MICHEEL 2002a). This applies, for instance, when the issue is whether small
clusters should be kept or whether groups which are, for the moment, not very
distinctive should be more clearly brought out conceptionally. [136]

The following discussion will be limited to three central conceptional problem
areas which are important for the analysis on hand and the examination of
individualization processes:

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49 In this regard, it is necessary to refer back to a software that does not restrict statistical analysis
     options from the start as, for instance, in popular software packages (e.g. SPSS), but offers
     many different analysis options (e.g. Clustan, Almo).

- Strategies to integrate actions (realizations) and interpretations (aspirations, assessments) into types of action logic using standardized survey and evaluation procedures,
- Recording general non-situational types of action logic,
- Examining social change with the help of general non-situational types of action logic. [137]

3.4.1 Integrating actions and interpretations into types of action logic

How can actions and interpretations be integrated into types of action logic? On the strength of the preliminary theoretical considerations in this essay, it does not come as a surprise that the attempt to establish a correlative link between action results and general action orientations failed when the qualitative typology was being standardized. That can be seen as evidence of findings which already came to light in other studies (e.g. BAETHGE et al. 1988) and, therefore, were taken into account in other research projects in explicitly conceptional terms (e.g. GEISSLER & OECHSLE 1996, who distinguish between life course designs and life course planning): the interrelation of general action orientations and what actors do in practice cannot be clearly defined. The theoretical argument states that types of action logic, such as the biographical action modes, are ambiguous with regard to action results. These are explained by additional factors (e.g. availability of resources, the actor's situation and how he defines it etc.). What this means is that types of action logic can be inferred neither from action results, nor exclusively on the basis of general action orientations. [138]

If it is not possible to find certain items or scales that can serve as good indicators for the dimensions of certain types of action logic, then the question arises whether a more complex survey instrument should not be worked out. Recalling the construction logic of biographical action modes, we can see that they were developed by referring back to certain *realizations* (or their failure) of formal life courses[50] and *aspirations* and *assessments* related to them. To reproduce this logic in the standardized instrument, items would have to be related to certain life course events, so that attitudes and interpretation patterns concerning different biographical events can be systematically compared with each other during the analysis. First, the question would have to be addressed if a change of jobs or a further education measure had ever been planned or carried out, and subsequently—referring to a particular event—the reasons and reflections that contributed to the decision would have to be examined, as well as the place value they had for that decision. Unlike the examination of general action orientations, this procedure involves the danger of producing too extensive and costly questionnaires. On the other hand, it would have the advantage of connecting with action practices more strongly. The general non-situational action logic would then have to be deduced from a comparison of meaningful actions in several biographical decision-making situations. [139]

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50 For instance, stages of career development: changing from one company/occupation/position to another, further education; stages of a partnership: moving in with a partner, marrying, having a first baby.

Another strategy can be applied if, for some cases, there are both standardized data and qualitative interview material available at a particular moment of the survey. It is possible, then, to examine in each individual case to what extent case ascriptions made on the basis of standardized items correspond to clusters with case ascriptions in the qualitative typology.[51] If there are differences, items used in the cluster analysis can be checked to determine if they have the necessary distinctiveness and variance for reproducing types or whether they should rather be excluded from the analysis. JAKOB (2001) used this strategy to develop a typology of protective modes for army officers when, after their studies, they transferred to civilian life. He had a standardized sample at his disposal with data both on types of action (practical preparation for the transition) and interpretation patterns (evaluations, estimations, expectations). Both kinds of data were taken into account in the cluster analysis he performed. Data from a standardized survey and qualitative interviews were available for a sub-sample. Thus it was possible to investigate the reasons for the lacking distinctiveness of items or action results during cluster formation, to look for ways that would take them into account appropriately, or to choose suitable items for the analysis (higher distinctiveness, unambiguity) from the pool of recorded attitude items and information on action results. [140]

3.4.2 The distinction made in practical research between situation-specific and general non-situational types of action logic

The second problem area refers to the question if situation specific actions (e.g. concerning a certain company or existing partner) can be distinguished from general biographical types of action logic (how employment contracts or partnerships are generally dealt with), the latter focusing on a particular life phase (e.g. the first few years of employment). [141]

If, in a standardized cross-sectional design, questions are raised about explanation patterns referring to single events, they are subject to the same situation-specific types of answer logic that apply to biographical interviews with only *one* survey being done. We can assume that opinions, points of view and descriptions concerning one's past life story are influenced by one's current situation. To be able to grasp possible changes empirically, precisely if they were not reflected by interviewees, it is helpful to interview actors at certain intervals, e.g. in surveys repeated every three years. Changes in the way a sequence of life events (even the same life events) are described and justified can then be controlled and specified. To make statements possible about changing biographical types of action *logic* or their stabilization—regardless of whether they were obtained in standardized or non-standardized interviews—attitudes recorded

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51 SCHAEPER and WITZEL (2001) tried that, too, But they only had the qualitative data from the first three series of surveys at their disposal, which they compared with the ascriptions of the fourth standardized series. By doing that, however, they could not assess how strong the influence of various factors (e.g. socialization effects) was on the quality of case ascriptions (because the interval between the last qualitative survey and the fourth quantitative survey was three years). In addition, the typologies had different kinds of construction logic. The biographical action modes included action practices, whereas the biographical orientation patterns were based exclusively on orientations at the time of the fourth survey.

at different intervals have to be compared with one another. General, non-situational organization patterns can then be distinguished from situation-specific ones. [142]

A qualitative panel, as arranged in the project for *Status Passages to Employment*, permitted a comparison of narratives at different survey intervals. Moreover, changes and inconsistencies could be pointed out in the interview situation, thus provoking further justifications and explanations. Which interpretations were then accepted as plausible or discarded as implausible, had to be decided for each individual case in the overall context of interviews and employment histories. [143]

But how can different kinds of self-representation be compared in standardized procedures? [144]

On the basis of standardized panel data, and using a probability-cluster-analysis, it was possible to compare how the likelihood of being able to ascribe individual cases to a particular cluster solution changed from one survey to another. If this likelihood increased, it could be interpreted as the stabilization of an ideal type of behavior. Thus, it would also be possible to investigate if individual persons—the cluster solution remaining the same for the entire sample—switched from one type of biographical organization mode to another between two survey intervals. [145]

3.4.3 The analysis of social change using general non-situational types of action logic as an example

To investigate general individualization processes referring to different status passages and life course phases, the biographical action modes, developed for the first few years of employment, would have to be put on a general basis including additional groups of people (not only successful graduates from vocational training, but also those who failed; not only young adults, but also middle-aged people and those no longer working etc.). [146]

For the investigation of general individualization processes in the sense of *general social change*, the advantage of the standardized typology is that quantitative changes can be shown in a comparison of cohorts. For that purpose, cluster solutions from different samples at different historical moments have to be compared. [147]

If the attempt is made to reproduce the cluster solution of a first cohort in later cohorts, and depending on how successful this attempt is, hypotheses or conclusions can be deduced about the type of social change involved. Can individual cases—even with shifting proportions—be assigned to various groups as well as at other moments, or do the cases fit in with the cluster solution less and less adequately? The latter would be a good reason for investigating individual cases more closely and, again, qualitative interviews would have to be referred to. If qualitative interviews are done *after* evaluating the standardized

material, interviewees can be targeted for qualitative analyses—similar to the two-
stage sampling (see Section 2.1): e.g. cases that come particularly close to an
individual type or those that can only be assigned to clusters badly or not at all. In
this way, processes of social change that find only unspecific expression in the
standardized instrument (i.e. in the changed quality of cluster-analytical group
formation) can be examined more accurately. New insights gained from
qualitative analyses can then bring about a modification of the typology (e.g. the
development of a new type) or new forms of standardization. Until now, the issue
of reproducing cluster solutions at different times has rarely been worked out
statistically (but see HANSSEN, MICHEEL & WAGENBLASS 2002; MICHEEL
2002b). Further research is necessary. Beyond statistical problems, it will have to
refer to the validity and comparability of action types at different historical
moments. The larger the intervals between investigated cohorts (e.g. in a com-
parison of *the generation of anti-aircraft auxiliaries* with today's youth), the bigger
the problem of the validity and transferability of the standardized instruments
applied. As a rule, the problem of changing conceptual interpretations and
changing language usage is increasing (ALLERBECK & HOAG 1984). To
safeguard or properly assess the comparability of quantitative, standardized
procedures, it is therefore advisable to link them to qualitative, non-standardized
survey data which can indicate a corresponding change in meaning and suggest
ways of dealing with it. [148]

All in all, it has been demonstrated that, when transforming a qualitative typology
into a standardized instrument, and when applying it in a comparison of cohorts,
the combination of qualitative and quantitative data and methods can be useful at
several levels:

· When developing a standardized questionnaire, the true-to-life quality of
  items is ensured, since the spoken language used in qualitative interviews
  can be referred to.

· When reproducing the qualitative typology by means of cluster analyses
  based on standardized items, the qualitative material helps with decisions that
  cannot be made on the basis of statistical considerations alone—for instance,
  in the choice of criteria for making certain dimensions operational, or when
  having to decide whether clusters should be kept because of their theoretical
  significance despite the small number of cases involved.

· Conversely, the quantitative data material can indicate how to correct
  qualitative types—for instance, when the distinctiveness between certain
  qualitative types is poor. It has to be decided, then, to what extent this is a
  typology problem or a problem of standardization attempts. If it is possible to
  refer to large amounts of qualitative data material, new evaluation
  perspectives for the qualitative classification of types may result. If not
  enough material is available, the new questions raised would have to be
  considered in further qualitative interviews.

· If individualization processes are examined on the basis of a standardized
  instrument and by comparing cohorts, additional qualitative analyses are
  required to ensure the instrument's continuous validity and maintain its

sensitivity for social change. The specific selection of ideal types as well as deviating cases can be useful to ensure the typology and develop it further. [149]

4. Summary and Outlook

At the beginning, it was argued that the individualization discourse in post-WW II-Germany was handicapped, if not blocked, mainly because of qualitative and quantitative data and survey strategies being separated. To bring some progress into this confused situation, a conceptional and practical research strategy was suggested. Its purpose was to show how, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data and methods, the individualization thesis could be more thoroughly examined than before. [150]

A new mode of societalization was claimed and seen as the core of the individualization thesis. In this regard, it was not sufficient, as it had been until then, to investigate the interrelations between institutional change at the meso-level and socio-structural change at the macro-level and to infer from them that changes were taking place at the micro-level of actors. Rather, it was considered an empirically open question to what extent institutional change contributed to the postulated changes at the micro-level. Thus, it was possible to analyze changes observed at the macro-level in a differentiated way, taking into account interrelations with institutional or individual changes. Conceptionally, this new perspective resulted in a differentiated terminology. *Institutional individualization processes* describing changed structures at the meso-level were distinguished from *personal individualization processes* aiming at different types of action logic in the way subjects deal with their institutional action conditions at the micro-level. [151]

There was another reason, however, why the micro-level of *personal individualization* was of particular importance for analyzing general individualization processes. In rapidly changing modern societies, we can no longer assume universal and everlasting interpretation patterns without questioning them. Therefore, actions and their meaning must be investigated jointly if unexamined interrelation hypotheses are not to be taken for granted. Since the individualization thesis, however, refers precisely to the connection between action practices and their meaning, as demonstrated in specific types of action logic, it cannot be analyzed by referring only to changes in general interpretation patterns or pluralization processes. [152]

Using an empirical example, it was demonstrated how, at different levels, *personal individualization processes* could be dealt with in relation to institutional action contexts and socio-structural action results. Strategies of combining qualitative and quantitative data and methods were shown, which can be used, at the level of sampling, classifying types and quantifying a typology gained by qualitative means, to examine sufficiently valid empirical material. On the basis of this material, it should be possible to provide sound evidence of social individualization processes. [153]

The empirical part put special emphasis on the example of a typology distinguishing between different kinds of biographical action logic and applicable to show the specific problems of the individualization thesis in an exemplary way. A changed action logic, on its own, does not permit unambiguous statements to be made about action results that can be expected. To do that, the various types of logic must be analyzed in relation to specific action contexts. To what extent the biographical action modes *optimizing opportunities* or *personal autonomy* lead to a patchwork biography, is a question related to respective action contexts, individual resources available, experiences and aspirations. [154]

The need to tread new methodological and conceptional paths is increasing to the extent that research issues are becoming more complex, modern theoretical developments are increasingly being referred to, or rapidly changing societies are calling into question previous certainties and habits of explanation. If generalized explanation patterns are no longer valid for the rationalities of what actors do, if various social milieus increasingly elude the world of scientists' experience, and if previous attitudes are being replaced by new ones, then quantitative studies oriented towards formal, structural indicators must substantiate the premises for their explanations with qualitative surveys—unless they want to expose themselves to the reproach of pursuing a "sociology of variables" (ESSER 1989; FAULBAUM 1992; KELLE & LÜDEMANN 1995). [155]

In a *modernity which is modernizing itself* (BECK 1992) or a society *which is becoming more fluid* (URRY 2000), the question has to be addressed again and in a new way to what extent research should be related even more strongly to individual types of action logic in order to see more clearly how social reproduction mechanisms are changing. If the notion of stable biographical action contexts has to be dismissed just like the other notion of stable, or critically changing identities, then a research perspective seems appropriate that relates subject constellations, transforming themselves in the course of life to biographical condition and experience constellations, and connects both with the various kinds of reproduction and transformation logic they belong to. For that purpose, the research process requires a systematic combination of qualitative and quantitative data and methods. [156]

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