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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RICŒUR'S NARRATIVE METHODOLOGY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LIFE HISTORY TEXTS

BY

DAVID DONALD BROWN 

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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Before there is any-thing to which our thinking can correspond, before there are particular truths, our speech already appropriates truth by the community it remembers. To listen to our own language is to hear that community within our speech.

David Silverman, 1975

If meaning is not a sector of self-understanding, I do not know what it is.

Paul Ricœur, 1970

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled RICŒUR'S NARRATIVE METHODOLOGY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LIFE HISTORY TEXTS submitted by David Donald Brown in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

A strategy, referred to as Identity Claim Analysis (ICA), is proposed for the interpretation of life history texts. This project, while taking its immediate focus from questions concerning life history accounts, is part of a larger exploration into the relevance of the philosophy of Paul Ricœur for sociological inquiry. The thesis traces the evolution of Ricœur's thought to his inquiry into time and narration, including his conceptualization of narrative identity. A reconstruction of Ricœur's project suggests how his general framework may be adapted to serve the purpose of interpreting life history texts from a critical sociology perspective.

An overview of life history research in social science is provided, focusing upon the major paradigms and the fundamental debates surrounding hermeneutic problems and efforts to develop analytic procedures. Following Jerome Bruner, a psychologist who also has attempted to appropriate the philosophy of Ricœur, the present study takes the main objective of autobiographical analysis to be the disclosure of canonical structural properties in life narration. The strategy of ICA follows from this objective and the prior reconstruction of Ricœur's hermeneutic framework.

The strategy is based upon the premise that autobiographical texts are at one level identity projects manifest in expressed claims about the self. It is argued that the deeper meaning of such texts gravitates around (1) claims about the self relative to the social and temporal referents of the world, (2) claims about the self in relation to significant others or events in the social world, and (3) claims about the present reflexive understanding of the self over the life course. The strategy of ICA is thus linked to a theoretical con-

ceptualization of identity that is hermeneutic, temporal, contextual, and transformative.

The potential contribution of ICA for sociological inquiry is assessed by considering its continuity with the presuppositions of Ricœur's framework, the interests of critical theory, and the empirical features of three life history texts. The dissertation concludes by discussing the correspondence between the analyses arising through application of the strategy and established critical perspectives, including a feminist study of autobiography and the formal pragmatics of Jürgen Habermas.

Dedicated to the memory of my grandparents,
Elsie Cameron Brown and Thomas Lake Brown;
and to the memory of my father,
William Donald Brown.

PREFACE

This work describes the development of a methodological strategy for the interpretation of life history texts, with the more general purpose of introducing Paul Ricœur's thought to sociological inquiry. In the course of this study I have worked with three particular autobiographical texts: Maria Campbell's Halfbreed (1973) and the accounts of Maria and Manuel Sanchez reported by Lewis in The Children of Sanchez (1963[a]). From the onset I want to be clear about the relationship of this study to these texts and to their respective authors.

First, my purpose has not been to render a full sociological analysis of the individuals who speak of themselves in the Campbell and Sánchez texts. Rather, the texts are used to guide, constrain and, ultimately, to illustrate the conceptualization of a methodological strategy.

Second, while this work presents an strategy for explicating autobiographical accounts in formal terms, it has not been my intention to negate the validity of an informal reading. It would do great violence to the texts and their original authors if I were to insist that any such analytic representation is superior in an overall sense. Nonetheless, within social scientific discourse the articulation and evaluation of the methods underlying knowledge claims require a more formal perspective. This work speaks from within that circle of discourse. Outside of that circle I would insist that the value of such texts lies in their capacity to connect the experience of the reader to the experience of the author on many levels including the emotional and spiritual.

Third, the texts I have used were selected on the basis of their being readily accessible to my readers. The main effort, as indicated above, has been to develop a methodological approach to life history texts. This effort is made less complex by taking the empirical grounding from already established texts. The alternative would have ultimately entailed the development of an interviewing strategy in addition to the development of an interpretive strategy. The cost of simplification is having to contend with the difficulties associated with secondary texts. In this sense it is important to remember that the Sánchez texts used were in fact Lewis's representation of the original life history interviews with the Sánchez family. Any interpretation given to these texts, therefore, is to some extent an interpretation of Lewis's orientation over and above that of his subjects. Since the social scientific use of autobiography primarily is concerned with the orientation of subjects, the biases arising through interviewing, translation and editing remain problematic.

Fourth, with respect to the texts used from The Children of Sánchez, it has not been my intention to support Oscar Lewis's methods of data collection nor his editing and organization of the transcribed interviews. The methods by which these accounts came to be published in their present form have been the subject of serious doubt and criticism, as will be discussed in Chapter VI. Rather than being viewed as a support for Lewis's methods, the present work should be read as an attempt to find a reading that would give voice to these texts despite such limitations. This study has been premised, in part, on the arguments that life history accounts contain structural properties that are to some extent independent of interviewing

and editing biases. It has also been assumed that an interpretive strategy can be developed to lift these structural properties into view, such that the text can be further appreciated from a social scientific perspective.

In other words, my effort has been to salvage these texts from the limitations of Lewis's method rather than to lend support to his method. One can appreciate this effort by realizing that each text may be subjected to two kinds of readings. The first kind -- a surface interpretation -- is the reading called for within the context of representation; that is, within the writing-reading discourse of the text. In the case of the texts presented by Lewis, this context includes the codes brought to the text through the interaction between informants and researcher, through the practises of translation and editing, and in the relevances ascribed to the published text by Lewis and other readers.

The second kind of reading -- a depth interpretation -- operates through a resistance to discourse surrounding the text, and strives toward the revelation of the self-world identification being projected by the text. While not offering a return to the authority of the author/subject, the form of reading developed in this study does offer, as a depth interpretation, a critical appraisal of the author's/subject's voice. I contend that a project of self-identification underlies the autobiographical text. This project can survive within the texts, even despite the tendencies for readings instituted through sociological and popular discourse to focus on isolated anecdotes in order to produce theoretical evidence or romantic drama. Moreover, such identity projects are raised into view through a procedure, to be outlined in this work, that lifts into view the latent narrative(s) of autobiographical texts. Once

salvaged from the limitations of a surface reading, such narrative identifications become open to critical reflection.

Finally, again with respect to my use of texts taken from The Children of Sánchez, it has not been my intention to support or falsify the 'culture of poverty' thesis, especially the formulation given by Lewis. This thesis has been the subject of considerable debate in social science as well as in the wider community. The present work is not immediately concerned with that debate. Nevertheless, this work does find its impetus in a critical sociology of knowledge which contends that forms of subjectivity exist in a reproductive relationship with sociocultural conditions. I hope that the methodological arguments made in the following pages are able to contribute to theoretical debates in a constructive manner. My objectives will have been realized, particularly in this regard, if this work permits those who find the 'culture of poverty' thesis untenable to still find scholarly and perhaps emancipatory value in the autobiographical texts upon which the thesis ostensively was based. This can be accomplished, as I intend to show, through a deconstruction of the texts that permits, in turn, a critique of their original reading.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The path leading up to the completion of this project has been laden with both personal frustration and moments of intellectual satisfaction. Many people helped along the way. In particular, I have valued the support given to me by Raymond Morrow, the supervisor of my dissertation. He has a gift for leading graduate students toward finding their own direction and potential. Ray enabled me to grasp the essence of my work, without imposing his own substantial vision.

The other members of my committee each deserve my gratitude. Gordon Fearn provided years of encouragement and fostered my penchant for taking disciplinary risks. Judith Golec was invaluable as a critical sounding board throughout all stages of my work. Steven Kent kept reminding me to connect my philosophical work back to the concerns of sociological inquiry. Carlos Torres shared the wisdom of Paulo Freire, and raised many thoughtful questions. I am especially grateful to Professor Ben Agger, my external examiner, for his insightful and supportive appraisal of the thesis.

I am indebted to Marie Carlson and Bruce Miller for introducing me to the philosophy of Paul Ricœur, thereby providing the focal point of my research. Helen Wood must also be thanked for typing and editing drafts of this work, and for coming through whenever I was faced with a deadline.

First among these friends has been Ann Moritz, my wife. Through many discussions over the years, Ann has acted as a catalyst in the formation of my own views of the social world. I wish to thank her, and the rest of my family, for the sacrifices made in the name of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter I - Introduction

How may we listen to the telling of a life history account? This question provides the focal point for the present study. Behind the question lies the paradox of the use of autobiographical materials in social science. The richest descriptive materials available for sociological inquiry are found in such accounts (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927). The life history, in principle, makes available the two fundamental dimensions of sociological analysis described by Berger and Luckmann (1967) as objective and subjective social reality. Such accounts promise a longitudinal perspective running parallel to individual and collective development. If elicited carefully the life history overcomes the superficial nature of the survey questionnaire, while grounding the ethnographer's search for meaning in the sequences and relations that bind a life. Nevertheless, despite this promise of richness, the life history approach is an enigma of sociology. Research only can exploit sources for which analytic frameworks have been developed, and sociology has tended to neglect the problem of autobiographical interpretation.

The question thus remains - how may sociology grasp the subject and the social world through a reading of such accounts? At stake is more than the requirement for an appropriate set of techniques for transforming autobiographical material into sociological knowledge. The broader issue, that I take as the problematic for this study, concerns how the self-narrative text may be conceptualized in a manner that extends our theoretical understanding of the continuity between action, narration, and identification. The triad of agency, history, and identity establishes the conceptual boundaries for my investigation, and requires the search for a framework that integrates

these concepts around the interpretation of narrative texts. I will explore this issue taking as my starting point the concerns of critical social theory and, more specifically, the concerns of a critical social psychology (cf. Wexler, 1983). The primary resource for the study, however, will be the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricœur.

In the remaining pages of this chapter I will lay out more fully the sociological problematic at hand, the theoretical interests and resources upon that I will be drawing, and key elements of my analytic project including its theoretical and methodological implications. This introduction will conclude with an overview of how the remaining chapters are structured.

It is appropriate at this point to declare the linear sequence that follows to be an illusion. The production of any text refigures its intended content in order to fulfill the demands of genre and, more generally, of systematic human communication. The writing of a thesis requires the linear sequencing of component chapters. Herein lies the illusion. In the spirit of autobiography I must confess that the circularity of my project is not well represented in the orderly exposition of my text. Having made this confession I would also note that, following Ricœur, my experience of the process may be of less interest to the reader than the structures of thinking disclosed only in the text. In this sense, the reality of the text is as important as the process it represents from my perspective as well as that of other readers; the text becomes the locus of critical reflection.

A. Conceptual Problematic

The lack of a theoretical framework for comprehending autobiographical texts in sociological research is part of a broader neglect of narrative processes in social life (Polkinghorne, 1988). It must be acknowledged that sociology has taken a linguistic turn. This turn is evident in the agenda of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, although the analysis of language structures remains undeveloped in comparison to their focus upon the interpersonal order. Exceptions to this general tendency are found in works influenced by interactionism including Burke (1945), Gerth and Mills (1953), Berger and Luckmann (1967), and, more recently, Denzin (1989). With the exception of Denzin, even these have not appropriated into sociological discourse a fully systemic view of language.

The advent of the continental tradition of structuralism, following the principles of semiology established by Saussure (1959), provided the foothold for a fuller social scientific merging with linguistic theory. This was most evident in the works of Levi-Strauss (1966) in anthropology in which the language of myth was decoded to reveal structures of mind. Yet, the approach advocated by the structuralists insisted upon a negation of the subject, and a corresponding negation of narrative. The structures of language were given primacy over the intentional subjects central to humanistic philosophy and the configurational dimension of myth was given primacy over its temporal (narrative) dimension.

The confrontation between structuralism and hermeneutic philosophy created an opening for a 'narrative turn' in the human sciences. This mo-

ment was realized in literary criticism (Frye, 1957), in psychology (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1987) and in some forms of discourse analysis that emphasized the accomplishment of narrative in textual works (Wetherell & Potter, 1987), as well as in projects conducted under the name of historical social psychology (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). In my view, however, the most far reaching elaboration of the role of narration in social life is that developed by Ricœur in both his theory of interpretation (1976[b]) and his discussion of narrative function (1980, 1988). Ricœur offers a clear statement against the structuralist negation of subject and narrative without re-centring the subject relative to the force of language. The significance of this work for critical social inquiry into autobiographical texts will be given considerable further attention in this study.

One other line of sociological inquiry has the potential to converge with the recent rise of interest in narrative processes. The tradition of critical sociology, including but not restricted to the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, has sought to conceptualize social life in terms of a historically contingent agency-structure dialectic. C. Wright Mills, for example, calls upon the sociological imagination "to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (1961: 8). He goes on to suggest that the sociological imagination is that "quality of mind that will help (people) to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves" (1961: 5). On my reading, Mills is implicitly acknowledging the narrative foundation of social life and sociological inquiry.

More recently, Fay (1987: 68-69) has noted the narrative focus implicit in critical theory to the extent that it is concerned with constructing narrative accounts about underlying historical processes, and with the narrative accounts (ideologies, realizations) held by subjects. This focus is most explicit in the educational project of Freire (1970[a], 1970[b]). Habermas (1984), while not specifically concerned with narrative social processes, has developed a way of conceptualizing forms of communicative action, in terms of a formal pragmatics, within which narrative operations may be located. In fact, one of the interesting consequences of the analysis presented in this study has been an empirical validation, in general terms, of the forms of communicative action deduced from his formal pragmatics.

Returning to the immediate problem of interpreting autobiographical narratives, a considerable renewal of interest in the use of such techniques has been observed in recent years (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). This interest, however, has not yet fostered a systematic reconceptualization of autobiography within sociology. The key efforts to rethink the nature of these narrative productions has taken place in other disciplines on the edge of sociology: philosophy, literary studies, and anthropology. In the cases where sociologists have attempted to develop theoretical accounts of autobiography, they have drawn directly from these other disciplines. The present study will not be an exception to this pattern, although it strives for a more adequate degree of integration.

Among those who have attempted to arrive at a conceptualization of the life history account are several anthropologists and sociologists.

Mandelbaum (1973) has developed a model of the autobiographical text that focuses on the evident turning points, sociocultural dimensions, and adaptations. Agar (1980), and later Luborsky (1987), have attempted to perceive the 'conceptual templates' of such narrative texts through 'themal analysis.' Frank (1979), Crapanzano (1984), and Angrosino (1989) have shifted the focus away from the structure of the account to the social interaction behind its production, arguing that the text discloses primarily the relationship between ethnographer and informant. Both Denzin (1989) and, more explicitly, Ferrarotti (1981, 1989) conceptualize the life history account in terms of Sartre's (1966) humanistic Marxism. Kohli (1981) and Bruner (1986, 1987) most clearly present the autobiography as a reflexive theory of the subject.

My own project will build upon a critical assessment of these divergent strategies. The work of Bruner, and particularly the manner in which he appropriates Ricœur, will be especially important in developing my own framework. It should be noted, however, that the approach I take is, in the final analysis, complementary to the efforts of Denzin and Ferrarotti in the sense that it offers a way to integrate their respectively individual and collective analyses.

B. Theoretical Orientation

The stance that I take toward the problem of working with autobiographical materials is captured under the term 'critical hermeneutics,' a term used by Thompson (1981) to denote the field of continuity between the ideas of Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricœur. I appropriate this term in order

to signify my joint concern with, first, the sociological critique of consciousness in its relation to the agency-structure dialectic, and, second, with the process of interpretation as both a reflexive social activity and a sociological strategy. This orientation is distinct from both a 'subject-centred' humanistic sociology, and from those orientations aligned with structuralism and post-structuralism that have reduced the 'subject' to a construct of language. Following Habermas, I view the 'subject' in developmental terms. Specifically, I view the concrete person as a potential agent in the sense of being able to act upon his/her sociocultural world, and in the sense of being able to reflect upon his/her 'self' within that social/linguistic world. This potential is realized to the extent that persons are able to develop their competency in the fields of communication action. Such development is contingent upon social conditions of existence.

Ricœur's thought emerges at the point of tension between two traditions of continental philosophy: hermeneutic phenomenology and structuralism. I interpret his work as an ongoing effort to find a way of transcending the contradictions between these disparate views of human being. Hermeneutic phenomenology, aptly described as an ontological hermeneutics (Howard, 1982), itself represents a merging of two philosophical schools: hermeneutics and phenomenology. Traditionally hermeneutics was concerned with the interpretation of religious, legal, and historical texts. In the area of historical interpretation, such figures as Schleiermacher and, later, Dilthey attempted to forge an "epistemological foundation for the human sciences" (Thompson, 1981: 37).

Transcendental phenomenology was founded on Husserl's attempt to "elucidate the essential meaning of objects of experience through an investigation of the modes of their appearance" (Thompson, 1981: 38), a study into the intentional character of consciousness. The bringing together of these concerns is initiated in the work of Heidegger, wherein hermeneutic activity shifts from being an epistemological basis to being an ontological basis for the human sciences. To be human is to interpret, and it is to interpret from a position in experienced time. Building on the work of Heidegger, Gadamer argues that all interpretation is 'prejudiced;' that is, it comes out of particular historically-given and language-based tradition. Interpretation cannot take place outside of a given linguistic tradition. Thus, Gadamer displays an almost structuralist emphasis on the centrality of language over the subject. "Being that can be understood is language" (Gadamer, 1975).

Ricœur's own project has emerged over a number of decades. In terms of the development of hermeneutic philosophy, Ricœur has been responsible for giving hermeneutic phenomenology a critical edge. This shift, resulting out of his encounter with structuralism, is manifest in his effort to conceptualize the role of the text in human development; that is, the development of the human being as an interpretive being. Yet, Ricœur still holds to a de-centred notion of the subject. "Contrary to the idealistic concept of self-constitution, hermeneutics presupposes that man has no direct consciousness of himself but has to 'appropriate' what he is through the signs of the cultural tradition to which he belongs" (Van Leeuwan, 1981: 25).

This approach differentiates Ricœur's work, and my own, from the structuralist and post-structuralist agenda. For Ricœur, the 'distance' between texts and what they are about provides the impetus for interpretive development of the person. The texts handed down by tradition and culture call for reinterpretation, and correlatively a re-positioning of the self relative to language. While a 'final' meaning may always elude us, this does not imply that interpretative being is futile, as suggested by the post-structuralist image of the subject caught forever in a trap of undecidability. Ricœur would most certainly agree that to take the strong post-structuralist position would be to "foreclose upon the very political and epistemological possibilities" (Smith, 1988: 103) that are implicit in the human capacity to enter into a dialogue with language by way of textual interpretation.

Following Ricœur, I see this development of the person as focused around, not direct introspection, but indirect (re)interpretation of the self in narrative texts. The notion of text is used here in the broadest sense, including the reflection upon unrecorded actions (Ricœur: 1971). The subject of such texts, inscribed or not, is the 'subject'[1] produced through the narrative work of the text. This 'subject' is the object of struggle between persons party to the interpretation of the text. More significantly, however, this 'subject' is the point of confrontation between the person as a potential narrator and the system of discourse that constrains the language of the narrative text. Put more directly, and one of my concerns is to radicalize the philosophy of Ricœur, the 'subject' of the text is the tension between what is possible, in terms of sociocultural structure, and what is potential in terms

of human agency. The 'subject' of the text is at once the manifestation of ideology and the means of personal and social reflexive interpretation.

For the person (or collectivity) the textual 'subject' provides an object of reflection one consequence of such reflection being a reinterpretation of the self. In this sense the self is symbolic; it always demands an interpretation in light of many possible/potential interpretations. Identity -- the answer to 'who am I/who are we? -- is minimally conceptualized as the current reflexively interpreted meaning of the self; and, because identity always is the product of narrative interpretation, it is a narrative identity. This does not simply mean that identity takes a narrative form, but that it is accomplished through the interpretation of narrative texts. Narrative provides the only communicative basis for connecting action, as a temporal construct, and identification. As Jerome Bruner, acknowledging his debt to Ricœur, has said:

> We seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of narrative. Which is not to say that there are not other temporal forms that can be imposed on the experience of time, but none of them succeeds in capturing the sense of lived time: not clock or calendrical time forms, not serial or cyclical orders, not any of these. It is a thesis that will be familiar to many of you, for it has been most recently and powerfully argued by Paul Ricœur. Even if we set down annales in the bare form of events, they will be seen to be events chosen with a view to their place in an implicit narrative (1987: 12).

On the basis of this claim, I would go on to argue that conduct only can be construed as meaningful social action through narrative representation.[2] The person only can be affirmed as an agent (or not) in narrative accounts.

Ricœur's work is thus capable of radicalizing interpretive sociology by linking the meaning of self to agency. His work informs the agenda of social theory and microsociology in particular, by de-centring social interaction as well as the subject through his insistence upon the constant mediating role of the text. Finally, Ricœur complements critical theory and critical social psychology by offering, in addition to a theory of narrative, a methodology of narrative interpretation.

C. Direction of the Present Study

Taking this perspective carved out from the works of Habermas and Ricœur, a number of questions may be framed concerning the ontology and epistemology of life history research. What is the life history **about** as a text of communicative action? The term 'about' is used here in the sense of referencing the kind of code or project 'around' which the text is organized (Green, 1988). The question, therefore, may be rephrased: What kind of personal/social project is being accomplished or attempted in an autobiographical account? Following Ricœur, I will answer that it is organized around a self-interpretive project of identification. This leads to the question: What are the characteristic operations of the autobiographical account? On the basis of my reading of three life history texts, I will answer that the fundamental operations need to be described in terms of three levels of claims about the identity of the self.

I will also demonstrate how these claims are organized and interpreted through a procedure referred to as Identity Claim Analysis (ICA). This

methodological strategy holds promise in being able to answer a further question: What may a given autobiographical account disclose about the self-consciousness of a person or community as a potential agent? Finally, these specific questions lead to one that is both more compelling and more speculative: What kind of social world would enable/constrain the project of identification disclosed in the autobiographical text? The process of trying to address this last question will forge a link between my appropriation of Ricœur and the formulations of critical social psychology.

In order to conduct the empirical aspect of this study, I have selected three autobiographical texts. The first, Maria Campbell's Halfbreed (1973), is a 'true' autobiography in that it was written in the first person. The second and third texts are taken from Oscar Lewis's The Children of Sánchez (1963[a]), these being the accounts given by Marta and Manuel Sánchez. The Sánchez texts are the result of life history interviews conducted, organized, and edited by the anthropologist (Rigdon, 1988). This particular set of three texts offers the possibility for certain key comparisons: (1) between the written text and the texts constructed through an interview process, (2) between the accounts produced by individuals living under conditions of social oppression in different societies, (3) between individuals of different sex, and (4) between the interpretation of the texts arising through the framework developed in this project and the interpretations given by other authoritative readers, i.e., the 'culture of poverty' interpretation given by Lewis (1963[a]).

The texts were read, following the general principles of hermeneutic interpretation (Radnitzky, 1973: 218): (1) attempting to understand the text

from within itself as an autonomous entity whose deep structures were independent from at least the conscious intentions of the authors, (2) searching for an understanding of the text that rendered it a maximally coherent narrative configuration, and (3) working dialectically between the global understanding of the text as a whole, and the various parts of the text.

The logic of my inquiry was to discern how the text worked as a latent identity project, a presupposition taken a priori from Ricœur's writings on narrative identity. It was posited that persons, in the course of communicating the events and sequences of their lives, must draw upon a scheme for organizing these subjective experiences. Bruner (1987), a cognitive psychologist, has referred to these schemes as canonical narrative models. Bruner has suggested that such models are necessary in order for the subjective organization of our biography to mesh with the way other members of our community subjectively organize their biographies. At stake is the possibility for speaking about our (collective) life. Following Bruner's own appropriation of Ricœur, I take the main objective of autobiographical analysis to be the disclosure of the basic structural properties of life narration, properties that express the canonical narrative framework dominant in a particular concrete social context.

I go beyond Bruner in my conceptualization, however, by incorporating Ricœur's idea of narrative identity at the centre of my analysis. I contend that the structural properties of these autobiographical texts only can be grasped fully in their part-whole relations if the text is understood as the projection of identity claims. In my reading of the three texts I find three basic levels of identification: (1) claims about the self relative to the social and

temporal referents of the world, (2) claims about the self in relation to significant persons, groups, or systems in the social world, and (3) claims about the self's present reflexive understanding of the self-in-the-world over the life course. In the sense of 'what the text is about' offered by Green (1988), I will argue that these claims provide the hermeneutic centre of the autobiographical texts around that other anecdotal elements gravitate.

I will suggest that in order to make an account of my life events work as an account it must be bound together by a narrative continuity. The final, or, at least, the desired continuity in my life is my identity, what Ricœur refers to at one point as my self-constancy (1988: 246-247).[3] In this way the manifest project of life narration establishes the opening for a latent project of self-interpretation and identification, both projects being served by the recounting of concrete events. Such anecdotes provide the surface of the text, while at the same time reinforcing the identity claims that together constitute its deeper structure. The author, in this sense, is both the teller and follower of the account. S/he constructs the surface text of the autobiography while, in the same instance, s/he reflexively interprets the 'subject' given within its deeper structure.

The analysis of identity claims entails (1) the explication of such claims from the autobiographical text, (2) discerning and organizing the claims into their respective levels of identification, (3) distributing the claims across the social contexts with which they are associated in the text, and (4) accounting for the distribution of the claims across levels and contexts theoretically. The justification for observing how identity claims are distributed across contexts flows generally from Ricœur's insistence that formal structural

analysis (explanation) should be linked back to the concrete world, and more specifically from Sartre's (1966) recognition of the importance of social contexts as mediations between the personal and the societal.

An examination of the distribution of claims at different levels of identification with their associated mediating social contexts permits us to discern, in particular, the social relations that provide the basis for developmentally higher order identification. In the present scheme the levels of identification increase in their reflexive-critical capacity from (1) relative claims to (2) relational claims to (3) reflective claims. These levels of identification arrived at inductively correspond, more or less, to the forms of communication action in Habermas's formal pragmatics (1984: 328-337), these respectively being: (A) norm-conformative speech acts, (B) objectivating speech acts, and (C) expressive speech acts. The implication of this continuity will be discussed further in the conclusion of this study.

In my view, the present study supports the validity of the conceptualization given to autobiographical texts as identity projects and lays the foundation for further methodological development. More significant, I believe, are the implications for theoretical work in three related areas: the concept of identity, the social process of personal identification, and the function of narrative processes in social life, including the social construction of (hi)stories. In accord with my interest in bringing Ricœur into sociology, I find in this application of his ideas both the potential for countering the relative neglect of narrative processes in sociology, and for challenging the sociological reification of 'roles' by offering an agency-based conception of personal and collective identity. My analysis suggests that if sociologists

listen to how concrete people organize the experience of their selves and their lives, then they will find identity to be much more than a set of current role commitments.[4] It suggests that identity is hermeneutic, temporal, contextual, and transformative.

By 'hermeneutic' I intend that persons continually must reinterpret the meaning of their selves through 'subjects' disclosed in narrative thought and narrative texts. As Ricœur has recognized, the self always must be reinterpreted in light of the shifting balance between life as history and life as fiction - the ever changing tension between what has been possible and what has become potential.

By 'temporal' I am suggesting that persons experience their selves not at a single point in time, but in terms of a dynamic self-constancy that projects from their past into their future. To ask 'Who am I?' is to ask 'Who have I been?' and 'Who might I become?'. By 'contextual' I want to imply that identity is not (simply) categorical, but that it is founded on the experience of the self in comparison to, in relations with, and reflecting upon other persons and events in the social world.

Finally, by 'transformative' I am suggesting that identity contains a utopian as well an an ideological aspect[5] in the sense that persons have the capacity to organize their experience of selves around their (potential) personal and collective agency. The concept of agency here implies resistance to the constraints of material force and the constraints given by cultural-linguistic imperatives, resistance to what Miller (1987) has referred to respectively as domination and power. Overall, by opening up the concept of

identity and grounding it in autobiographical accounts, the present study resists, in the sense of Foucault, a system of reason constituted by sociological discourse (cf. Agger, 1989) that tends to constrain the idea of human agency within rigid social psychological concepts (Wexler, 1983). Identity escapes categorization when it affirms the person in terms of his/her potential agency.

As to the boundaries of the present study, it has not been my objective to develop a comprehensive life history method. Rather, it has been my objective to conceptualize the life history text along the lines suggested by Ricœur's critical hermeneutics, and to explore a corresponding form of interpretation. A limitation of this work is that it does not enable us to directly address the collection of the life history account, a process in which both author and researcher are implicated. To overcome this limitation, however, goes beyond the scope of this project. Such an investigation will be appropriate once the conceptual foundations of autobiography have been more firmly established.

D. Overview of Chapters

The task immediately at hand is to provide an overview of how the thesis is organized into component chapters. My overall logic will be to present first the relevant details and critique of Ricœur's philosophical framework. The remaining chapters then will appropriate this framework into the context of autobiographical interpretation. The decision to sequence the chapters in this manner results in the literature review for the empirical

aspect of the study being found in the centre, rather than near the beginning of the thesis. This reflects my desire to present the philosophical foundation of my work to the reader before moving into the specific interpretive work. It also reflects, in broad terms, the development of my own thinking about these matters. This thesis, while taking its immediate focus from questions concerning life history accounts, is also part of a larger exploration on my part into the relevance of Ricœur for sociological inquiry.

The main concerns of the second chapter will be to specify the details and development of Ricœur's approach to language, discourse, and hermeneutic interpretation. The chapter traces the evolution of Ricœur's project from his initial concern with human will to his more recent interest in time and narration. The development of this project also displays his shift from the hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger and Gadamer to his current critical hermeneutic stance mediated by his encounter with structuralism. The second chapter concludes by outlining his program for interpretive methodology, a program that provides the analytic strategy for the later reading of life history accounts.

The third chapter will locate and introduce Ricœur's philosophical discussion of time and narrative, including his conceptualization of narrative identity. The chapter first reviews various phenomenological views of the self in relation to temporality. It then goes on to outline the manner in which Ricœur addresses the problematic of time, the function of narrative relative to this problematic, and the emergent phenomenon of narrative identity.

The fourth chapter offers a reconstruction of the Ricœurian framework suitable for the interpretation of life history texts. This reconstruction of Ricœur's project suggests how his general framework may be adapted to more specifically serve the purposes of the critical interpretation of life histories. A number of aspects require elaboration before the framework as a whole can be appropriated into social inquiry. The reconstruction proposed here is primarily concerned with Ricœur's conceptualization of agency and identity. This chapter completes the metatheoretical half of this study, and prepares the way for the theoretical and methodological work to follow.

The fifth chapter sets the stage for a more focused examination of the life history approach in sociology. It provides an overview of life history methodology, especially the major paradigms and fundamental debates. The focus of this chapter will be on hermeneutic problems and the efforts to develop analytic procedures. Moreover, while some of the literature reviewed is sociological, it is essential to include references to important developments in cultural anthropology and related disciplines. The chapter concludes by specifying the presuppositions concerning life history research that will inform the balance of the study.

The sixth chapter describes the development of a strategy for the interpretation of life history texts based on the reconstruction presented in the previous chapter. The context of development is provided by three published life history accounts: Maria Campbell (1973), Marta Sánchez and Manuel Sánchez (Lewis, 1963[a]). The emphasis in this chapter is with the task of discerning fundamental narrative structures and their analysis. The

seventh chapter takes these fundamental structures as the starting point for demonstrating the strategy of identity claim analysis with the selected texts. The criteria for assessment gravitate around a concern with achieving a continuity between the presuppositions of Ricœur's framework, the interests of critical theory and the empirical features of these life histories.

The concluding chapter primarily will summarize the insights gained from the empirical application and assessment outlined above. It will go on to pursue the implications of the Ricœurian framework for critical methods in sociology. This discussion will involve an assessment of the correspondence between the analyses arising through the developed strategy and established theoretical perspectives, including critical theory and a feminist study of autobiography. The dissertation will end by discussing emergent issues and projects that, while being beyond the objectives of the present study, still warrant further investigation.

On a final note, this project has entailed two related yet distinct struggles. It clearly has been an effort to articulate a conceptual framework relevant to critical social inquiry. In this sense it has been an attempt to produce something useful for a particular community. The value of the product ultimately will be assessed through its use and critique by others. At the same time, this project also has been an effort to explore and, to some extent, resolve my own uncertainties about social life and sociological inquiry, especially with respect to the meaning of identity and the act of interpretation. As I hinted earlier, any sense of coherence or linearity discovered by the reader in the following pages belies an often circuitous process of finding a way through the language of social theory.

Notes

1 I will denote the subject projected from within the text as 'subject' in order to differentiate the meaning of the term from less precise usage, such as the subject as actor. For a critical discussion of the different kinds of subjects, in and out of texts, see Smith (1988).

2 Hayden White (1980), in his discussion of historical narratives, has made an argument along similar lines. According to White, the function of narration in historical accounts is to bestow different values on social events.

3 For an overview of the social psychological and sociological issues surrounding the continuity of the self see Weigert et al (1986: 60-62).

4 Even relatively recent and sophisticated discussions on the nature of identity continue to anchor the concept in the static notion of role commitment. See, for example, Weigert et al (1986).

5 For a fascinating discussion of the ideological and utopian aspects of the self, as well as the implications of their contradiction for personal crisis, see Wexler (1983).

Chapter II - Ricœur: Understanding and Explanation

This chapter outlines the scope and history of Ricœur's project. Particular attention is given to the methodological aspects of his work, that may be referred to in general as the theory of interpretation. The focus is upon those methodological principles that are of interest from a sociological perspective, and particularly within the context of the interpretation of narrative texts. A further discussion of Ricœur's theory of time and narrative is pursued in Chapter III.

This chapter will serve as a preliminary background to the application of Ricœur's theory to the study of autobiography that follows. Three general areas of Ricœur's thinking need to be discussed prior to that application: the distinctions between language, discourse, and text; the process of depth interpretation; and the extension of the textual model to meaningful action. The chapter includes the identification of difficulties in Ricœur's theory and a re-casting of the text-action analogy.

A. Development of Ricœur's Project

Ricœur's interest in the text-world relationship traces to his grounding in phenomenology.[1] Even in his exploration of human will in Freedom and Nature (1966), however, Ricœur begins to shift away from the existentialist concern with positive essences of life. Instead, he breaks new ground by considering the aporias of existence: guilt, bondage, alienation and so forth. This concern with the problem of meaning in existence brings Ricœur to hermeneutics.

In his Symbolism of Evil (1967) Ricœur finally breaks with the Husserlian vision of self-consciousness. A displacement of the intuitive subject is found at this point is his work. He no longer considers it possible for subjects to reflect upon their consciousness in any direct sense. This idea is replaced by the view that consciousness can only be reflected upon indirectly, through the interpretation of meanings immanent in symbolic productions. At this stage Ricœur has aligned himself with the hermeneutics of suspicion, the model of interpretation found in the works of Marx, Nietzsche and, most notably, Freud.

Through his study of Freudian psychoanalysis that Ricœur elaborates his philosophy and sets the stage for his future projects. In Freud and Philosophy (1970) he considers the implications of a hermeneutics grounded in the interpretation of symbolic language. Ricœur now finds it necessary to introduce an explanatory moment into interpretation in order to overcome the reification of consciousness. He posits a tension in existence between force and meaning. Whereas interpretation is concerned with the revelation of meaning, explanatory procedures are necessary to explicate the forces or conditions of existence that work against the emergence of meaning. Explanation is realized in the application of theoretical concepts used to account for the distance between the self and its symbolic productions (Freeman, 1985: 299). In this way Ricœur builds a framework for interpretation around his understanding of the psychoanalytic process.[2]

Nonetheless, Ricœur is concerned to go beyond the hermeneutics of suspicion found in Freud. It is his insight that a complete interpretation of

symbolic productions requires, in fact, two hermeneutics: an archeology of force to contend with the unconscious, in a manner akin to Freudian inquiry; and a teleology of meaning to grasp the progressive coming to consciousness as reflected in the Hegelian concept of spirit. These regressive and progressive dimensions are aspects of each and every symbolic production. The plurivocity of the symbol, rather than concealing meaning, gives consciousness its impetus by provoking acts of interpretation.

The idea of the symbol as a basis for creativity in language and culture is further developed by Ricœur in his analysis of metaphor and, more generally, in his encounter with structuralism. In his collection of essays, The Conflict of Interpretations (1974[a]), Ricœur argues for the necessity of a structuralist approach to symbolic expression. Structuralism provides the explanatory method called for in his Freudian reconstruction of hermeneutics. The structuralist model becomes a basis for Ricœur's efforts to come to terms with his own view of a symbolic language in which the intentional subject is displaced. Furthermore, it enables him to claim for hermeneutics a form of objectification in common with the sciences, but still consistent with the meaningful subject matter specific to the cultural sciences. The model of the text thus becomes the focus of Ricœur's thought.

As with his critique of Freud, Ricœur extends his thought beyond formal structuralism by rejecting its restricted conceptualization of language. By critically appropriating the structuralist framework Ricœur reaches the point of being able to articulate a coherent methodology for the cultural sciences. Structural explanation in Ricœur's scheme must be limited to a mediation in the interpretive process. The fundamental problem with

structuralism, according to Ricœur, is its emphasis on linguistic works as self-contained entities. For Ricœur the structural analysis of a text has no purpose without an attempt to follow the direction of the text to its external referent. He criticizes the structuralist analysis of myth, for example, by observing that:

> myth would not even function as a logical operator if the propositions that it combines did not point towards boundary situations. ... If this were not the case structural analysis would be reduced to a sterile game, a devisive algebra, and even the myth itself would be bereaved of the function Lévi-Strauss himself assigns to it, that of making men (and women) aware of certain oppositions and of tending towards their progressive mediation. To eliminate this reference to the aporias of existence around which mythic thought gravitates would be to reduce the theory of myth to the necrology of the meaningless discourses of mankind (1976[b]: 87).

Rejecting the extreme implications of structuralist text, however, leads Ricœur into a dilemma. On the one hand, he is insistent that the structuralist effort at interpreting the text as if it had no referent whatsoever is a pointless exercise in symbolic algebra. On the other hand, he also has rejected the idea of following the Verstehen path of Dilthey in which, on his interpretation, the reference of the text is reduced to intentions of the author. Whereas the former framework involves a text that is silent to the world, the latter involves a text that can only refer back to its author. Ricœur is convinced from his earlier critique of phenomenology that any attempt to reconstruct the author's intended referent by way of empathic communion would be inadequate. In an important sense, the text has

more to say that its author. Consequently, the intended or ostensive referent of the text only can serve as a starting point for a critical interpretation.

Ricœur navigates through this impasse by arguing for a framework that entails a duality of referents. Interpretation begins with the author speaking of an ostensive referent; but proceeds, indirectly through an explication of the narrative structure, to a latent or non-ostensive referent. This second level of meaning is constituted as the world-propositions of the text. In other words, through the act of critical interpretation the reader grasps the language of the text, rather than the intentions of the author. On Ricœur's account, to interpret a text is to understand its way of re-presenting the world, where the world is the complex of actual and possible conditions for human existence. The objective is to discern the language that enables the author/text to speak of the world.

With the publication of his essay entitled "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text" (1971), Ricœur begins his effort to establish the relevance of his hermeneutic paradigm for the human sciences and specifically for the study of meaningful action. This attempt, however, appears to have remained undeveloped (Thompson, 1984) and has served primarily as a bridge to extend the model of the text to the interpretation of history. In Narrative Time (1980) Ricœur continues his inquiry into the semantics of action by exploring the relationship between (hi)stories and the human experience of temporality. Ricœur moves beyond the phenomenological discourse by lifting into view the problem of the incommensurability of lived and universal perspectives on time. On Ricœur's account this problem gives rise to the narrative form of expression. The narrative text is

understood as a 'mimesis' of action, an attempt to lift into view the problem of human intervention into history. Frank points out that (1979: 81) that "a character in the Aristotlian sense is one who reveals the significance of a situation through the decisive execution of action" (1979: 81, my emphasis). In other words, the narrative is concerned more with revealing the nature of action than it is with representing the personality of actors.

A consequence of narrative interpretation in the social world is the formation of individual and collective identity. Narrative identity is constituted as an unstable self that develops through the interpretation of (hi)stories. It is here that Ricœur completes a circle that began with his analysis of Freud. In this conceptualization of narrative identity he brings forward again the idea of a hermeneutic of consciousness that entails both an archaeology of the force in language, and a teleology of meaning through language. Ricœur's concept of identity is a process of coming to consciousness by way of (re)interpreting the symbolic language of the unconscious. Thus, Ricœur offers a general theory of narrative grounded in the aporia of time and the poetics of narrative.

Ricœur's position in the hermeneutic tradition may be understood in his relation to the Gadamer-Habermas debate. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) has developed an ontological hermeneutics that comprehends the interpretive basis of social life, including both natural and social scientific practice. Gadamer, however, has refused to outline a methodological counterpart to his ontology. Ricœur's approach to the problem of textual interpretation is generally consistent with, and would appear to build upon, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Ricœur's work extends hermeneutics from its

basis in the phenomenology of interpretation to a methodological framework for the cultural sciences (Hekman, 1984).

But Ricœur, in taking some guidance from structuralism, goes beyond the point of merely providing a methodology for Gadamer's ontological hermeneutic. In doing so Ricœur moves closer to the position advocated by Jürgen Habermas. Habermas has challenged the philosophy of Gadamer on the grounds that the latter's position entails a rejection of the Enlightenment emphasis on the critical nature of reflexivity (Ulin, 1984: 105). Ricœur has allowed for the possibility of a critical hermeneutic by giving privilege to the referential language of narrative accounts. Unlike Gadamer, Ricœur's critical hermeneutic maintains a central place for the external referent of the text. But it takes as its route to that interpretation the deep structure of the discourse, rather than the surface interpretations of the subjects. Moreover, Ricœur offers an approach that moves beyond the ontological hermeneutics of Gadamer and Heidegger, first, by opening to a 'method' of textual explication based upon structuralist linguistics; and, second, by shifting the idea of interpretative being away from subjects enclosed in linguistic tradition, toward that of subjects capable of re-interpreting their own tradition. It is particularly in terms of this latter point that Ricœur's hermeneutics converges with critical theory.

Ricœur has attempted to resolve the classical debate over explanation and understanding in the social sciences by forging a linkage between structuralist linguistics and hermeneutic phenomenology. His theory of depth interpretation describes the transition from one state of understanding to another mediated by structural explanation. Ricœur attempts to extend his

theory to the methodology of the social sciences by describing a correspondence between the concepts of the text and meaningful social action, and between the processes of textual interpretation and social inquiry.

B. Interpretive Methodology

Ricœur's theory is of interest here because it indicates a point of convergence between the two principle methodologies in sociology. Ricœur's ideas are situated between the tradition within which Durkheim participated, on the one hand, and the tradition within which Weber participated, on the other. In other words, Ricœur has had to work through, in his philosophy, the same debates concerning the tension between social structure and meaningful human agency that has characterized both classical and contemporary sociological theory. He begins his project by building upon the hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger and Gadamer that in turn may be traced to the philosophy of Husserl, Dilthey, and Kant. At the core of this tradition has been an interest in defining the bases for the interpretation of action and history, and a commitment to the centrality of interpretation in human existence.

Ricœur confronts this hermeneutic tradition with the structural linguistics of Saussure and, to a larger extent, Benveniste. It appears that Benveniste's thought was directly influenced by the ideas of Durkheim (Koerner, 1973: 49). Durkheim's influence on linguistics is most evident in the structuralist view of language as a supraindividual reality. Like other 'social facts' language is thought to be external to individuals and a constraining force in their lives. Ricœur brings the divergent principles of

structuralist and hermeneutic inquiry together in a dialectic through which explanation and understanding are both viewed as aspects of a critical depth interpretation.

To discuss what Ricœur means by textual interpretation, it is necessary to first outline the distinction he sets up between language and discourse. It is also necessary to explain the further distinction he sets up between dialogical and textual forms of discourse. Ricœur differentiates between discourse and language through four sets of characteristics (1971: 530-531).

1. Language is a system of signs that has only virtual existence. Discourse is actual. All discourse has a concrete and present instance.

2. Language, not being connected to a concrete moment, lacks a subject. Discourse always has a subject. It has someone who draws upon language in an effort to communicate.

3. The signs of language refer only to other signs. The meaning of signs is given in the manner in which they differ from and relate to one another. Discourse has a reference external to itself. Discourse is always about something.

4. Language is a condition for communication, but is not communication itself. Discourse is the process of communication.

These distinctions prepare the way for establishing the differences between dialogical and textual discourse. Ricœur's theory of depth interpretation flows from an ontology of textual discourse. He points out how the:

> ancient debate between explaining and understanding concerns both epistemology and ontology. More precisely, it is a debate which begins as a simple analysis of our way of thinking and talking about things, but which, as the argument proceeds,

> turns to the things themselves on which our concepts bear (1978: 149).

Ricœur's formal model of the text is based on the idea of a work which has been inscribed. He defines a text as any utterance or set of utterances fixed by writing. It is primarily this condition of inscription that Ricœur uses to differentiate between textual and dialogical forms of discourse (1971: 531-537).

1. Whereas the present instance of dialogue is relatively fleeting, this instance is fixed through inscription in the case of a text.

2. Whereas dialogue has others who are communicated with at the discretion of the subject, the audience of a text is to be created by the text itself.

3. Whereas the intentions of the subject coincide with the meaning of the discourse in dialogue, intentions and meanings become dissociated in the case of texts.

4. Whereas dialogical discourse refers to a situation common to those in communication, textual discourse also refers to an ensemble of references that may be realized through a depth interpretation.

At the centre of Ricœur's work is the tension between the ideas of understanding and explanation. This tension flows from the classical debate in hermeneutics that may be traced to the time of Dilthey. Ricœur notes that Dilthey:

> called explanation that model of intelligibility borrowed from the natural sciences and extended to the historical sciences by the positivistic schools, and he took interpretation as a derived form of understanding in which he saw the basic approach of

> the 'human sciences' (Geistewissenschaften), the only one which can do justice to the basic difference between these sciences and the 'natural sciences' (1971: 135).

It is precisely this separation of explanation and understanding that Ricœur is against. For Ricœur methodologies based on explanation (Erklären) or understanding (Verstehen) are limited to the extent that one excludes the other. The idea of understanding that Ricœur finds inadequate is that which involves only a surface interpretation. A surface interpretation is directed at what the text or, more accurately, what the author is saying. It is directed at grasping the subjective intentions of the author. In Ricœur's terms the subjective intention of the author is the sense of the text. The difficulty with a surface interpretation is that a significant level of meaning may exist beyond that accounted for by the author's intentions. He suggests that:

> intention is often unknown to us, sometimes redundant, sometimes useless, and sometimes even harmful as regards the interpretation of the verbal meaning of his work. In even the best of cases it has to be taken into account in light of the text itself (1976[b]: 76).

In other words, the text must be viewed as having a certain degree of semantic autonomy. At the same time Ricœur finds the idea of explanation offered by structuralism to be inadequate. Structural explanation attempts to describe the underlying structure of the text as an autonomous entity. This view of interpretation is limited in that it removes itself from actual contexts around which the meanings of the text must gravitate (1976[b]: 86).

For Ricœur the purpose of interpretation is not simply to describe the sense or the structure of the text, but rather it is to bring out the latent reference of the text. Interpretation so directed is referred to by Ricœur as a depth interpretation. Such an interpretation only may be realized by bringing together the opposing approaches of explanation and understanding.[3] Explanation and understanding are viewed by Ricœur as implicating one another. The semiotic method is contained within a semantic process.

> On the epistemological level, I say that there are not two methods, the explanatory method and the method of understanding. Strictly speaking, only explanation is methodic. Understanding is rather the nonmethodic moment which, in the sciences of interpretation, comes together with the methodic moment of explanation. Understanding preceded, accompanies, closes, and thus envelops explanation. In return, explanation develops understanding analytically (1978: 165).

Ricœur seeks to constrain explanation within the concerns of understanding. The two levels of understanding, mediated through structural explanation, are distinct in that the first is directed at the sense of the text while the second is directed at its reference.

The process of depth interpretation may be viewed as a dialectic between two aspects. The first of these aspects is 'explanation,' that entails a shift from initial understanding to structural analysis, from the sense of the text to its structure. The second aspect of comprehension entails a shift from structural analysis to an understanding of context, from the structure of the text to its reference. In the course of a depth interpretation the reader

is lead from what the text says to what it talks about by way of the structural analysis. In Ricœur's words:

> The first time understanding will be a naive grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole. The second time, comprehension will be a sophisticated mode of understanding, supported by explanatory procedures. ... Explanation, then, will appear as the mediation between two stages of understanding. If isolated from this concrete process, it is a mere abstraction, an artifact of methodology (1976[b]: 74-75).

Explanation, as an element of interpretation, serves to ground the imagination of the reader in the structure of the text to a limited field of possible re-constructions. In this way it provides a basis for arguing that one interpretation or another is tenable. The idea that an interpretation must be capable of validation in discourse is implicit in Ricœur's writing. The text both creates the need for an interpretation and mediates between interpretive arguments as the means of validation.

> If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal. The text presents a limited field of possible constructions. ... It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to arbitrate between them and to seek agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our immediate reach (1976[b]: 79).

What is to be the basis for the interpretation of a narrative text? This is the fundamental hermeneutic problem for interpretive sociology. Taking Ricœur's direction, three basic possibilities are identifiable. A researcher may attend to (1) the intentions of the agents, (2) the intentions of his/her (theoretical) imagination, or (3) the structure discerned in the text itself. Ricœur's theory leads to realization that the structure of the discourse must

be the primary basis for building and validating an interpretation. Furthermore, his theory suggests how the aspects of explanation and comprehension would be developed in the context of sociological analysis. Let us consider the arguments more closely.

Since a narrative text is a work, a construction arising out of the action of particular individuals, it seems reasonable to suggest that the meaning of the text is exactly what the agents intend, nothing more or less. Is not the route to understanding the text through a recovery of the psychic configurations of the agent? Ricœur's answer to this question clearly would be negative. Even in the event that the agent is prepared to state his intentions Ricœur would argue that knowledge of such intentions is still of only limited interpretive value. The agent's account may be incomplete or in some instances misleading. Ricœur would be concerned that the meaning of a text not be completely anchored to the intentions of the agents. In this sense he would want the researcher to resist the temptation to accept the reading of the text preferred by its agent. Ricœur has said that nothing has done more damage to the theory of understanding than the assumption that understanding is a matter of understanding someone else (1978: 155).

Ricœur's position regarding intentions must be acknowledged for a number of related reasons. First, agents are only able to act meaningfully within the constraints of historically given codes. Such codes may express (mythical) connotations beyond the intended meaning of the agent. Second, agents may manipulate accounts of their own intentions in order to satisfy felt psychological or cultural demands. Finally, agents may often, if not always, realize the fuller implications of their actions only subsequent to their

own reflection upon them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 196). From this perspective agents may only assist in the interpretation of a text in a limited sense. The analyst is compelled to treat their reported intentions as part of the narrative under study, rather than as a detached account of that text.

While Ricœur would want to free the imagination of the researcher from the intentions of the agent, he would also be concerned that imagination (theory) not lead the researcher away from the 'limited field' of the narrative text. In this way this theory points to a methodic anchoring of the researcher. But this would be an anchoring to the text itself, rather than to an identification of the intentions 'behind' the text. Ricœur notes that what must be understood is not the one who speaks behind the text, but that which is spoken about, the subject matter of the text (1978: 155).

If sociological interpretation is concerned primarily with the reading of narrative texts, as I believe it must be, then a model of interpretation must be established that seeks out meaning in the text itself, rather than in the intentions of agents. Ricœur contends that "to understand is not merely to repeat the speech event, it is to generate a new event beginning from the text in which the initial event has been objectified" (1976[b]: 75). If an agent-determined conception of meaning is based upon empathic understanding, then what would an text-determined conception of meaning be based upon?

Following Ricœur's direction a conception of text-determined meaning may be developed in part around the concept of explanation. But Ricœur does not advocate a model of explanation borrowed from the natural sciences. Rather he directs us to follow the path broken by the French

structuralists. According to Ricœur, if something is borrowed, then it is borrowed from the field of semiology or semiotics (1971: 149-150). Taking the semiotic approach, texts are analyzed in terms of their constituent relations. It is the interplay of oppositions and their combinations on the basis of an inventory of discrete elements that defines the concept of structure in semiotics (1971: 150). Following Ricœur, a narrative has been explained once the formal logic of relations that appear to unite the roles and activities within it have been explicated. The immediate purpose of this treatment is to bring together under a single account segmented roles and actions by identifying the structural relations that obtain between them. This account is what Ricœur would describe as a narrative structure.

Such an explanation, however, is not yet a depth interpretation in the hermeneutics of Ricœur, albeit a necessary part. A depth interpretation is not completed by merely obtaining a formalized system. Ricœur observes that it is not adequate to stop with a conception of narrative as a formal algebra of constitutive units (1976[b]: 86). The incompleteness of structural explanation demands a return to understanding in the form of comprehension. Implicit in all structural analyses is what Ricœur wants to make explicit: the narrative's meaning with respect to a concrete world.

On Ricœur's account the limitation of the semiotic approach is overcome by enveloping it within a larger semantic approach. He states that the "most concrete definition of semantics, then, is the theory that relates the inner or internal constitution of the sense to the outer or transcendent intention of the reference" (1976[b]: 21-22). This would entail a shift away from formal analysis of the narrative to the comprehension of an 'external'

referent. Whereas semiotics would be concerned with the identification of a formal structure underlying the narrative, semantics would be concerned with the relation of the narrative to its referent.

But what is this referent that the narrative projects for the researcher? Ricœur links the idea of the referent in social inquiry to forms of life and their aporias. In an important passage he observes that:

> In the same way as linguistic games are forms of life, according to the famous aphorism of Wittgenstein, social structures are also attempts to cope with existential perplexities, human predicaments, and deep-rooted conflicts. In this sense, these structures, too, have a referential dimension. They point to the aporias of social existence, the same aporias around which mythical thought gravitates (1971: 560).

While Ricœur does not elaborate upon his use of 'form of life' a compatible definition may be taken from elsewhere. Kripke describes a 'form of life' in Wittgenstein's writing as the "set of responses in which we agree, and the way they interweave with our activities" (1982: 96). On the basis of this definition, it is justifiable to think of forms of life as social contexts.

The reference Ricœur repeatedly makes to 'aporias of existence' also must be considered. Clearly he associates the concept of aporias, which he understands as the perplexities, predicaments and contradictions of social existence, with the structure of concrete forms of life, rather than with the internal structure of narratives. In another passage Ricœur contends that:

> myth would not function as a logical operator if the propositions that it combines did not point towards boundary situations. ... To eliminate (the) reference to the aporias of existence around which mythic thought gravitates would be to reduce

> the theory of myth to the necrology of the meaningless discourses of mankind (1976[b]: 86-87).

The structure of the narrative by implication is a re-presentation of the contradictions underlying the form of life. If the intentions of the agent constitute the sense of the narrative, then the form of life and its structural features are its latent references. These are what the narrative speaks of, if not what its agents say directly.

The role of the researcher in depth interpretation then is one of following the structure of the narrative from its sense to its reference. The researcher shifts from explanation back to understanding by taking the formal structure discovered in the narrative and using it as a model for viewing in a new way the form of life that the narrative represents. The autonomous narrative text becomes displaced by the form of life it projects as the object of understanding. It is important to recognize, nevertheless, that Ricœur does not view depth interpretation as a finite process. Rather, his emphasis on reflection as a continuous and essential feature of human existence reminds us that depth interpretation is a recursive process. Each new interpretation must be viewed as a point of departure for further inquiry.

The references made available through a depth interpretation involve a level of meaning distinct and valuable in its own right. The meanings made available through depth interpretation are not readily available through the surface interpretations that constitute everyday life. Ricœur contends that reflection in social life (and implicitly in social science) rests solely on our ability to express and interpret texts (1970: 46). He contrasts initial and elaborated levels of understanding in interpretation by referring

to the former as naive and the latter as critical. A semantics of action modeled on this theory would enjoy a critical perspective. Ricœur observes:

> May we not say that in social science, too, we proceed from naive-interpretations to critical-interpretations, through structural analysis? But it is depth interpretation which gives meaning to the whole process (1971: 560-561).

C. The Model of the Text and Social Action

It is Ricœur's attempt to connect his theory of interpretation to the field of meaningful action that makes most evident the relevance of his ideas to sociology. Ricœur begins this attempt with the hypothesis that the social sciences:

> may be said to be hermeneutical (1) inasmuch as their object displays some of the features constitutive of a text as text, and (2) inasmuch as their methodology develops the same kind of procedures as those of Auslegung or text-interpretation (1971: 529).

This hypothesis makes explicit what has remained an implicit presupposition of interpretive social science: the idea that action is a kind of text. The importance of his work on action is made apparent by its acceptance among social scientists such as Geertz (1973: 19), and its recent comparison with the work of Habermas (Thompson, 1981).

In representing hermeneutic inquiry in this manner Ricœur does not claim to have devised a new methodology. He observes, in fact, that the investigations by Freud in psychology, and Levi-Strauss, in anthropology,

have implicitly followed the process that his theory merely describes. In establishing a correspondence between the concepts of action and text he points towards a comparable process of investigation in sociology. Ricœur has described psychoanalysis as a semantics of desire; his work directs us to view sociological analysis as a semantics of action.

To accomplish the analogy between action and text, he has tried to move away from the importance of inscription through writing as a necessary condition of a text. He points out that:

> from the outset the notion of the text incorporated features which freed it partially from the relation to writing as opposed to oral discourse. Text implies texture, that is, complexity of composition. Text also implies work, that is, labour in forming language. Finally, text implies inscription, in a durable moment of language, of an experience to which it bears testimony. By all of these features, the notion of the text prepares itself for an analogical extension to phenomena not specifically limited to writing, nor even to discourse (1981: 37).

Ricœur has argued that the concept of action, and indeed history, corresponds directly with the concept of text on the grounds that actions are complex and durable works.

At this point some conceptual difficulties with Ricœur's model may be observed. Thompson has pointed out a number of problems with the theory of interpretation, particularly as it is extended to the study of action. First, it is not clear how a structuralist analysis would actually explicate or unfold the reference of the text (1981: 162). Second, the theory does not include the analysis of those conditions under which texts (or actions) are

produced (1984: 196). Third, it is not clear how the results from explanation or comprehension are to be assessed (1981: 162-163).

While these are major concerns they do not preclude the extension of Ricœur's basic model to the area of social inquiry. A more serious issue raised by Thompson, however, is Ricœur's failure to show that action has linguistic features in common with the text (1984: 191-192). According to Thompson, the assumption that action is textual reflects a common error in contemporary social theory and philosophy. He contends that such an assumption leads to a misleading analysis of action and an inadequate account of the relationship between action and language.

Further to Thompson's point, I would argue that action may be shown to have more in common with what Ricœur has correctly defined as dialogue than with his own description of a text. In fact, Ricœur's efforts to claim a correspondence between action and text actually serve to undermine his fundamental distinction between text and dialogue. This difficulty may be shown through a systematic comparison of the three concepts.

1. Dialogue and action have a fleeting instance. In practice both flow from one moment into the next. Texts have the quality of being segmented and detached from other moments.

2. Dialogue and action are meaningful in the same manner. In both cases agents are co-present and able to take the meaning systems of others into account in situ. Texts must be made meaningful ex situ.

3. The meanings in dialogue and action merge with the intentions of their agent, so that meanings may be clarified by an inquiry into the agent's intentions. With texts intentions and meanings have become dissociated.

4. Dialogue and action refer to a situation shared by interlocutors, a common set of referents. Texts compel their readers to imagine possible or unfamiliar referents.

Nevertheless, I would also argue that Ricœur's basic theory can be made to recover from this particular difficulty. He has merely failed to acknowledge that dialogue and action are theoretical concepts, whereas 'text' is a methodological concept.[4] When I say that action is a theoretical concept I mean that it is something that is taken to exist whether or not it is being studied. Any action is meaningful in the dialogical sense regardless of whether a social scientist is present. It is only as a participant that one experience action as meaningful action. Action that is non-problematic for an observer is being viewed as if that observer were a full participant in the social context in which the action is embedded. The meaning of such action is taken by the observer to be self-evident.

In contrast, to say that something is a text is to evoke a methodological concept. It is a methodological concept in the sense that it is through observation that an action comes to be like a text. Action becomes like a text when it is taken to be problematic. In such an instance the meaningfulness of the action is lost to the observer, and to any participant who temporarily takes the reflective role of the observer. It becomes 'textualized' if and when one steps out of the flow of social life. This 'stepping out' occurs when one does not connect, by choice or circumstance, the meaning of action in this present moment to the meaning of action in one's past experience and future expectations. In this way action becomes conceptually segmented from its context. This view allows for the possibility of observers

and participants who choose to reflect critically upon (their own) action. In other words, actions may be viewed as a text, as being problematic, by choice or by necessity. This distinction between non-reflective experience and reflective observation is not to be underestimated. As Berger and Luckmann have noted the "world of everyday life proclaims itself and, when I want to challenge the proclamation, I must engage in a deliberate, by no means easy effort" (1967: 23-24).

But if the text is the problematic moment of discourse, then what is the problematic moment of action? In other words, what is experienced by observers of social action as opposed to that which is experienced by participants in that action? For the sake of clarity in this study I will hereafter refer to what is experienced by observers as an episode. Whereas action corresponds to dialogue as a theoretical concept; an episode corresponds to the text as a methodological concept. I have adapted the concept from Harré and Secord (1972: 10) and take it to mean an observed or elicited set of behaviors and cognitions for which a unity is discerned but not clearly understood by the researcher.

Episodes are the texts of social inquiry in a manner that conforms to Ricœur's model, while avoiding some of the conceptual problems. The textual characteristics of episodes are summarized as follows.

1. Episodes have a present moment that is fixed in the mind or records of the observer, and for the time being cannot be connected meaningfully to other moments.

2. Episodes have an audience of observers that does not have to be defined by the participants or agents involved.

3. Episodes are defined under the condition that the intentions of agents and the meanings of action become dissociated for the observer.

4. Episodes, like other texts, create the possibility for a non-ostensive reference to be discovered.

From a hermeneutic perspective social inquiry begins in earnest only when it becomes necessary to interpret such episodes. In the methods of everyday social life, episodes are interpreted through narrative processes. The recognition of this point is of some considerable importance for discussions further on in this study.

Notwithstanding the above, I would associate a number of positive consequences with Ricœur's general approach. The first consequence of Ricœur's theory for sociological methodology is that it enables us to get beyond the false dichotomy of explanation and understanding. Explanation must be viewed as a necessary part of understanding, but only a part. But Ricœur's theory also suggests that the appropriate model for sociological analysis is not to be borrowed from the natural sciences. Instead, Ricœur urges to explore the semiotic methods being developed in structural linguistics.

A second consequence of the theory is that it provides a conceptual scheme for classifying forms of interpretive social research. This scheme involves a three part typology of research approaches based on the way the object of theoretical interest is defined and the associated manner of inquiry (Table 1). Each type of inquiry takes as its object or starting point the narra-

tive texts defined above. The typology can be used to identify the tendency of a particular research project to focus on one form or another.

Table 1: Forms of Interpretive Sociology

Type of Inquiry	Primary Theoretical Interest	Relation to Ricœur's Interpretation Theory
Empathic	Intentions (sense)	Surface Interpretation
Semiotic	Narratives (structure)	Structural Explanation
Semantic	Forms of Life (reference)	Depth Interpretation

Empathic inquiry is that form of research that views its object as the intentions of the agents who take part in the episode. It finds the accounts of agents with respect to the episode to be relatively non-problematic. The narrative text is understood when the understanding of the subject(s) can be replicated. The outcome of this form of sociological research corresponds to what Ricœur refers to as a surface interpretation. Empathic inquiry is characterized by an absence of explanation and comprehension.

Semiotic inquiry is that form of research that views its object as the internal structure of given episodes. It rejects the intentionality of agents as a valid means of accounting for this structure. Rather, semiotic research is

satisfied to reduce observed actions to a coherent system of codes and formulae. A narrative, on this account, is explained when such a system can be generated. Semiotic inquiry is less interested, however, in comprehending the form of life from which the narrative has emerged. The outcome of this form of sociological research corresponds to what Ricœur refers to as structural explanation. Semiotic inquiry is characterized by an absence of comprehension.

Semantic inquiry is that form of research that is a dialectical function of empathic and semiotic forms of inquiry. On one hand, it accepts the intentionality of agents as an aspect of the narrative, but rejects it as a source of privileged interpretation. On the other hand, semantic inquiry is interested in the meaning available in the structure of the narrative, but only insofar as that meaning may be used to comprehend a form of life and its aporias. A semantic inquiry is thus supported by a semiotic analysis of narrative. The outcome of this form of research corresponds to what Ricœur refers to as a depth interpretation. Semantic inquiry is characterized by two aspects: explanation and comprehension. Together these aspects provide interpretive sociology with the basis for a semantics of action. This form of inquiry would appear to be the most compatible with a critical sociology, given its interest in the analysis of social relations and their structural contradictions.

In summary, a useful perspective is achieved towards social inquiry by viewing it through Ricœur's theory. First, the theory is based upon a rethinking of the distinction between explanatory and hermeneutic modes of inquiry. It transcends the classical opposition between explanation and understanding in a way that not only leads to a process of depth interpretation,

but that also entails the possibility of social critique. Second, the theory enables us to re-describe and compare instances of interpretive research in sociology in terms of empathic, semiotic and semantic ideal-types. Ricœur has presented the broad parameters for extending the model of the text to social inquiry. In the final analysis Ricœur does not offer a program of methods, but does articulate a methodology for reflecting upon the form and purpose of social inquiry. In the next chapter I begin to examine the aspects of his work that would facilitate an analysis of autobiographical texts.

Notes

[1] For a concise overview of the development of Ricœur's thought see Freeman (1985).

[2] The appropriation of the psychoanalytic process represents an important point of convergence between the works of Ricœur and those of Jürgen Habermas. See Habermas (1971) and Thompson (1981).

[3] With respect to Ricœur's notion of explanation, it is important to realize that he does not intend causal explanation, such as might be described in the relations between variables. Rather, he uses the term 'explanation' in a manner equivalent to 'explication,' i.e. explaining a text by disclosing its semiotic structure - lifting into view the relations between constituent parts and how these together form a whole.

[4] The argument here can be made more clear by referring back to Ricœur's notion of distanciation. I am suggesting that an object becomes a text - that is, it demands interpretation - as a result of our having, consciously or otherwise, distanced ourselves from that object. Hence, action becomes a text - an episode - when it appears or is made to appear distanced from our own experience. The strategy of phenomenological reduction or bracketing reflects our capacity to make otherwise taken-for-granted realities (i.e., ourselves) into texts for interpretation.

Chapter III - Ricœur: Narrative and Identity

This third chapter reviews the perspective on time that has developed within the phenomenological tradition. It is this tradition that Ricœur seeks to transcend in his analysis of time, specifically with respect to the incommensurability of phenomenological and cosmological perspectives. The phenomenological perspective on time is first articulated in the work of Husserl, although it finds some explicit affinity with the problems considered by Augustine. Husserl's work is followed by Schutz in his efforts to develop a social phenomenology of temporal consciousness. A view of the relationship between time and language emerges in the works of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. I find in their studies strains of thought that anticipate some aspects of Ricœur's hermeneutics.

The chapter goes on to draw out the aspects of Ricœur's work on time and narrative that are most relevant for sociology. This work is discussed in terms of three central themes: narrative form, historical time, and narrative identity. The narrative form is seen as a response to the gulf between lived and universal time. Narrative serves to mediate between divergent temporal perspectives through its representation of human action. A consequence of narrative mediation is the formation of individual and collective identity. In Ricœur's writing, narrative identity is constituted as an unstable self that develops through the interpretation of (hi)stories. In this sense, the difference between fiction and history is less important than their mutual contribution to the formation of social knowledge.

A. The Self and Time

In certain respects this study is intended as a counter to what Giddens has called the repression of time in social theory (Giddens, 1979: 3). According to Giddens, both functionalist and structuralist theories have suffered from an synchronic bias. This is most evident in the tendency of macro-sociology to shift away from the historical perspectives established in classical social theory. The repression of time, however, is also a factor in contemporary micro-sociology. Theories of the self and the construction of meaning have remained largely synchronic in symbolic interactionism, beyond acknowledging that symbols are vehicles for transferring meaning across the distances of time and space (See, for example, Lauer & Handel, 1983: 82). While the self interacts (presumably in time), the issue of temporality remains underdeveloped in interactionist theory. An exception to the repression of time in micro-sociology is to be found in the emerging field of historical social psychology (See, for example, Gergen & Gergen, 1984). For the most part, however, the concern with human temporality has remained centered in phenomenology.

Silverman, in his collection of essays on continental philosophy (Silverman, 1987: 7), notes how the phenomenological tradition may be contrasted with the structuralist tradition in terms of the status of the self. The latter tends to treat the self as a secondary aspect of existence that emerges through signification. Phenomenology, on the other hand, emphasizes the ontology of the self, and inserts language as an epistemological bridge to account for the self-world relation. The phenomenology of the self is further differentiated from the structuralist paradigm by its emphasis on

temporality in human experience. This emphasis on temporality is evident in the works of Husserl, Schutz, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty.

Husserl (1964) sets himself the task of submitting time to direct description. It is here that phenomenology first restricts the question of time to internal consciousness. Objective time is understood as completely reducible to the internal or subjective structures of experience. In Husserl's view, language is separate from experience to the extent that original experience has its own pre-linguistic structure. Moreover, by way of intuition, it is possible to reveal the structures of experience without relying on the structure of linguistic thought (Polkinghorne, 1988: 27-28). Husserl's resistance to the linguistic and social aspects of temporal experience becomes problematic for later thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur.

Husserl envisioned the consciousness of time as an "impression of a streaming present" surrounded by the impression of an immediate past and future (Polkinghorne, 1988: 128). He discusses the temporal consciousness of self in terms of how the present ego maintains contact with the past ego, even though that ego is no longer present in the strong sense. The continuity of this contact from one present to the next is the endurance of the self. The past self is not disconnected, but rather the past of a present self.

> The past 'I' is correlated with the present 'I' by the fact that I experience the past 'I' as an 'I' that I recollect in the present. A subsequent present 'I' is already recollecting the past 'I' in a slightly different fashion and so on continuously throughout the life of the ego. This continuity is the temporalization of the enduring self (Silverman, 1987: 21).

The temporal consciousness of the self emanates from the present towards the past and the future. The self has retentions in primary memory of the recent past, remembrances in secondary memory of the distant past, and protentions or expectations about future experiences. Retention is the fading away of present experience into past experience. Remembrances are of times distinctly beyond the horizon of the present. Through these modalites all times are present in the self, although the self is able to differentiate between times in terms of horizons experienced in the present. This means that 'now' is bounded by the temporal horizon of the intentional act. Due to the temporal distance that separates remembrances from the present, new intentional acts are required to make them present. These memories, once sedimented in the past, must be re-presented through acts of recollection (Polkinghorne, 1988: 128). Ongoing consciousness thus consists in a series of intentional acts (Bernstein, 1976: 142).

The three-fold structure of now, retention, and protention displays a continuity with Augustine's trilogy: the present of the past, the present of the present, and the present of the future. It is against this reduction of all time to subjective time that Ricœur will later direct his analysis. But before considering Ricœur's arguments, I will review some other attempts to grasp the temporal nature of the self.

The work of Husserl has been incorporated into sociological theory through the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, and subsequently by Berger and Luckmann. Schutz (1970) may be credited with bringing the question of time into the social realm. He conceives of the problem of

meaning as essentially a problem of internal time-consciousness. Schutz addresses the problem of meaning by integrating Husserl's notion that consciousness is a series of intentional acts with Bergson's concept of the individual's durée (Bernstein, 1976: 142).

According to Bergson (1944), reality is continuous and any attempt to divide it in finite parts was a misrepresentation. Through intuition one can become aware of the world as a duration, rather than as a world of fixed objects. To experience the world as duration is to experience change itself. Moreover, the individual self as experience "is duration, a flowing, creative, and productive process" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 128). Bergson argued that becoming aware of the self as duration through intuition is difficult, and inscribing it with communicable meaning virtually impossible.

Schutz differentiates between the interpreted act and the intentional processes involved in its inception. "Only the already experienced is meaningful, not that which is being experienced. For meaning is merely an operation of intentionality, that, however, only becomes visible to the reflective glance" (cited in Bernstein, 1976: 143). In other words, one must pause and take a linguistic stance towards what has been intended in order to grasp conduct as meaningful. The meaning of conduct is given shape by its association with a subjective project. In Bernstein's words, a project "is the completed act that the actor has fantasied in the future perfect tense" (1976: 154). This anticipates the hermeneutic view of action that emerges in the later discussion of narrative.

But how I experience my conduct as meaningful is different from how others experience this same conduct. Whereas I interpret the conduct of the other as it is happening, I am unable to interpret my own conduct except in reflection. On the basis of this observation Schutz describes the alter ego as being that stream of consciousness that I can grasp in the process of acting (Schutz, 1970: 166). On this point he is able to provide a conceptualization of temporal identity.

> It implies that this stream of thought which is not mine shows the same fundamental structure as my own consciousness. This means that the other is like me, capable of acting and thinking; that his stream of thoughts show the same through and through connectedness as mine; that analogous to my own life of consciousness his shows the same time-structure... It means, furthermore, that ... he has the genuine experience of growing old with me as I know that I do with him (Schutz, 1970: 167).

Simultaneity brings into relationship two enduring individuals. They endure together as long as their temporal streams are coordinated. On Ricœur's interpretation, the "experience of a shared world thus depends on a community of time as well as space" (Ricœur, 1988: 113). The consequences of the non-simultaneity is further explored by Schutz in terms of the orientation towards predecessors, contemporaries and successors.

Simultaneity must be based upon a common time-frame. Intersubjective experience must include an objective intersubjective time "which forms a priori a single order of time with all the subjective times" (Schutz, 1970: 165). Given the wider context of Schutz's work, 'objective'

may be interpreted as 'generally accepted' (Wolff, 1978: 517). Thus, the reference to objective time in Schutz's writing is be taken to mean an intersubjectively available standard of time. Such a standard time would enables us to co-ordinate our divergent experiences of subjective time. To use Schutz's language, time becomes typified.

According to Schutz, the orientation of the individual within the life-world is anticipatory. The future is always indeterminate, although open to possible action; the past is always given, although open to reinterpretation in the present. In this sense, the temporal flow of consciousness is ultimately articulated within the framework of our own autobiography as the ongoing reinterpretation of past experiences leading into the shifting horizon of possible action.

> In our thinking in the life-world, we are, above all directed toward the future. What has already happened can still be reinterpreted but does not allow itself to be changed. What is still to come, however, is (as we know through our own previous experience) in part uninfluenceable by us, but in part modifiable through our possible acts (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973: 19).

Berger and Luckmann (1967) also address the development of this temporal structure in the work. They attempt to lay out a comprehensive social phenomenology of everyday life based to a large extent on the work of Schutz. Their treatise includes a brief discussion on the temporal structure of the life-world (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 26-28). They note that temporality is an intrinsic property of consciousness, that the stream of consciousness always has a temporal order. Moreover, the "world of everyday life has its own standard time, that is intersubjectively available. This standard

time may be understood as the intersection between cosmic time and its socially established calendar" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 27).

In a manner similar to Heidegger they indicate that the complexity of the temporal structure "is exceedingly complex, because the different levels of empirically present temporality must be ongoingly correlated" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 27). Thus individuals must co-ordinate biological, social, historical and cosmological times on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, time is experienced in everyday life as both continuous and finite. "All my existence in this world is continuously ordered by its time, is indeed enveloped by it. ... The knowledge of my inevitable death makes this finite for me" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 27).

Heidegger (1962) criticized western philosophy for conceptualizing existence in static, atemporal terms. Against this manner of thinking he offers the view that human existence is essentially an indeterminate flux - the self is ambiguous. The object of reflection is the self, but the self is also the subject. Human experience brings together these aspects of subjectivity and objectivity simultaneously in a unified act. The self is thus "both active and passive, constituting and constituted. But most importantly, it is not now one and now the other, rather it is experienced as both at the same time" (Silverman, 1987: 35).

The self becomes meaningful only when it interprets itself. It is meaningless to the extent that it does not disclose its own multiplicity of meaning. Understanding always operates within a set of already interpreted relationships, a relational whole that Heidegger refers to as the 'world.' This

concept is not to be confused with the objective world. Rather 'world' is the set of presuppositions "in which the individual finds himself prior to any separation of the self and the objective world" (Palmer, 1969: 132). Moreover, the 'world' has a temporal structure in which each moment of existence is related to other moments - the 'datability' of the experience (Silverman, 1987: 41). The 'world' encompasses individual experience so completely that it tends to slip beyond the grasp of self-reflection. At the same time the 'world' structures - inhibits and enables - our understanding. The self must be interpreted in an appropriate way, as a whole, or 'it becomes invisible.' It must be approached not by analyzing it into its component parts, but as a unitary phenomenon.

Through the 'world' the self translates itself into meaningfulness. The world "is the realm of hermeneutic process whereby being becomes thematized as language" (Palmer, 1969: 134). Being is revealed through language. To say I understand my-self is to say that I have knowledge of what I am and what I might become. My understanding always relates to my future, it is projective and this projection always extends from present situation. In this sense to understand my self is to understand my temporality. But understanding is not an object to be possessed or analyzed; rather it is my only way of existing. Understanding is developed through a process of interpretation; yet it is the ground for any such process. On Heidegger's account, to be human is to bridge the gap between self and otherness, between situation and possibility, by developing understanding through interpretation.

Heidegger argues that temporal experience is organized into levels, each operating at the same time. The first and most accessible is the level of

within-time-ness, in which day-to-day objects and social action are experienced. On the second level of historicality one experiences oneself as having a coherent past, present, and future. According to Heidegger, it is the third level of temporality that offers the greatest resistance to reflection. Through consciousness of temporality our self is experienced as an integrated, yet finite (mortal) identity. The consciousness of temporality is described by Polkinghorne:

> Here we become aware of time from the perspective of personal finitude. Understanding that existence has a beginning and an ending, we recognize the self as an expression marked off from the nothingness from which we came and into which we will disappear. We come to see that existence is a unity and that past, present, and future are aspects of our one existence. I am that existence which includes what I have done, what I am doing, and what I will do, and each moment is part of the whole that I am (Polkinghorne, 1988: 130-131).

As with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's (1962) ontology begins by taking the ambiguity of the self as a given. In Merleau-Ponty's work this ambiguity is even more distinctly temporal. The experience of temporal ambiguity provides the basic structure of the self. The self is not merely a reflection of temporality, nor is the self founded on temporality; rather Merleau-Ponty insists that the self is temporality. Time and subjectivity account for one another equally (Mallin, 1979: 101).

Time is the perpetual movement of signifying new presents, a movement grounded in a receding past and in anticipation of a possible future. Time is the cohesion of my life. "It is not a compulsion, nor a desire, but rather a fundamental structure of a human being" (Silverman, 1987: 89).

Temporality is experienced not as objective time, but as personal time due to the fact that it "arises from my relation to things" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 412). Time is not simply a succession of presents, and any given present cannot be viewed as an isolated instant. While the past, present, and future are three distinct dimensions of time, the whole of time is contained in every present (Mallin 1979: 92). The present may be thought of the continual point of contact with the world or otherness. The past is the experience of that contact which has already faded and been replaced by a new present. The future consists in those experiences that could possibly emanate from a given past and present.

In this sense the self is temporally unified and contains within itself a momentum for future articulation and action. My self, as a temporal structure, moves through my life as an unstable unity. This movement of the self from past present to future present is characterized by Merleau-Ponty as the "thrust" or momentum of the self attempting to fully grasp itself, this grasp continuously being just beyond reach (Mallin, 1979: 96). This image is similar to that conveyed by Schutz in his notion of the self always interpreting itself in reflection. In Mallin's words, the process:

> is one continuous attempt to grasp or articulate itself (the 'self' which is articulated is the presence of both its primitively given past and its future, which perpetually escape every such attempt.) Temporality must be a system of transitionally posited present and a continuous attempt to capture itself, because, from the first it was a general and indeterminate presence to itself and was thus primordially ahead of any specific grasp it could get of itself (Mallin, 1979: 96).

The temporal structure or 'thrust' of the self encounters the world (otherness) as a transitional synthesis (Rabil, 1967: 37-38). While all my times are here and now in the present, a particular other time may lessen its grasp on my present. Thus my self from a distant past in my life tends to fade as a salient element of my present, and as a ground for my future. My self as a temporal structure is able to transform itself in light of emerging presents in the world. It achieves this transformation by "concentrating on certain articulations ... which may have been highly determinate, into the background" (Mallin, 1979: 96). According to Merleau-Ponty, a self is repressed when it gives to a past articulation an unusually strong presence. It is not subsumed through the transitional synthesis because:

> one remains blind to the traumatic revelation given in that moment that certain closely held desires, values, and certainties are unrealizable and insupportable. As a result, they become a perpetual task and a 'complex' that subsequent presents must continue to pursue without the possibility of satisfaction (Mallin, 1979: 96-97).

Two selves may attain intersubjectivity not through mutual consciousness, but by aligning their temporality in the present. Each self "arrives at self-knowledge only by projecting himself into the present where both can be joined together" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 410-433). This projection takes place through language. Against Husserl and the empiricists, Merleau-Ponty argues that no experience exists prior to language; experience itself is linguistic (Polkinghorne, 1988: 28-30). The pre-linguistic realm is not accessible without reference to language and any intuitive approach is therefore invalid. Thinking and speaking are the same phenomenon. Language en-

ables us to bring forth a meaningful interpretation of the perceptual and emotional levels of our existence. "By finding meaning in experience and then expressing it in words, the speaker enables the community to think about experience and not just live it" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 30). Thus, Merleau-Ponty shifts towards the kind of analysis undertaken by Paul Ricœur.

B. Ricœur's Theory of Time and Narrative

Ricœur identifies a temporal problematic that extends beyond, yet encompasses, the temporality of the self. Ricœur finds his problematic or 'aporia' in the writings of Augustine. On the one hand, Augustine wants to assert that a time is realized by each individual soul; that is, "the time of the mind that distends itself" (Ricœur, 1988: 244). On the other hand, he must confess "that time itself had a beginning with created things. This time must be that of every creature, therefore, ... a cosmological time" (Ricœur, 1988: 244). This aporia of disparate perspectives on time is expressed by Ricœur as the fundamental incommensurability of "a purely phenomenological perspective on time and a cosmological one" (Ricœur, 1988: 4). This cosmic perspective extends beyond the bounds of the self's temporality demarcated by the retentions and protentions associated with an individual life-time. Cosmic or universal time envelops the life-world. It is the temporality of the objective world.

The universal perspective is one "that hermeneutic phenomenology never completely follows through on and with which it never manages to come to terms" (Ricœur, 1988: 88). In Ricœur's assessment neither Husserl

nor Heidegger were able to transcend the purely subjective perspective towards time. For "it is difficult to see how we can draw from phenomenological time, which must be the time of an individual consciousness, the objective time that, by hypothesis, is the time of the whole of reality" (Ricœur, 1988: 244). Ricœur attempts to bring together the phenomenological concern with temporality and the hermeneutic concern with textual understanding. This section examines in more detail his claim that narrative is the human response to the dilemma of two temporal levels.

In his recent work Ricœur inquires into whether, and how, narration functions as a 'solution' to the aporia revealed in his analysis of time (Ricœur, 1988: 4). He argues that 'procedures of connection' are necessary to bring together lived and universal time in human experience (Ricœur, 1988: 99). The classic connection procedure is found in the use of the calendar. The "time of the calendar is the first bridge constructed by historical practice between lived time and universal time" (Ricœur, 1988: 105).[1] Ricœur builds upon this view of the calendar as a chronicle, as a primitive form of narrative. According to Ricœur's main thesis, it is through narration that individuals mediate between lived and universal time. In his words, "there can be no thought of time without narrated time" (Ricœur, 1988: 241).

Ricœur is not concerned with what narrative provides in terms of objective knowledge of the past, rather he is concerned with the function narrative fulfills in the life-world (Polkinghorne, 1988: 66). Narrative serves its mediating function by opening a third level of time: historical time. Ricœur understands historical time to be the reinscription of lived time on

universal time (Ricœur, 1988: 104-126). Thus, temporality, in the sense of Heidegger's third level, is the primordial referent of narrative. Ricœur argues that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience" (Ricœur, 1984: 3). In order to make this argument clear, I will now review his analyses of narrative form, historical time, and narrative identity.

Whereas a chronicle has only a chronological or episodic dimension, a narrative also has, by virtue of its plot, a non-chronological or configurational dimension.[2] The structure of narrative is irreducible to either its chronological or non-chronological aspects. All narratives are more than a chronological series of events; the events form a unitary configuration. At the same time, the configuration of any narrative is derived from the episodic dimension. To speak of a narrative is to speak of a temporal configuration. Both the process of constructing and the process of interpreting the narrative hinges on our recognition of its complex temporal structure. "The art of narrating, as well as the corresponding art of following a story, therefore require that we are able to extract a configuration from a succession" (Ricœur, 1981: 278). Thus, Ricœur posits a hermeneutic of 'telling' as well as a corresponding hermeneutic of 'following.' From both perspectives the task involves a part-whole dialectic in which the meaning of each event is given in the story as a whole, and the meaning of the story is given in the configuration of discrete events.

Ricœur criticizes structuralist approaches to narrative, particularly those variations following Saussure's semiology, for ignoring the complex

structure of narrative (Ricœur, 1981: 280-281). These approaches treat the narrative as an atemporal text in which the episodic dimension is collapsed and the configurational dimension is analyzed in isolation. While there is a role for such formal explanatory procedures, this role is subsumed under the larger aim of interpretation. The methodology of explanation has "no other function than to help the reader to follow further. The function of generalizations that the historian asks us to accept is to facilitate the process of following a story, when the latter is interrupted or obscured. Explanations must therefore be woven into the narrative tissues" (Ricœur, 1981: 278). This argument links Ricœur's earlier work on interpretation theory with his present exploration of narratives. In that earlier context Ricœur observed that understanding "precedes, accompanies, closes, and thus envelops explanation. In return, explanation develops understanding analytically" (Ricœur, 1978: 165).

Drawing upon Aristotle's Poetics, Ricœur observes that the common strategy in all works that imitate action is the operation of emplotment. This operation unifies fictional and historical texts under the name of narrative. An event in a narrative "must be more than a singular occurrence: it must be defined in terms of its contribution to the development of a plot" (Ricœur, 1981: 277). A story or, more specifically, its plot:

> describes a sequence of actions and experiences of a certain number of characters, whether real or imaginary. These characters are represented in situations which change or to the changes of which they react. These changes, in turn, reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the characters, giving rise to a new predicament which calls for thought or action or both.

> The response to this predicament brings the story to its conclusion (Ricœur, 1981: 279).

From this understanding of plot, to follow a story is to recognize the sequence of events and actions as displaying a particular 'directedness.' By this Ricœur means that the reader is moved along by the development of the plot and must "respond to this thrust with expectations concerning the outcome and culmination of the process. In this sense, the 'conclusion' of the story is the pole of attraction of the whole process" (Ricœur, 1981: 277).[3] The epistemology behind reading a story cannot be modeled on the positivist paradigm, for a story's conclusion cannot be deducted or predicted.

> There is no story unless our attention is held in suspense by a thousand contingencies. Hence we must follow a story to its conclusion. So rather than being predictable, a story must be acceptable. Looking back from the conclusion towards the episodes which led up to it, we must be able to say that this end required those events and that chain of action. But this retrospective glance is made possible by the teleologically guided movement of our expectations when we follow the story (Ricœur, 1981: 277).

Narration is always ultimately a social activity. In the case of historical narrative it "is always a community, a people, or a group of protagonists which tries to take up the tradition - or traditions - of its origins" (Ricœur, 1980: 189). Moreover, a limited number of narrative forms emerge from an examination of the tradition as a whole. These limited forms, found across the expanse of human history, are archetypes reproduced through narrative tradition (cf. Scholes & Kellogg, 1966; Frye, 1957). These archetypes provide the basis for a conventionalization of narrative, such that stories and histo-

ries are fundamentally communicable. Their plot-line or code is culturally pre-given (Ricœur, 1981: 287).

Ricœur wants to show that all forms of narrative have temporality as their underlying referent, and that temporality, as a form of life, reaches experience in narrativity. Part of his strategy is to relate the analysis of narrative to the different levels of time experience introduced by Heidegger (Polkinghorne, 1988: 131-134). At the level of within-time-ness, narrative establishes the notion that time is involved with social action. Narrative is a display of "how temporality impinges on the lives and actions of the protagonists and the supporting cast with respect to their accomplishing their goals and purposes" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 132). At the level of historicality, narrative establishes action as a temporal configuration. Narrative lifts as series of events into a unified, meaningful whole. With respect to the third level of temporality, Ricœur argues that narrative enables communal memory or tradition to transcend the isolation of personal memory or experience. Referring to a perspective developed in Schutz, Ricœur asks:

> Does not narrativity, by breaking away from the obsession of a struggle in the face of death, open any meditation on time to another horizon than that of death, to the problem of communication not just between living beings but between contemporaries, predecessors, and successors? After all, is not narrative time a time that continues beyond the death of each of its protagonists? (Ricœur, 1980: 188).

Ricœur contends that temporal experience only can be brought to discourse in the narrative form. This experience "comes to language only so far as we tell stories or tell history" (Ricœur, 1981: 294). Every narrative

configuration is completed by a refiguration or reinscription of temporal experience onto historical time. Yet, historicity cannot be accounted for by historical narration alone. It is Ricœur's contention that "it is in the exchange between history and fiction, between their opposed referential modes, that our historicity is brought to language" (Ricœur, 1981: 294). Historicity stems from an interweaving of the intentions behind both historical and fictional narrative. Following Habermas's (1971) conceptualization of the knowledge-constitutive interest that animates the hermeneutic-historical sciences, Ricœur posits an interest in enlarging the capacity for communication (Ricœur, 1981: 294-295). This interest leads toward a dual set of considerations: toward the recognition of 'difference' and toward the recognition of 'essence.'

The recognition of difference at first appears as the domain of fiction, yet it is also necessary for historical narrative to the extent that the latter involves the valued selection of past events. In history difference is experienced as the objectifying distance between 'now' and 'then,' between 'we' and 'they.' On the other hand, the recognition of the essential at first appears as the domain of history, yet it is also necessary for fictional narrative to the extent that the latter involves a mimetic representation of action. In fiction essence is experienced as the typification, to use the phenomenological term, of characters and actions. By "opening us to what is different, history opens us to the possible, whereas fiction, by opening us to the unreal, leads us to what is essential in reality" (Ricœur, 1981: 296). The complementarity of historical and fictional narrative thus integrates the past, present and future as the historicity of the self. Yet, the contradictory side of the re-

lation between historical and fictional intentions serves at the same time to disrupt the stability of the self.

C. Ricœur's Theory of Narrative Identity

Individual and collective identity are established through an interpretation of 'who' acts in the narrative. The narrative enables us to remember, and consequently, repeat or re-construct the course of action according to a meaningful configuration (Ricœur, 1980: 180). It is here that Ricœur builds his argument upon a merging of Aristotle's concept of mimesis and Arendt's concept of action. Following Aristotle, he takes the position that only action may be meaningfully signified as activity in narrative, through a process of mimesis (Ricœur, 1981: 292). He goes on to identify three levels of mimesis: recognition of action, representation of action in narrative, and reception of action through narrative. Ricœur borrows Arendt's idea that action is that aspect of human behavior that can be recollected in stories whose function, in turn, is to provide an identity to the actor (Ricœur, 1980: 187; cf. Hannah Arendt, 1958).

In Ricœur's scheme the self is one of self-knowledge derived from an examined life. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell. Similarly, the identity of a community is constituted "by taking narratives that become for them their actual history" (Ricœur, 1988: 247). Ricœur does not provide, however, further elaboration of narrative identity at the collective level. Nor does he attempt to explore the relation between individual and collective identity.

Identity is constituted through a continual "series of rectifications applied to previous narratives, as in psychoanalysis. Narrative identity thus presents the possibility of critique" (Ricœur, 1988: 247). The self "draws the past and its possibilities into the present through tales and histories, and it imaginatively anticipates the future consequences of activity by seeing them as reenactments of its repertoire of stories" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 135).

> The self ... may be said to be refigured by the reflective application of such narrative configurations. ... (T)his narrative identity, constitutive of self-constancy, can include change, mutability, within the cohesion of one lifetime. The subject then appears both as a reader and the writer of its own life, as Proust would have it. ... (T)he story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself. This refiguration makes this life a cloth woven of stories told (Ricœur, 1988: 246-247).

This identity or self is both cohesive and mutable. Furthermore, both of these features are derived through the appropriation of narratives. The developmental process of rectification is animated by the inherent instability of the self as a narrative identity. This instability is due to the tension obtaining between the roles of historical and fictional narratives available in a given community. Pointing towards an avenue for empirical research Ricœur (1988: 247) suggests this instability of narrative identity would be verified through "systematic investigation of autobiography and self-portraiture." Narrative identity:

> is not a stable and seamless identity. Just as it is possible to compose several plots on the subject of the same incidents, ... so it is always possible to weave different, even opposed, plots about our lives. In this regard, we might say that, in the ex-

> change of roles between history and fiction, the historical component of a narrative about oneself draws this narrative toward the side of a chronicle submitted to the same documentary verifications as any other historical narration, while the fictional component draws it toward those imaginative variations that destabilize narrative identity. In this sense narrative identity continues to make and unmake itself (Ricœur, 1988: 248-249).

In summary, Ricœur has argued that narratives are given in response to a temporal aporia. Lived time and universal time cannot be accounted for by one another within individual experience. This gulf is continuously bridged in experience through the narrative projection of action onto historical time. The historical and fictional dimensions of narrative interact in such as way as to establish identity in historical time. Identity, whether individual or collective, continually revises itself in light of narrative encounters. In this final assertion Ricœur connects back with his earlier work on interpretation and self-understanding.

> In this self-understanding, I would oppose the self, which proceeds from the understanding of the text, to the ego, which claims to precede it. It is the text, with its universal power of world disclosure which gives a self to the ego (Ricœur, 1976[b]: 94-95).

Notes

1 It is significant in this regard that almost all calendars in our culture indicate both astronomical and cultural events that extend well beyond the boundaries of the individual temporality.

2 White (1980) discusses the difference between a chronicle and a true narrative in a similar manner.

3 I find in this statement a noteworthy parallel between Ricœur's description of narrative plot and Merleau-Ponty's description of the temporality of the self, particularly with respect to their mutual use of the concept of 'thrust'.

Chapter IV - Toward a Ricœurian Framework

The purpose of this fourth chapter is to consider how certain aspects of Ricœur's project might be elaborated before being appropriated into sociological theory. More specifically, it anticipates the development of a framework for comprehending life histories. First I will offer a tentative reconstruction of the concepts that are of particular relevance to sociology and social psychology. Second, I will suggest the direction in which Ricœur's framework can be developed so as to afford a critical analysis of life history texts.

A. Theoretical Reconstruction

I find a number of conceptual difficulties with Ricœur's theory associated with areas insufficiently developed from a sociological perspective. The required elaboration takes the form of an immanent critique and remains consistent with the overall thrust of Ricœur's work. For the present purpose, the most important aspects of the reconstruction are the arguments (1) that the final referent of a narrative text is the question of agency and (2) that an analysis of a narrative text is critical to the extent that it reveals constraints placed on the language of human agency. While Ricœur's theory does identify the relation between action and narrative, it does not develop the connection between action and narrative in terms of their mutual temporality.

Ricœur's conceptualization of the temporal aporia is made more tenable by restating it in sociological terms. The distinction between lived and

universal perspectives on time may be a source of concern for philosophers and theologians, but it is not sufficiently problematic to account for the centrality of narrative in everyday life. If the phenomenon of narrative is to find its genesis, even in part, in a temporal aporia, then such an aporia must be a compelling force in the life world. Recall that Augustine acknowledges the temporality experienced by the individual soul. This is the same temporality that phenomenologists, including Ricœur, have taken as their starting point in the analysis of internal time-consciousness. Augustine goes on to confess, however, that he must also acknowledge the time that began with creation, that is therefore the time of all individuals. Ricœur places his emphasis on the cosmic, rather than the social implications of this confession.

In my view, it is the temporal incommensurability of the ego and the other that constitutes the aporia of sufficient force to require a narrative response. In social life the important concern lies not with the objective time of the world, but with the time of the intersubjective world. On this account, the temporal aporia flows from the awareness that others have an experience of being-in-time discordant with our own. A temporal non-identity, in the form of other persons, presents itself in opposition to the time of the ego. This non-identity is experienced as an alienation of selves in time. Some procedure of connection is necessary, to use Ricœur's language, in order to transcend the gulf between ego and other.

As in Ricœur's general scheme, this function is performed by the narrative creation of historical time. Narrative mediates between the temporal ego and the temporal other by 'displaying' how their relation is predicated upon action. The idea of narrative displaying, rather than explaining, rela-

tions is borrowed from Polkinghorne (1988). The hermeneutic product of this display is an 'us' concordant in historical time. Narrative creates a field of action upon which a temporal intersubjectivity may be fostered. On the basis of this first reconstruction, 'historical time' may be equated with the 'time of action.'

This leads, however, to the need for a further reconstruction of Ricœur's framework. While his theory does develop the relation between action and narrative, it fails to adequately bring out the connection between action and temporality. Hannah Arendt's understanding of action, that Ricœur explicitly borrows, is compatible with the Weberian view of action as meaningful conduct. She does specify, along with Aristotle, that action is conduct that can represented in narrative. But what makes Arendt's concept particularly significant for the analysis of time and narrative is the emphasis she places upon action as initiative (Canovan, 1974: 57-65).

Action, in contrast to labour or work, is an advent. Ricœur himself makes the distinction between 'advent' and 'event' in his earlier work (Ricœur, 1965: 33-36). An advent "denotes the emergence of a sens in history which transcends its time and continues to be effective in the present" (Schmidt, 1985: 134). It is important in this context to acknowledge the dual meaning of *sens* as 'meaning' and 'direction.' Or, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, "advent is the promise of events" (cited in Schmidt, 1985: 149).

It is inadequate then to speak of action as meaningful conduct. It is also always temporal, and it is temporal in a particular way. Action does not simply occur in time, as with Aristotle's view of motion. Nor does it sim-

ply occur across time, as with Augustine's series of presents. Action begins time. This view of time having a beginning with each action touches upon Kermode's (1966) analysis of significant episodes in narrative. Kermode observes that in the west we follow a 'biblical notion of time,' one that is broken into periods of significance or kairos. "The beginning of a period of kairos is identified by the occurrence of an event that makes a difference in our lives, and the ending is marked by a resolution and return to a routine" (Polkinghorne, 1988: 79).

At the phenomenological level action provides the gradation of subjective time. My lived experience of time is given its sense of flow, not so much from arbitrary measures of time, but from the new moments that each action initiates. Action punctuates my experience of time. More important, however, is the implication that my action is an intervention into the world and, particularly, into the temporality of others.[1] Just as my action disrupts and marks the experience of my temporality, I expect that my action is an initiative into the life-course of others. I reciprocally view their action as an initiative into my life-course.

Nevertheless, human agency is always in doubt, always indeterminate, precisely because the ego can only experience the intervention of its action upon itself and not upon others. My consciousness of personal (collective) agency is therefore dependent upon the degree to which I can signify my (our) conduct as action through language. The function of narrative in this regard is to project human action onto a social plane, as a connection between the experience of action, as the gradation of ego time, and the experience of acting into the time of others. Narrative is thus an attempt to estab-

lish a historical consciousness of agency. Social agency is affirmed through its testament in narrative.

In this sense, and in contrast to Ricœur's view, it falls short to consider temporality as such to be the ultimate referent of all narratives. Rather, I suggest that the final referent in narration always is the question of human agency. This question is the same temporal aporia of ego and other described above. Moreover, the referent of narrative is not this or that specific action, but rather, it is human efficacy as demonstrated through dramatic tension and resolution. To participate in narrative thought is to evoke a semantics of action in which social events are interpreted as part of a wider consciousness of agency. It is upon such accounts of agency, which is the potential to act in history, that identity as temporal consciousness is built.

Thus, the experience of conduct as action is dependent upon such conduct being represented through narration. Narrative is that form of human experience that configures conduct as action. Borrowing Schutz's term, narrative shifts our attention from conduct to 'projects' of action. I experience action as a break into the world of the other, but only insofar as it is reinscribed by way of narrative thought. But are all actions reinscribed? Do we narrate all conduct that comes into our experience? Here again, Ricœur's theory is in need of elaboration. In my view, it is necessary to make a distinction between narrative competence, narrative identity, and narrative texts, as well as the relations obtaining between them.

Our narrative competence enables us to recognize human conduct as action and, concomitantly, to display or experience such conduct in narra-

tive form.[2] Through narration the meaning and value of one's action, or the action of others, is suppressed or enlarged. In the words of Hayden White, narrative moralizes events (1980: 26). Our experience of action and self is always first a product of internal narration. Through internal narration conduct becomes inscribed as action, and the interpretation of agency becomes incorporated into our self.

Consistent with Ricœur, the ego develops a self in the form of narrative identity by continually appropriating the representation of efficacy found in narrative works. Moreover, the self takes the form of a story. In the development of this story past action is (re)organized into coherent configurations using culturally given plot-lines.[3] We, in turn, project such configurations into the future as intended action. In a similar manner, Polkinghorne has said:

> we achieve our personal identities and self concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be (Polkinghorne, 1988: 150).

But what of the differentiation Ricœur makes between individual and collective identity? He fails to provide an adequate account of how the two levels of identity are implicated by the internal narrative process. For the present, I will simply note that the mediation of these two levels will be

problematic for the individual, and that this difficulty will be manifest in the instability of identity. While Ricœur does correctly identify the tension between fictional and historical elements in narrative thought as a source of instability for the self, he does not acknowledge the potential tension between personal and collective levels of identity.

In some instances individuals perform an operation of external narration. This operation results in the production of a narrative text. Narrative texts may take the form of historical or fictional narratives. Historical texts involve the inscription of empirically given agents and actions. The history written by historians (or historical sociology) involve, in this sense, a double-hermeneutic to the extent that it is based on the interpretation of narratives already produced by the agents in question in the form of chronicles and oral histories.[4] Fictional texts involve the inscription of imagined agents and actions. As suggested above, the social purpose of the narrative text is to project an image of agency, that may be positive, negative or ambivalent. In any case, a narrative text finds its reason for existence in a project for displaying a particular aspect of human efficacy at the level of discourse.

The processes surrounding the construction of the narrative text will be directed by various interests that may operate at cross-purposes. Smith (1980) provides a useful account of the need to recognize narration as social process with potentially multiple interests in effect. An example of such an interest is the temporal orientation of the group [i.e. traditional, futuristic] as discussed by Stokols & Jacobi (1984). Gergen & Gergen (1984) also address

the issue of the social construction of narrative accounts under the rubric of historical social psychology.

Following Habermas (1971), this project may be animated by an interest in domination or an interest in emancipation. On the one hand, an interest in domination will be correlated with efforts to suppress the display of efficacy in narrative texts. In other words, an attempt will be made to advance the ideological image that social history is a matter of reified forces, rather than capable agents. On the other hand, an interest in emancipation will be correlated with efforts to promote the image of agency displayed in narrative texts. The narrative project will work to align community members towards or against one another in terms of perceived efficacy.

The consciousness of agency connects with temporality from an additional perspective: the life-course may be described in terms of a developing consciousness. Narrative identity may be viewed as the story of our emerging temporality. Heidegger (1962) has provided a system for considering levels of consciousness with respect to time. As outlined by Heidegger, the level of being-in-time-ness, the level of historicality, is the deepest level of consciousness. Heidegger (1962) suggests that the level of temporality, the deepest level of consciousness, requires the greatest effort to self-understanding. To some extent Ricœur has attempted to set up his theory of narrative as a response to these levels of temporal consciousness.

Arguably, however, the sequencing implied by Heidegger is, in fact, reversed in human experience. Contrary to what is implied by Heidegger, the

individual acquires a sense of being a mortal unity at a relatively early age. This is the realization that one is a person who has a beginning and an ending separate from the larger history of the world. Following Erikson (1950), the second stage of consciousness, the awareness of one's life as a historical unity, occurs in late adolescence and young adulthood. This is the realization that one is a person with an intimately connected past, present, and future. The final and least secure stage of temporal consciousness is the realization that one is a 'temporal agent,' that one can act upon history. It is this consciousness of agency in the life-world that remains the most elusive for the developing self. We never quite escape the doubt that our actions will have significance for the future.

I would suggest that the first two phases in the development of the self, temporality and historicality, are able to unfold through the processes of internal narration. The third phase, which entails the consciousness of agency, is dependent upon the external telling and following of (hi)stories. As suggested above, such narrative forms are the bases for interpreting one's own social efficacy. Following Ricœur, the aspect of identity grounded in narrative texts is necessarily unstable due to the divergent referents of history and fiction.

The possibility of human agency will remain in question so long as conditions of domination preclude the telling of (hi)stories that assert the potential for individual and collective agency. The development of identity in this regard will be progressive under social conditions in which narration is able to display agency in a positive manner. Conversely, this development will be regressive or blocked to the extent that social conditions bring

out narratives that display agency in a negative or negated manner. It is in this sense that identity, which is the current state of developing consciousness, may be subjected to critical inquiry.

Ricœur briefly alludes to the critical perspective that can be built upon his conceptualization of narrative identity, but his discussion remains at the psychological level. A more adequate perspective will view narrative as a social event that, following Habermas (1984), may be analyzed in terms of constraints placed on the communicative process. Given the discussion of action above, such constraints will be efforts to distort the representation of human efficacy. The assumption underlying such a critical analysis is that narratives may serve to promote or inhibit individual development and emancipation. Each narrative text is a medium for asserting whether particular social orders are rational or otherwise. A critical perspective asks whether a narrative will enhance or restrict the view of individuals or collectivities as efficacious agents. An ideological narrative is one that serves specific sub-group interest in domination by (mis)representing the agency of some members.

Since identity is, in part, a function of this process, a critique of narration is necessarily a critique of factors bearing upon identity formation. The first task of a critical social science in this regard is hermeneutic. Narrative texts must be read in a manner that lifts into view the underlying reference to human agency. The second task is to identify the constraints placed on the articulation of agency in historical and fictional narratives. Such constraints may include the intentional exercise of power or the passive working of social structures. An example of such constraint will be in the selec-

tion of events or social dramas that are to be reinscribed through narration. This filtering of events will to a large extent determine the degree of human agency that can be conveyed by the (hi)story. The third task is to determine the manner in which these narratives facilitate or inhibit consciousness of agency, and subsequent societal change or continuity.

B. Interpreting Autobiographical Texts

Ricœur's theory of time and narrative, along with the limited reconstruction developed above, provides the basis for understanding (hi)story telling and following in everyday life. For the present purpose it is possible to present this framework as a metatheory for comprehending life history texts. This metatheory can be described most generally as a critical hermeneutic. Such an approach to life history texts combines the principles of Ricœur's hermeneutics with the emancipatory interests of critical social science.

At the level of ontology, a life history is to be read in a manner parallel to that in which it was produced. In other words, it is to be understood as a narrative or a composite of narratives. Moreover, the account is to be approached as a production arising out of the tension between the agency of the author(s) and the prevailing social conditions. It is an articulation of the actor's experience of agency over the life-course with respect to given social relations. Consequently, an interpretation of the life history is pursued by considering the reciprocal relations of meaning between the text, as a whole, and the accounts of action that comprise it. In more complex life histories,

this process will be one of understanding the relation between a set of narratives that together constitute the entire text.

It will be important to distinguish between elements of the text that are truly narratives and those that are merely chronicles, for the difference may be correlated with variant images of agency. In this regard, Hayden White (1980) suggests that agency is negated by the representation of human conduct in the form of a chronicle, whereas it is asserted by representation of conduct in the narrative form. In any event, the elements of the text are to be interpreted as relating to one another within the historical consciousness of the individual, a consciousness that attempts to coordinate the meaning of past, present and future experience. In this way identity is both the subject and object of a life history text.

The ongoing problem of identity is the unstable consciousness of individual and collective agency. A critical assessment assumes that identity progresses towards a narrative account of self-efficacy under conditions favouring rational thought. In the present framework, the narration of life events is the intersubjective foundation for social praxis. This conceptualization of narrative identity lead us to consider the critical dimensions of Ricœur's approach. An affinity can be noted between Ricœur's narrative hermeneutic and critical social science. First, Ricœur views self-consciousness as being mediated by the continual interpretation of individual and community (hi)stories. The process of self-consciousness is animated by and directed towards the problems of meaning in the world. These problems or aporias reflect the contradictions and perplexities of social life.

Second, according to Fay, the idea of narrative is fundamental to a critical social theory.

> One of the deepest assumptions of critical social science is that there is a unity in human lives which, though not apparent, lends coherence to their multitudinous forms. This unity is presented in a narrative of the lives of a people in which the various changes in their activities and arrangements are related together to form a meaningful whole, and by setting this narrative into the broader story of human life as it has unfolded up to the present time. This narrative depicts the underlying principle of change at work in the emergence and disappearance of the numerous forms of human life and the countless welter of human activities and relationships. It is on the basis of this principle of change that the purported present crisis of society is revealed to be a crisis of a certain sort. And this it is by disclosing the narrative unity of a people's existence that their revolutionary potential is revealed to them (1987: 69).

Ricœur focuses on the underlying structure of activity and relationships by eschewing the intentionality of subjects as the primary source of meaning in the interpretation of narrative texts. In place of these psychological imperatives, Ricœur directs us to reveal, by way of depth interpretation, the sociocultural boundary conditions that constitute the 'world' of the text. Through the practise of depth interpretation, self-consciousness may be elaborated and, potentially, emancipated from the limits of prior interpretations. Consistent with a critical sociology, Ricœur's theory implicates a process involving not only self-reflection, but also self-rectification in light of new readings. It is an act of reflection in which the self is "clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives" (1988: 247).

Ricœur's continuity with critical sociology can be made more evident by establishing the parallel between his philosophy and Paulo Freire's theory of cultural action (1970[a], 1970[b]). Whereas Ricœur's project has evolved from a concern with reflection toward a hermeneutics of praxis, Freire's approach develops the concept of praxis toward a politics of reflection. Freire and Ricœur thus converge at the point of a critical hermeneutic. In Freire's pedagogy, as with Ricœur's hermeneutic, consciousness is not a complete given of the human condition; rather, it is something emergent. Consciousness is striven for through the task of life. This task is undertaken not in the form of an unmediated self-reflection, but as an ongoing process of interpreting the texts of one's life and, especially, one's life as a text.

Along with Ricœur, Freire argues that fundamental to this process is the reversal of the subject-object relationship between individuals and their limit-situations (or conditions of existence). Development is the process whereby the individual moves from viewing the self as an object in the situation to viewing the self as an efficacious subject relative to a possible world. According to Freire, the project of humanization is contingent upon the individual shifting from a consciousness of self as an object, to a consciousness of self as a subject. As an object, one is reflected and acted upon; as a subject, one reflects upon the world and acts upon history. Reflecting and acting are inseparable aspects of praxis. On this point, Freire warns against any tendency to reduce the question of praxis to subjectivism or objectivism. In this sense, Freire demonstrates the same tensions between force and meaning that animate the thought of Ricœur.

In the first instance, the limit-situation is viewed as a force acting upon an individual as object. In the second instance, the limit-situation is viewed as a world that may be transformed through praxis by the individual as subject. This shift in the horizon of thought is mediated by the act of interpretation wherein the situation becomes objectified within the text. For both Ricœur and Freire, it is the mediating capacity of the text (or the word) to provide the reader with a world, rather than merely a situation. This is the basis for a critical hermeneutics. It is critical in the sense that it founded upon a re-appropriation of language, a signification of the limit-situation as a potential world. At the centre of this critical movement is the distanciation of the subject from the situation through a structural analysis of texts.

In describing the consciousness of those who are oppressed, Freire defines the 'culture of silence' as a world view organized around the conception of self as an object. Following my reconstruction of Ricœur, the culture or language of agency is a set of world-propositions organized around the conception of self as a subject. The objective of critical inquiry is to discern the dominant language in people's lives, be it a language of silence or a language of agency. The dominant language provides the semantic environment for consciousness and, consequently, praxis. This language presents the self to itself as one who is an object or a subject relative to the social and material context.

But we also are able to resist and transform language. This is accomplished, following Ricœur's theory of metaphor, through the continuous re-interpretation of discourses, including those constituted by languages of

silence or languages of agency. The process of coming to consciousness then does not entail gaining freedom from language. Rather, it entails disengaging oneself from a particular form of language - the language of silence. Language, as a set of world-propositions, is revealed through an interpretation of dialogical or textual discourse. The concern of a critical hermeneutic in this regard is not primarily with the sense that subjects ascribe to the discourse, but with the properties of the language implicated therein. This, of course, does not preclude subjects from reflexively engaging in such an interpretive process.[5]

More specific to the proposed study, is the potential of Ricœur's ideas for developing an alternate framework for understanding (hi)story telling and following in everyday life. Such an approach to life history texts would combine the interpretive logic of hermeneutics with the emancipatory interests of critical social science. A Ricœurian framework for studying life history texts would involve, first, a way of conceptualizing the life history account as a text and, second, a way of deriving a critical interpretation from this kind of text. The self-reflective aspect of autobiographical expression would be acknowledged. The life history is, potentially, as much a means to self-discovery as it is the outcome of introspection. Ricœur leads us to expect that the interpretation of the life history account, by the author or the reader, will be critical to the extent which it is based upon an explication of structural features of the account. Such latent features are to be interpreted over and above the manifest descriptions located at the surface of the text, and which reflect the author's intended referent.

Following Ricœur, the life history text is viewed as projecting two non-intentional referents: the form of the sociocultural world and the identity of the author relative to that world. The form of the sociocultural world is represented (and reproduced) in the life history text as a set of linguistic boundary conditions. These conditions are the limits to which the subject can both describe and act in his/her life-world. Nonetheless, the form of the sociocultural world will not present itself to the subject in a straightforward manner. The subject will be faced with contradictions between different ways of describing and being in the world.

In Ricœur's terms, the life history account would be expected to reflect certain aporias of existence, as well as the subject's reply to these aporias. The subject will reply to these aporias by relating his/her self to the language of the life-world in a particular manner through narrative accounts of social action. The identity of the subject in the autobiography would be viewed as this relationship of the subject to the social world. Building on Ricœur's notion of narrative identity, identification occurs in a tension between the definition of self in terms of history and the definition of self in terms of potentiality. Moreover, the identity presented in life history accounts will be expected to reflect the instability of the self in light of this tension.

> Narrative identity thus becomes the name of a problem at least as much as it is that of a solution. A systematic investigation of autobiography and self-portraiture would no doubt verify this instability in principle of narrative identity (Ricœur, 1988: 249).

A critical interpretation of life history accounts, following a Ricœurian framework, would be based on the hermeneutic strategy of explicating the relations between the parts and the whole of the autobiographical text. This strategy involves reading for the levels of coherence and direction invoked by the text. [illegible] reading will not be concerned so much with the surface description [illegible]ents given by the subject, but rather with the structural relations obtaining between separate narrative accounts and the (linguistic) form of life projected by the text as a whole. Specifically, this mode of interpretation would be concerned with how the various narratives in the life history text claim an identity for the subject by re-presenting instances of action in relation to the social order.

The primary referent of the life history would be the self interpreting it-self as a symbol at a particular stage of development, a stage fixed by the elicitation of the account. The level of meaning associated with Ricœur's depth interpretation is based on the polysemic character of the symbol. The symbol is a construct that is at once caught between different realities and acts as an semantic bridge for exploring the boundaries between those realities.[6] Moreover, the meaning of a symbol lies in the realities it connects. The multiple realities that gravitate around a symbol give the symbol its polysemic character. In principle, the most problematic symbols (i.e. those symbols which evoke a high degree of fascination) can have a virtually infinite range of meaning. A function of narrative is to constrain or guide the interpretation of a symbol toward a limited range of meaning - to correct what Ricœur has called a surplus of meaning. The symbol, therefore, is potentially the locus for intersubjective struggle.

The self is such a symbol, and the self-as-symbol is a fundamental referent of the life history account. As a symbol the self bridges the multiple realities - possible and potential identities - confronting the individual. In bridging these multiple realities the self is open to an almost infinite range of meaning. This view is somewhat consistent with Goffman's notion of the self as a myth in the modern world (Collins, 1988). Berger & Luckmann's (1967) phenomenological discussion of identity is also relevant in this regard. Narrative activities in the social world function to constrain or guide the meanings of the self. Social life is always, in part, an intersubjective struggle over the identity of given selves through the interpretation and reinterpretation of (hi)stories.

On this account, identity is the meaning of the self which emerges through the ongoing interpretation of narratives. The meaning of the self (identity) is derived from the relations of the subject to the sociocultural world displayed in (hi)stories. But Ricœur has also reminded us of the instability associated with narrative identity. This instability suggests an intersubjective struggle on two grounds: (a) between different identities deemed possible within the language community, and (b) between what is presently deemed possible and what is potential for the subject over time.[7]

This above analysis connects readily into issues concerning the sociology of knowledge, especially the question of sociocultural reproduction. In the course of describing the social world, as in a life history, the actor invokes particular contrasts and thereby reproduces the structure of the sociocultural system. In this way the structures of history and culture impinge

upon, and are reproduced by, the narrative activities that inform identity. The nature of identity, in turn, constrains the range of conduct in the social world and, consequently, the potential for personal and social transformation.

Under conditions of oppression, the narrative codes for making identity claims may be highly restricted. Under such conditions narrative resources are apparently no longer available through traditional culture, nor are they available from within the prevailing sociocultural system. To paraphrase Fay's earlier comment, the transformative potential of the subjects is revealed to them only after they are able to disclose the narrative unity of their existence; and this capability may well be limited by the social distribution of cultural knowledge (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973).

C. Summary

This chapter has built upon Ricœur's analysis of time and narrative. A number of conceptual difficulties were raised with respect to Ricœur's theory. These difficulties were associated with areas that were insufficiently developed from a sociological perspective. An attempt at elaboration was made with respect to the concepts of universal time, social action, narrative identity, temporal consciousness and social critique. These attempts at elaboration took the form of an immanent critique and remained consistent with the overall thrust of Ricœur's work. To summarize the major points, I have argued (1) that universal time is the time of the other, (2) that action is fundamentally temporal, (3) that the referent of narrative texts is the

question of agency, (4) that identity develops towards consciousness of agency, and (5) that an analysis of narrative process is critical to the extent that it reveals constraints placed on the display of human agency.

Ricœur's framework for understanding the relation between time and narrative is much more comprehensive than it has been represented in this study. To some extent the purpose here has been to pull out the elements having the greatest relevance for social theory. At the philosophical level Ricœur's work offers a direction for sociology that recognizes the temporal and narrative features of social life are recognized. At the theoretical level his work provides a framework for conceptualizing the processes and motivations that operate in the course of (hi)story telling and following. This application may find its relevance in such diverse areas of social inquiry as ethnohistory and the sociology of mass communications. The framing of oral history and the social construction of news find a common denominator in Ricœur's analysis of narrative. Finally, at the empirical level, Ricœur's theory is able to sensitize us to a number of issues that may be examined further in the context of life history research.

The main concern of the present study is with developing the reconstruction presented in this chapter in such a way as to further the elaboration of a critical hermeneutic. The life history account is an instance of discourse particularly suited for a hermeneutic analysis of this order. The work of Paulo Freire also provides a theoretical starting point that is appropriate to a Ricœurian methodological framework. Its critical orientation makes it well suited to the documents selected for empirical examination: Lewis's collection of autobiographies from a Mexican family living in

poverty, and Maria Campbell's autobiographic account of life as a Métis woman. Before outlining the empirical aspects this study, however, it will be useful to first review the problems of life history research in sociology.

Notes

1 For a discussion of the 'intervening' feature of action see Von Wright (1971).

2 For a general overview of 'narrative competence' see Polkinghorne (1988: 107-113).

3 The archetypes of plot have been analyzed by Frye (1957) and Scholes & Kellogg (1966).

4 See Giddens (1976) for a more detailed discussion of the double-hermeneutic.

5 In my judgement, a Ricœurian framework could be used to extend Freire's model of emancipatory cultural action.

6 My understanding of symbols and narratives in this regard owes a great deal to the discussion presented by Cove (1987: 18-27).

7 The tension between identity in terms of the language community, and identity in terms of time was first recognized by Dilthey (cf. Habermas, 1971: 140-160).

Chapter V - Autobiography and Sociology

The main task of the fifth chapter is to draw out the primary methodological issues surrounding autobiographical analysis in the social science literature. That task will be set against an outline of the historical development of the approach in sociology. As a strategy for comprehending the literature, I will take the position that three kinds of presuppositions must be made explicit in the course of articulating a methodology of life history research: what form of project constitutes the life history text, what is the social process through which the life history text is produced, and what is the manner of analysis appropriate to the interpretation of such texts. The final purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical transition between the philosophical foundation laid down in the previous chapters and the empirical work of textual analysis that lies ahead.

The chapter concludes by specifying the presuppositions necessary for a critical hermeneutic of life history accounts. Building upon Ricœur, I will argue, first, that the life history primarily is a temporal configuration of claims about the identity of the subject(s). Second, while autobiographical expression is rendered locally by a particular individual through interaction with particular audiences, the text primarily is a (re)production of historically given codes - a world - for self-interpretation and self-presentation. Finally, I will argue that a critical interpretation of the life history account, based upon a form of discourse analysis, promises greater theoretical insight than either an empathetic reading or a thematic analysis.

The life history approach has been defined rather broadly in some parts of the literature, or it has been included under the discussion of other kinds of personal documents. For the purpose of this project, I will follow the lead of Bertaux & Kohli (1984: 217) and define the life history approach as social research "based on narratives about one's life or relevant parts thereof." Even within this more constrained definition, I find considerable variation within the literature on how to further specify the approach.

A. Rise, Fall, and Renaissance

The development of the life history approach in sociology has been associated with the more general struggle over the legitimation and critique of various social research methods. This struggle, echoing the Methodenstreit of sociology's European origins (Ferrarotti, 1989: 106), is most evident in the transition between methodological paradigms. The first of these has been referred to as an ecological paradigm (Ferrarotti, 1989: 95) exemplified by the methodological tradition identified with the Chicago School in the earlier part of this century. Here the emphasis was upon describing individuals caught up in the web of social relationships and institutions. Attention was directed to the social problems of people and communities in the face of the emerging mass society, concentrating especially on "forms of deviancy" (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984: 233). During this period the life history method was introduced into North American methodology and applied to a range of social problem areas.

The formative work for this period was Thomas and Znaniecki's The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (1927). Central to their study was the life-record of an individual immigrant, written by the subject at the request of the researchers. As with Dilthey, Thomas and Znaniecki emphasized general social realities, and not merely individual subjectivity (Kohli, 1981: 63). This is expressed in the recognition that autobiography is a "privileged way to historical, or social reality," in addition to the individual life (Kohli, 1981: 64). On the basis of their experience with such material Thomas and Znaniecki asserted the primacy of life history materials for sociological inquiry. Their assessment bears repeating.

> We are safe in saying that personal life-records, as complete as possible, constitute the *perfect* type of sociological material, and that if social science has to use other materials at all it is only because of the practical difficulty of obtaining at the moment a sufficient number of such records to cover the totality of sociological problems, and of the enormous amount of work demanded for an adequate analysis of all the personal documents necessary to characterize the life of a social group. If we are forced to use mass-phenomena as material, or any kind of happenings taken without regard to life-histories of the individuals who participate in them, it is a defect, not an advantage, of our present sociological method (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927: 1832-33).

Although somewhat eclipsed by classics that followed in its path, such as Shaw's trilogy The Jack-Roller (1930, 1966),[1] The Natural History of a Delinquent Career (1931), and Brothers in Crime (1938), Thomas and Znaniecki's study remains the seminal work for development of the life history approach in sociology. The publication of The Polish Peasant in

Europe and America represented not only the introduction of a method, but also anticipated the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism and other interpretive forms of sociology (Kohli, 1981: 63). The affinity between the life history approach and Meadian social psychology is readily grasped. According to Becker, a key strength of the life history approach lies in its potential to shed light upon the *processes* of symbolic interaction. In the introduction to Shaw's The Jack-Roller (1966), he claims that:

> the life history, if it is well done, will give us the details of that process whose character we would otherwise only be able to speculate about, the process to which our data must ultimately be referred to if they are to have theoretical and not just an operational and predictive significance. It will describe those crucial interactive episodes in which new lines of individual and collective activity are forged, in which new aspects of the self are brought into being.

Nevertheless, the reception given to the life history approach during this period also included a number of critical challenges to its primacy within the context of social scientific research, challenges that anticipated the coming decline of the ecological paradigm. It is ironic that perhaps the most serious criticism was leveled by the main proponent of symbolic interactionism. Herbert Blumer (1939), in explicit reference to The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, argued that as an interpretive method the life history approach lacked accountability. Moreover, when coupled with problems of representativeness and reliability, these interpretive difficulties left the scientific value of the life history shadowed in doubt. Blumer contended that:

> the deficiency of human documents as a test of interpretation is due in large part to the nature of the act of interpretation. To interpret is to apply concepts or categories, and it seems that such interpretation in the instance of the human document, as in that of any human experience, is so much a matter of judgement that categories that are congenial and self-evident to one, readily fit the experience (Blumer, 1939: 124).

A significant evaluation of the life history approach was also undertaken by Dollard (1949). In that study he outlined several criteria for the use of life history accounts. Dollard's criteria included an emphasis on (1) the cultural and biological nature of the subject, (2) the continuity of childhood to adult experience, (3) the definition and influence of the social situation, and (4) the need to organize and conceptualize life history materials (Plummer, 1983). While Dollard was criticized by his contemporaries for relying too heavily on a psychoanalytic approach as his standard for comparison, his criteria together represented a move toward analyzing life histories in a manner that required theoretical insight on the part of the researcher. The writings of Dollard and Blumer display the earliest recognition that life history interpretation is, in fact, problematic.

A second methodological regime, having a nomothetic paradigm, emerged with the increasing dominance of positivist philosophy in North American social science. Two significant shifts in the conceptualization of sociological inquiry occur with the legitimation being given over to a nomothetic model of social research. First, the emphasis on contextual description gives way to statistical description: modeling the typical member of an aggregate set in terms of selected variables and their correlations.

Second, and arising out the first methodological shift, a decline occurs in the relevance of local meaning systems for sociological inquiry. While never abandoned as an issue, meaning came to be viewed as a problem of social research (as in the 'problem of subjectivity') more than as an object of inquiry itself. To the extent that meaning was taken as an object of inquiry, it was reduced to the static and individualistic terms of attitudinal research.

Associated with these shifts in the conceptualization of legitimate social science was a major decline in the use of life history research within North American sociology. On one account, the major reason for this decline is the bias toward deductive 'single study' research characteristic of the nomothetic paradigm (Becker, 1966). Moreover, following the comments of Blumer and Dollard, the method was particularly vulnerable due to its lack of explicit presuppositions and interpretive procedures. This is an important point for it implies that the current resurgence of interest in the life history approach will, in the longer term, be dependent upon the articulation of such presuppositions and procedures.

It also should be recognized that while the method suffered a major period of decline during 1950s and the 1960s, this same period witnessed some continued use of the method in European sociology and in North American anthropology. While the work of Znaniecki had a temporary, though significant, influence on North American methodology, the tradition from which his thinking originated continued to flourish in Poland and increasingly elsewhere in continental Europe. Similarly in anthropology the life history approach continued to develop even while it remained dormant

within mainstream sociology. Perhaps the most well known of these projects is Oscar Lewis's The Children of Sánchez (1963[a]).

More recently, however, another profound shift in methodological discourse. While it is not possible to identify a new dominant approach to research, sociology is currently caught up in a period characterized by a loss of faith in the nomothetic paradigm. Even though nomothetic methods are still the most frequently used in published research, we are now facing a crisis in which the mode of inquiry heretofore dominant in sociology has a lack of continuity with the issues central to contemporary social theory. Not incidental to this crisis has been a recognition of language as a fundamental property and discourse as a fundamental process in social life.

It would be incorrect, however, to consider the linguistic turn in sociology as a resurgence of the Chicago School tradition. Whereas that earlier tradition implicitly equated meaning with the conscious intentions of the subject, the present debate, having felt the influence of structuralism, tends toward the notion of a de-centred subject expressing historically given linguistic totalities with or without conscious intention. As a result, and even without a clear alternative research paradigm, recent methodological discourse in social science has been characterized by a concern with the problematics of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989) and critical interpretation (Giddens, 1976; Thompson, 1981).

Along with this general realignment of methodological thinking in sociology, we have witnessed a renaissance in the development of life history research (Kohli, 1981; Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Crapanzano, 1984; Stanfield,

1987). But this renaissance has not simply been a continuation of the earlier paradigm from which it found its origins. Indeed, mainstream symbolic interactionism has moved away from what might be considered its method of origin. Bertaux and Kohli report that while:

> the spirit of the Chicago School of the 1920s remains alive in symbolic interactionism, the latter's focus on specific situations and organizational contexts has led to a preference for direct observation (and the associated interviews); little attention has been paid to the life history approach (1984: 232).

Rather, the life history approach is now being pursued by social scientists influenced by the perspectives of recent continental philosophy: phenomenology, structuralism, and hermeneutics (Watson, 1976; Crapanzano, 1984; Denzin, 1989; Ferrarotti, 1989). The present study also falls within that sphere of influence.

The remaining sections of this chapter are devoted to outlining the range of presuppositions subject to debate within the current renaissance of the life history approach. This overview will lead to my own specification of presuppositions about the project, production and interpretation of the life history text. These parameters for life history research will be consistent with Ricœur's hermeneutic framework as I have interpreted it in the previous chapters.

B. Contemporary Approaches

During the past two decades various attempts have been made to clarify the value and means of life history research. Important in this regard has been the efforts of a number of anthropologists and, for this reason, their

work is included in the following review. As indicated earlier, the function of this review is to provide a basis for setting the initial presuppositions of my own analysis. The literature presents, within the specific field of life history research, both points of contrast and of continuity with Ricœur's philosophical framework. My immediate task is to draw out those points from across the range of contemporary autobiographical analysis.

The first major effort at developing a systematic approach to the analysis of life history accounts is found in the writings of Mandelbaum (1973). He takes as his starting point the observation that the main difficulty of life history research is "the lack of accepted principles of selection, of suitable analytic concepts to make up a coherent frame of reference" (Mandelbaum, 1973: 177). Mandelbaum goes on to set out three such analytic concepts: dimensions, turnings, and adaptations. In so doing, Mandelbaum attempts to answer what is to become the key question of autobiographical research in the social sciences: what exactly should be focused upon in the interpretation of a life history account?

According to Mandelbaum, a "dimension of a life history is made up of experiences that stem from a similar base and are linked in their effects on the person's subsequent actions" (Mandelbaum, 1973: 180). These dimensions range from the micro or personal level of experience, in terms of the psychosocial dimension, to the macro or pan-human level of experience, in terms of the biological dimension. With respect to their particular analytic focus:

> The cultural dimension lies in the mutual expectations, understandings, and behavior patterns held by the people among

> whom a person grows up and in whose society he becomes a participant. ... The social dimension of a life history includes the effective interplay and real relations in the course of which the actors may alter the roles, change the nature of the choices, and shift the cultural definitions. ... Within the study of the psychosocial dimension, the observer focuses on the individual's subjective world, his general feelings and attitudes (Mandelbaum, 1973: 180).

Mandelbaum further develops his conceptual framework with the concept of 'turnings,' a concept that anticipates the notion of epiphanies found in the work of Denzin (1989). According to Mandelbaum a life history may be conceptualized in terms of principle periods:

> marked by the main turnings, the major transitions, that the person has made. Such a turning is accomplished when the person takes on a new set of roles, enters into fresh relations with a new set of people, and acquires a new self-conception. The turning thus combines elements of the three dimensions, the new roles being mainly cultural, the new interactions being social, and the new self-conception being psychosocial (Mandelbaum, 1973: 181).

Finally, Mandelbaum completes his framework with reference to the concept of adaptation. "Each person *changes* his ways in order to maintain continuity, whether of group participation or social expectation or self-image or simply survival" (Mandelbaum, 1973: 181). The study of adaptations is facilitated by referring to the outline of dimensions and turnings.

> We can then look to the main opportunities and limitations that the person faced at each junction and ask how and why the person adapted his behavior (or failed to do so) at this

> point, what he tried to change and what he tried to maintain (Mandelbaum, 1973: 182).

While this conceptual system is appealing in the ready focus it promises, a number of difficulties remain. Some researchers doubt that the lives of ordinary people entail such salient turnings and adaptations (Langness, 1973: 200). It should be noted here that Mandelbaum illustrates his system by applying it to the life history of Gandhi. I suspect that this framework has been shaped by its own illustration. In any case, an analytic framework with extensive possibilities for application likely would have to be developed on the basis of general principles and mundane lives.

The system of dimensions, turnings and adaptations has also been criticized for its emphasis upon linear causality. First, the system represents the subject primarily as "a receiver and adherent of cultural norms and rules," and only secondarily as an agent of cultural and social change (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1973: 202). Second, Mandelbaum's system does not recognize the importance of "historical accidents and conjunctions, for which neither culture, society, nor personality can account" (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1973: 202). Perhaps the most apt depiction of the scheme has been offered by Akiwowo:

> Mandelbaum's systemic view of human action bears some resemblance to the system of programmed activities one encounters in planning (PERT). An important basic difference is that the human system of action is one of far greater freedom, a far wider range of options and therefore a far more complicated flow-chart and a critical path of analysis less easily determined than in cybernetics (1973: 197).

Yet, these critiques miss a more basic problem with Mandelbaum's arguments. His framework lacks a clear distinction between the events marking up a life and the subjective organization of those events in the autobiographical text. Mandelbaum is clearly ambivalent on this point.

> A person's own view of the watersheds in his life may not exactly coincide with the significant turnings that an observer may notice, but that view may nonetheless be important in the way in which he directs his life (Mandelbaum, 1973: 181).

Although Mandelbaum offers a systematic view of a life, notwithstanding the comments made above, he does not give adequate guidance for analyzing the autobiographical text as a subjective account.

The second main effort to develop an analytic framework for life history research is found in the works of Agar and Luborsky. Their approach differs from Mandelbaum in its complete focus on the life history as a textual artifact. Agar defines the life history as "an elaborate, connected piece of talk presented in a social situation consisting of an informant and an ethnographer" (Agar, 1980: 223). As with Mandelbaum, this approach takes a componential analysis as its starting point; but now it is a segmentation of the narrative text, rather than the life itself. The logic of segmentation in this case is one of attempting to articulate the implicit structure of the narrative and to be guided by such structure. In Agar's own words, life histories "are not engines, but there may be 'natural' ways of slicing them up for analysis" (Agar, 1980: 228).

Agar follows the approach of cognitive anthropology wherein samples of discourse are used to make inferences about the nature of subjectivity. In

this presupposition Agar displays some continuity with Ricœur. Specifically, Agar is less interested in the structure of discourse as such, than in the 'world' disclosed by the analysis of the discourse. The treatment of life history narratives, in this regard, is problematic given that the experience of cognitive anthropology has mainly been with inferences about limited domains of cognition from elementary units of language. "How does one make inferences from language chunks such as discourse, and what is the appropriate schema to which inference should be made?" (Agar, 1980: 231).

The approach being developed by Agar, referred to as 'themal analysis,' attempts to find patterns running through statements that deal with a common semantic domain within the autobiographical text.

> To date, the method has consisted of an informal content analysis, where statements with a related focus are abstracted from the text and examined for pattern. The foci used to abstract statements have been the fundamental categories of human experience so often discussed in a variety of social sciences and humanities. Typical categories include areas such as space, time, social others (both individual and institutional), and religion (Agar, 1980: 231-232).

The procedure begins by extracting all statements that reflect a particular domain. This set of statements is then inspected for thematic patterns.

Luborsky, following Agar, proposes to analyze life history material "in terms of *conceptual templates*, which operate both in narrative text and more widely in subjective belief systems that may inform variations in patterns of behavior" (1987: 367). On the basis of his examination of life history

themes and templates, Luborsky identifies three types of autobiographical narrative.

> First, there are terse, succinct texts consisting of a 'bare bones' listing of each phase or transition in the *culturally defined life course* of social persons, and/or statuses achieved that contribute to adult identity. There are little, if any, materials of an intimate nature or of an individual's subjective experiences.
> ... Second there are texts whose coherence was provided by a *key theme or topic*. ... Included in this category are texts organized around one of three main analogies: (1) comparisons between individual life cycles and biological, terrestrial, or celestial cycles, (2) the 'path not taken,' and (3) progressive development of wisdom and mature adult moral judgement and skills ('growing' and 'seeing' in the native lexicon).
> ... Third, there are texts that focus in detail on a *single marker event* in the past. ... These texts ... differ in combining attention to a single incident of subjective psychomoral development with a listing of narrative life course transitions accomplished (Luborsky, 1987: 370).

He goes on to interpret the cognitive templates, which he describes in terms of guiding metaphors, found in those texts taking their coherence from a central theme. Luborsky's work has concentrated on the use of 'nature' templates in sample life histories taken from informants on the verge of retirement.

While these latter two approaches have the benefit of conceptualizing the autobiography as a subjective document, it is necessary to critique them on the basis of the priority they give to the *focus* of life history statements, rather than to their respective *functions*. By theoretically attending to the topical focus their inquiry is restricted to a content analytic method. In con-

trast, a discourse analysis method is built upon viewing statements, and other elements of the text, in terms of the function performed in the textual project (Wetherhill & Potter, 1988: 171). Discourse analysis, as opposed to content analysis, assumes that structural features of the text are understood by the function they play in the act of discourse, and not primarily in their reference to external objects or their reflection of individual cognitive schema (Wetherhill & Potter, 1988: 171). Although Luborsky emphasizes the function of narrative statements -- at least more than Agar -- he offers little exposition as to what kind of human project is served by their function. Agar, however, does suggest "a correlation between narrative style and modes of organizing and representing the self." (Luborsky, 1987: 371). This notion anticipates what I will later refer to as identity projects.

A further issue of considerable importance is raised by both Agar and Luborsky; this is the social context and process of life history production. The methodological concerns surrounding the social nature of life history texts has been the focal point for a number of researchers, most notably Frank (1979) and Crapanzano (1984). Whereas Mandelbaum presents us with a linear model of an individual life, and Agar presents us with a thematic model of individual life experience, these analysts ask us to recognize the life history as an intersubjective project. More to the point, they ask us to view the life history account as an outcome of informant - researcher interaction.

Frank makes a distinction between the true autobiography and the life history. Whereas the former is a more or less independent project, "the life history is a collaboration involving the consciousness of the investigator as

well as the subject" (Frank, 1979: 70). This fact of life history production limits, according to Frank, the extent to which it may be used to disclose the subject's authentic experience (Frank, 1979: 72). She argues that research is needed to understand how subjects construct selves for presentation. The social context of informant - researcher interaction necessarily leads to a particular selection and organization of events.

> The child who may grow into a famous or extraordinary person may say and do things that have no relevance to a future identity as a public figure. The biography tends to scramble the significance of that life, reading it backward and filling in evidence that proves that the final verdict is the true and correct one. Isn't this, though, that way we tend to view any life, linking selected past events in an order that reveals who that person 'really' is - a sample of past behavior that is taken as representative, a generalization based on a theme? ... The theme may reflect an actuality, but it still a selected strand, a construct, a partial image, a model with the limitations on inference of a model, no less in this Western folk text than in our sociology and psychology texts (Frank, 1979: 82).

Moreover, Frank contends that the experience of one's life is not simply rendered by consciousness; rather, it "emerges in discourse with another or with oneself" (Frank, 1979: 86). This is a view of the self quite consistent with my conceptualization, flowing from Ricœur, that the self is, in the final analysis, a text unto itself. For Frank the problem becomes one of taking a methodic stance despite the conflation of subjective and objective perspectives within the interaction between the subject and the analyst. Part of the difficulty in taking a methodic stance toward life history documents may be traced to their presumed self-evidence (Frank, 1979: 71-73).

In saying this, Frank identifies a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, as Blumer (1939) has claimed, the use of the life history for scientific purposes demands analysis and abstraction. On the other hand, however, its apparent self-evidence inhibits the analytic stance. By default it is the tendency of readers to refer to their own life as the framework for comprehending the accounts given of the other's life. In a manner akin to Giddens's (1976) conceptualization of interpretive sociology as a double-hermeneutic, Frank observes that "the life history can be considered a double-autobiography, since it is to the investigator's personal experiences that the subject's accounts are first referred." (Frank, 1979: 89). In Frank's phenomenological approach the fact of double-autobiography is not merely the source of complexity; it is also the basis for understanding the properties of mind shared by the researcher and subjects in general.

> The use of the investigator's self as a resource for understanding parallels the classical requirement that a psychoanalyst be analyzed, not to cure the analyst so much as to open up the workings of his or her own mind as one sharing general properties of all minds (Frank, 1979: 89).

Crapanzano (1984) has taken the interactive conceptualization of the life history to a more radical level. In his understanding the life history is neither a record of external events, nor is it a reflection of general cognitive properties. Rather, the life history takes as its primary referent the ongoing interaction that led to its own production. Angrosino, paraphrasing Crapanzano, states that the written life history text "is, at best, a snapshot of a dynamic interchange that is itself part of an ongoing relationship between two people" (1989: 21). Both Crapanzano and Angrosino contend that the

value of studying life history texts lies in the insight gained about the social interaction between subject and ethnographer, on one hand, and the conventions of narration "that guide the creative act in a particular social situation" (Angrosino, 1989: 21), on the other hand. Angrosino, with the aid of symbolic interactionist theory, has moved toward the position that, despite the limitations of using life histories in terms of any referential function, one can use such documents to "clarify the nature of the encounters that generated the texts in question (Angrosino, 1989: 28).

While it must be acknowledged that the interactive conceptualization of the life history text offers an important critique of the extent to which such documents serve as historical evidence, this position does entail some risk of reductionism. The emphasis given to the interaction between subject and researcher, although a valid methodological critique, distracts us from referents of interest beyond the context of production. Even Crapanzano and Angrosino acknowledge the relevance of "folk-literary conventions" (Angrosino, 1989: 21) that stand outside the interactive order. Moreover, such conventions are neither life events nor personal orientations readily open to selection and distortion. Presumably such conventions, while potentially open to transformation in the longer term, are relatively fixed and historically given narrative codes. To the extent that such structural orders are not acknowledged, analysis drifts toward the ahistorical premise that all order in social life is locally produced. Given my interpretation of Ricœur, the conventions or codes underlying a narrative project manifest the 'world' of the text, this 'world' being the referent of main concern in a critical interpretation.

The interpretative interactionist position developed by Denzin (1989) shifts the conceptualization of the life history and its analysis toward a more critical approach. He has incorporated Sartre's (1966) progressive-regressive analysis, describing it as the critical - interpretive method. This method:

> seeks to locate and understand a class of subjects within a given historical moment; moves forward to the conclusion of a set of experiences, and then backward to the historical, cultural, and biographical conditions that moved the subject to take, or experience, the actions being studied (Denzin, 1989: 143).

In Denzin's approach to life history accounts the primary analytic operation is "subdividing the text into key experimental units," elsewhere referred to as epiphanies (Denzin, 1989: 46). He defines an epiphany as a "moment of problematic experience that illuminates personal character, and often signifies a turning point in a person's life" (Denzin, 1989: 141). The reader at this point will no doubt recognize the basic similarity between this formulation and the concept of 'turnings' used by Mandelbaum. Denzin, however, emphasizes much more the experience of turnings, rather than the events themselves. He directs our concern to how such epiphanies are meaningful within the experiential biography. Again following Sartre, Denzin wants to view the experiential biography of the subject in terms of the historical moment.

> Interpretive interactionism assumes that every human being is a universal singular. ... No individual is just an individual. He or she must be studied as a single instance of more universal social experiences and processes. ... Interpretive studies, with their focus on the epiphany, attempt to uncover this complex interrelationship between the universal and the sin-

> gular, between private troubles and public issues in a person's life. In this way, all interpretive studies are biographical and historical. They are always fitted to the historical moment that surrounds the subject's life experiences (Denzin, 1989: 19).

Despite his adherence to Sartre's progressive-regressive method, Denzin does not clearly articulate an approach focusing upon structures of the universal. In the quotation given above he seems to equate the universal with public issues, rather than with structures given historically through social relations. This is not so much a critique of Denzin's program as a recognition of his microsociological orientation. In contrast, Ferrarotti, the Italian critical theorist, moves closer to the sociocultural reproduction model implicit in Sartre's writings. In his discussion of life history research Ferrarotti asserts that life "is a practice which appropriates social relations (social structures), internalizes and re-transforms them into psychological structures for its de- and restructuring activity" (1989: 100). The act of interpreting the life history becomes "a heuristic passage which sees the universal through the singular, which seeks the objective by hinging on the subjective, and which discovers the general through the particular" (Ferrarotti, 1989: 103-104). In directing us to the objective by way of the subjective, Ferrarotti returns to the non-ostensive referent of the life history text, those codes that shape the autobiographical project.

Moreover, Ferrarotti reminds us that the progressive-regressive method necessarily involves the analysis of how the reproductive interplay between the universal and the singular is mediated by the local social context. An adequate interpretation of a life history text must be concerned not

only with the codes of the discourse, but also with the primary groups that mediate the subjective experience of the individual.

> Above all we must identify the most important spaces, those which serve as pivots between structures and individuals, the social fields where the singularizing practice of man and the universalizing effort of a social system confront each other most directly (Ferrarotti, 1989: 105).

Ferrarotti's position is that the primary groups become the subject of the biographic method (Ferrarotti, 1989: 109). This is a position with which I readily concur. Yet, it seems that further conceptual development is warranted at the level of the individual, or at least the individual in relation to such primary groups. This warrant comes in part from the need to specify the nature of the autobiographical project. The work of Ferrarotti, with some parallel to Ricœur, supports the interpretation of life history texts as identity projects.

> The group itself becomes in turn and, simultaneously, the object of the synthetic practice of its members. *Each of them reads the group from his individual perspective.* Each of them builds himself psychologically as an 'I', starting from *his* reading of the group of which he is part (Ferrarotti, 1989: 108).

The question of the self as the subject and object of a life history account is taken up by Kohli (1981). He contends the autobiographical form expresses a process of self-transformation that can be understood as a "comprehensive 'theory of oneself'" (Kohli, 1981: 64-65). An adequate conceptualization of life history thematization requires a turn to "theories of identity, action and interaction" (Kohli, 1981: 64), toward a social phenomenology of the self. The referents of autobiography from this perspec-

tive include the internal, subjective structuring of the self, and not merely historical events. Referring to Fischer (1978), Kohli explains the process of identification inherent in the life history.

> The construction of the life history is the mode by which the individual represents those aspects of his past which are relevant to the present situation, i.e., relevant in terms of the (future oriented) intentions by which he guides his present actions. Life histories are thus not a collection of all the events of the individual's life course, but rather 'structural self-images' (Kohli, 1981: 65).

The process of self-thematization presented by Kohli bears a continuity with the idea emanating from Sartre (1966) that identity, as an organization of personal experience, is the fundamental project of the individual (Langness & Frank, 1981; Angrosino, 1989). The difficulty with this proposition, according to Angrosino (1989: 7), is the limitation on assuming that the life history text actually reflects such cognitive processes and not merely the local context of its production. Again, I have argued that such a limitation assumes that the text only operates at the level of individual rationalizations. In so doing it ignores the potential for a text to denote a language of self-interpretation, a universal evident in the singular.

Kohli, following Labov and Waletzky (1967), attempts to identify the principle structures of autobiographical narratives in terms of two functions: referential and evaluative. Whereas the referential function is served by the description of sequential events, the evaluative function is served by making such events socially significant by relating them to the present.

> This means that narratives always contain a reconstructive element. The reference to past events occurs in the context of

> the present situation, and under the criterion of their significance to it (Kohli 1981: 67).

I would note here that the present situation is the moment of self-thematization within a social context of narration. In accord with a discourse analytic approach, Kohli suggests that one objective for the analyst working with such a text is to disclose "the natural subjectivity of the autobiography," a dimension independent of the author's knowledge of the world (Kohli, 1981: 70).

Nonetheless, Kohli considers the analysis of documents for structures of subjectivity to be an effort of limited value in light of the lack of a clear conception of *what kind* of subjectivity is to be gained from autobiographical material (Kohli, 1981: 70). He argues in favour of their traditional descriptive or referential value.

> One could say that an autobiographical narrative informs us about how the subject thematizes and constructs his own biography (in a given situation) and, by doing this, reaffirms (or even constitutes) his identity, and plans his actions. This is an important topic in its own right. But if it was all which could be gained from the biographical method, most of its applications would be invalid. Even if we accept the subjectivity inherent in any biographical account, we cannot satisfy ourselves with information that is purely geared to the contingencies of the present. We expect not only evaluation, but also reference; not only 'situational,' but also 'historical' truth (Kohli, 1981: 70-71).

Kohli suggests that the life history be used as one source set against others in the search for adequate descriptions of historical events (Kohli, 1981: 71). Notwithstanding the descriptive value of life histories, Kohli's assessment

of their value for research into subjectivity is open to critique. Kohli, while demonstrating the significance of the reconstructive function, fails to acknowledge the potential for revealing structures of universal relevance in singular texts. The theoretical foundation for such an interpretation has already been summarized by Ferrarotti, and the basis for an appropriate methodological framework can be derived from Ricœur.

One approach to life history research that explicitly draws on the philosophy of Ricœur is found in Bruner (1986, 1987). Following Ricœur, Bruner contends that lived time, the time of human action, only can be described through narrative. Moreover, this world is experienced by the subject only through a canonical narrative framework; that is, historically given, cultural recipes for structuring a life. For Bruner it is these canonical forms that are the important object of autobiographical inquiry, rather than the specific content of a life history account. Such accounts:

> reflect the prevailing theories about 'possible lives' that are part of one's culture. Indeed, one important way of characterizing a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life (Bruner, 1987: 15).

Bruner also reaffirms my interest in Ricœur by arguing that the autobiographical project is particularly unstable due to the extreme reflexivity placed on the subject who is at once both the teller and follower of the narrative. At the same time "this very instability makes life stories highly susceptible to cultural, interpersonal, and linguistic influences" (Bruner, 1987: 14). Yet, in contrast to those who have viewed the life history primarily as a product of the interaction between the subject and a relatively strange researcher, Bruner is convinced that the basic structural properties of life nar-

ration are "laid down early in the discourse of family life and persist stubbornly in spite of changed conditions" (Bruner, 1987: 31). More generally, and in this instance drawing on Sartre, he contends that:

> life stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life stories; tellers and listeners must share some 'deep structure' about the nature of life, for if the rules of life-telling are altogether arbitrary, teller and listeners will surely be alienated by a failure to grasp what the other is saying or he thinks the other is hearing (Bruner, 1987: 21).

Consistent with the direction of my study, Bruner takes the main objective of autobiographical analysis as one of seeing how the narrator represents his or her life, rather than one of seeing what events are described by the narration. In this sense, Bruner displays a continuity with some of the comments given above by Kohli. The general strategy advocated by Bruner is to consider other possible, or potential, forms of life construction in the course of examining given accounts. A worthy line of inquiry, in his view, will be to learn how people put their narratives together when they tell stories from life, considering as well how they *might* have proceeded" (Bruner, 1987: 32). In this respect, Bruner approaches a critical theory or radical humanistic perspective toward autobiographical projects.

Nonetheless, in his particular analytic strategy, Bruner does not offer a procedure capable of contributing as fully as it might to sociological theory. While Bruner makes good use of Burke's (1945) conceptualization of narrative structure and Rorty's (1976) historical analysis of the representations of agency, these schemes are not appropriated to his analysis in a manner that is social psychological, rather than literary, in focus. In my view the basic

weakness in Bruner's scheme is the lack of specification as to the nature of the autobiographical project itself. His discussion tends to conceive the autobiography as an expression of a 'life,' rather than a 'self.' Without claiming that these two concepts need to be fully separated, I would argue that the contributions of Bruner would be enhanced by incorporating Sartre's notion of the fundamental project, a notion I also have found in Ricœur's discussion of narrative identity.

This overview of the contemporary approaches to life history research leads us to the specification of three presuppositions that reflect the hermeneutic philosophy of Ricœur. These same presuppositions will guide my search for a more adequate method of life history interpretation in the remaining chapters. The first premise flows immediately from the critique of Bruner. In my view the production of the life history must be seen as part of a more general and ongoing identity project. This will imply that any analytic treatment will need to begin by focusing upon those functions related to (re)configurations of the self within the text. Those advocating the progressive-regressive method remind us that an identity project takes place in terms of various social contexts. Such mediations need to be acknowledged in any method that seeks to comprehend the structuring of identity.

The second premise concerns the factors shaping the autobiographical project as a narrative text. While the contingencies of subject-analyst interaction ultimately must be taken into account, it is likely , following Bruner's argument, that historically situated canonical forms of life story telling structure the text at its deepest levels. Moreover, my reading of Ricœur

finds support for treating such canonical forms as the non-ostensive referent of the life history text. The disclosure of this referent will be the goal of a critical interpretation of life history tests.

As to the final premise, it is clear that the object of my anticipated framework only will be made available through a discourse analytic method. If I take my object to be those formal properties of narrative identification, then I must turn to a kind of analysis that attends to how functions related to identity construction emerge within the text. This approach is advocated in the role Ricœur assigns to structural explication in the larger process of depth interpretation. But, as Ricœur has reminded us, such an explanation of formal properties should not remain an end of interpretation; but, rather, should permit a more critical understanding of the subject and the form of life projected by the text. It is with these presuppositions in mind that I now turn to the development of a method grounded in the reading of concrete texts.

Notes

1 The informant described in The Jack-Roller gave his life story again fifty years after the first, and a few years before his death. The second account is found in Snodgrass's The Jack-Roller at Seventy (1982). The implications of this kind of material for a more elaborate and comparative analysis is worthy of further investigation.

Chapter VI - The Search for Structure

This chapter strives to demonstrate the applicability of a Ricœurian framework to the sociological analysis of life history texts. An analytic method is described that is both consistent with a Ricœurian metatheoretical framework and grounded in the empirical structure of specific texts. The first part of the chapter documents the process of developing this method so as to reveal the logic underlying its eventual form. The second part describes the narrative levels revealed through the analysis of identity claims found in three autobiographical texts. The third part describes the manner in which these levels together comprise an identity narrative.

The texts employed in this project are Marta's and Manuel's accounts from the Children of Sánchez elicited through life history interviews by Oscar Lewis (1963[a]), and Maria Campbell's own written account (1973). The rationale for the use of these texts already has been presented in the first chapter. The Campbell text, as I will show, is an example of a relatively reflective and critical autobiography. It is useful therefore to present this text as a basis for comparative analysis, especially given the critical interests of this inquiry.

A. Discerning Basic Features

The present study has involved working back and forth between Ricœur's framework and the three selected life history texts. In the following discussion I will outline the structural features of the examined life history accounts, and the depth interpretation that may be developed from

these accounts. The process of developing an approach to the analysis of life history texts may itself be described in narrative form. This process entailed a number of false starts that eventually gave way to the present manner in which I comprehend the autobiographies. I will first describe the efforts at analysis that yielded little or no interpretive gain. A review of these mistakes will permit a clearer view of the logical and creative development of the present method.

In the course of attempting to translate Ricœur's framework into a method of life history analysis, the main difficulty encountered was in shifting from Ricœur's general principles to specific analytic procedures. The challenge in this regard was to arrive at a hermeneutic approach that would lift into view the primary structural features of the text in a manner consistent with Ricœur's theoretical presuppositions. In other words, the challenge was to arrive at an approach strategy that bridged the specific character of life history texts with the relevant aspects of Ricœur's framework.

Before giving an account of the emergence of this approach, it will be useful to outline the basic elements found in the three autobiographies. At the most general level each text is divisible into a series of 'episodes,' each appearing to have more coherence than the text as a whole. These episodes each had a finite set of topics that differentiated them from other episodes. Episodes ranged from a single page of text to several pages in length. A second element of the text, occurring within episodes, I will call 'anecdotes.' I define the anecdote as a story that takes the listener (and the teller) to a remembered or imagined event of social interaction. The anecdotes found in

these autobiographies characteristically involved considerable detail, including references to what was said and done by specific actors.[1]

A third element of the text, also occurring within episodes, consists of statements I will refer to as 'identity claims.' I have defined 'identity claims' as those reflexive statements given in the text that make direct assertions about the the nature of the subject (individual or collective), either in comparison with others or across the life course. These statements are claims as to (1) similarities or differences obtaining between the subject and others, and (2) similarities or differences between the subject at some point in time and the subject at another point in time, (3) causal relations obtaining between the subject and others, and (4) reflections by the subject back upon his/her life as a whole. These claims were found in all three texts and within every episode. Statements of this kind occurred in the text either adjacent to (before or after) anecdotes, or in the absence of anecdotes.

A first attempt at structural analysis focused on the anecdotes. The logic here was based on the assumption that these anecdotes were the primary level of narration within the text. At that stage in my thinking I had not yet recognized the possibility of the text as a whole constituting the main narrative. Moreover, the anecdotes had the appeal of being the most detailed accounts of the subject's world within the life history texts. During this early stage of the research I examined the types of anecdotes displayed in the texts with a concern for identifying whether specific anecdotes displayed the subject as a an active agent or a passive object.

This tact finally was abandoned on the grounds that the analysis of anecdotes could not get past the point of producing merely a summary of textual elements. This approach would not permit a reconstruction of the text as a whole called for by hermeneutic methodology. This strategy would at best provide a typology of anecdotes, without grasping how elements of the text came together to form a meaningful autobiography. This concern was magnified by the realization that the anecdote functioned in an evidentary relation to the identity claims. Each anecdote appeared to recount an instance of social interaction that supported the veracity of one or more identity claims.

The second attempt at developing a set of analytic procedures focused primarily on the level of episodes comprising the life history text. The logic here was to find a single claim that lent coherence to each episode. I assumed that the episodes were fundamental to the interpretation of each autobiography. The strategy entailed identifying the claim from which each episode took its meaning. This approach, while appearing to improve upon the first, was also abandoned. The procedure was dependent upon the idea that each episode gravitated around a single identifiable claim. This assumption was problematic in that often a single, explicit claim could not be found in the text. In some cases, a plurality of claims were evident; in others the plausible claim was implicit and had to be inferred. This latter condition relied overly on the subjective impressions of the reader. Moreover, it was also quite possible that the organization of episodes within the text was merely an artifact of editing or, in the case of the Sánchez texts, interviewing procedures.

A strategy was required that could overcome these limiting factors. The third attempt at structural analysis evolved out of the earlier two and resulted in the present formulation. This final strategy takes the identity claims to be the primary structural elements of the life history texts, at least insofar as the texts are autobiographical. The strategy developed takes the identity claims to be the main source of organization internal to the texts. The identity claims function as a complex set that lends coherence to each life history text as a whole.

The claims themselves do not appear to be responses to questions from the interviewer, but rather seem to emerge across a range of discussions in the text. Unfortunately, Lewis published the Children of Sánchez with his own voice removed from the transcribed interviews.[2] Nevertheless, the occurrence of the same range of identity claims in Maria Campbell's text suggest, at least, that the identity claims in the Sánchez texts are not simply artifacts of Lewis's interviewing strategies.

Following Green (1988: 42), I will speak of the life history text being 'about' this structural core. The text may be about something in the sense of having an external referent. But a text may also be thought of gravitating about something -- a core of linguistic structures that give the text shape and coherence. These structures of language, that make communicative activity possible, are what Ricœur would identify as the non-ostensive referent of the life history text. Or, more precisely, the non-ostensive referent is the cultural discourse that such linguistic structures are predicated upon. In Ricœurian terms this cultural discourse is the 'world' projected or opened

up by a depth interpretation of the text, an interpretation based upon an explication of the text's structure.

The most apt analogy is to view the set of identity claims as the seam that binds pieces of cloth into a functional garment. (Such a construction also may satisfy certain aesthetic demands.) This analogy illustrates the subject's relation to the autobiographical project. In telling one's life history one intends to construct something like a garment. This construct is what Ricœur would identify as the ostensive referent of the narrative. Yet one cannot accomplish this construction without implicitly drawing upon certain binding mechanisms, something like a seam. One must invoke such structural elements even if one does not consciously intend them as my referent.

Thus, such claims are not necessarily the intentional referent of the account, but only that system of self-knowledge necessarily actuated (and reproduced) in the course of accomplishing a self-description. A first presupposition of the method advanced here is that in the course of describing the course of his/her life the subject articulates such claims as part of the framing of the account and, in doing so, reveals certain structures of self-knowledge. I would suggest, following Ricœur, that the claims represent, in part, the intersubjective structure of the world of the subject. The identity claims serve to identify the subject within the bounds defined by the discourse of the language community. This operation, in effect, reaffirms (and reproduces) the discourse's arbitrary way of organizing social reality - the subject's framework for making sense. These claims at the same time affirm both the individual's identity, in the terms of the language community, and the in-

tersubjective structure of that same life-world. Hence, subject and language reproduce one another within the autobiographical discourse.

Having assumed the identity claims to be the central structural feature of the life history texts, the problem remained as to how to work with these statements in a manner that reveals more clearly the forms or styles through which these subjects represented their lives and, by extension, their selves. The first step in the devised method was to transcribe the identity claim statements from the original texts. Only when the original statements were broken or very long were they replaced by paraphrase. During the initial transcription of statements the original order of presentation in the text was maintained. By maintaining the sequence I hoped to retain the directionality that, according to Ricœur, defines the text as a whole narrative.

At this stage it was possible to attain a further validation of the centrality given to the identity claims in the analysis. Ricœur has suggested that a hermeneutic analysis must draw upon the logic of commutation (1976 [b]: 84-85). The commutation principle in semiotics suggests that an element (sign) contributes to the meaning or sense of the whole text (significance) if the meaning or sense of the whole is altered or negated by removing that element. A commutation test can be conducted on the identity claims transcribed from the life history texts, if only in the form of a thought experiment. In all three of the texts a reading of the sequenced identity claims maintains to a large extent the coherence of each original text, with perhaps even greater clarity.

If one were to imagine reading of the original text after any such operations had been removed, then the remaining elements (including the anecdotes) might appear colorful, but would lack relevance and continuity. The difference between a black/white and colour photograph of the same object is a second analogy useful in clarifying the presuppositions of the present method. The black/white picture draws our attention to structure: shapes and contrasts. The method of analysis I am describing is analogous to extracting a black/white image from a colour image. This application of the commutation principle lends support to the earlier assertion that the set of identity claims forms the binding structure about which the life history revolves.

B. Identity Claim Types

The next phase of the analysis was to code the identity claims into a set of interpretable and theoretically relevant types. The logic at work here was, in part, one of minimizing the empirical variation within types while maximizing the variation between types. An initial reading of the statements suggested two fundamental kinds of identity claim: comparative and temporal. The comparative claims could be coded further in terms of whether the claims were individual or collective, and then in terms of different reference individuals and groups.

In any event, it should be possible to compare different autobiographies in terms of the relative significance each of the four levels obtains within their respective texts. This assumes, of course, that such levels of narration

are universal. While this property is a presupposition of the Ricœurian framework, it remains an empirical question. A first reading of a number of other autobiographical texts from diverse sociocultural settings does suggest that the use of comparative and temporal claims may indeed be the common structural feature of life history narratives.

While Ricœur's framework provides a basis for comprehending the temporal statements, it does not directly anticipate the emergence of comparative identification, although any such attempt to interpret the self by comparison bears a continuity with his theory of metaphor. The claims on the temporal dimension were more challenging to code as they seemed to contain a wide array of self-descriptive forms. After sorting out the comparative claims and reading the remaining temporal claims in sequence, the text still appeared to operate at a number of different levels. An attempt was made at coding the temporal claims in order to differentiate them relative to the time of narration (the autobiographical present). This procedure initially resulted in two sets of temporal claims, each still in sequential order. The first set comprised claims contrasting past states of the self to other past states. The second set comprised claims contrasting present states to either past or future states. The commutation test was applied again to the temporal claims. After separation the reflective and description claims appeared to display greater coherence than when they were combined. This result suggests that by filtering out the two kinds of claims the significantly different levels of the life narrative are raised into view.

The first set of temporal claims, those contrasting past states with other past states, still appeared to contain more than a single level of description.

A number of coding schemes were tried with until a resolution of two levels emerged. These consisted on the one hand of those temporal claims that simply marked time and, on the other hand, of those claims in which life changes had been subjected to some form of analytic thought. This latter set included attribution of causality and recognition of patterns. The commutation test was conducted at this level with the results similar to the previous application. In the end, the analysis resulted in four sets of identity claims: a set of comparative claims, a set of sequential claims, a set of consequential claims, and a set of summative claims. (The reader should note that these are labels that I will modify, and re-organize, later in the discussion as the interpretation of the texts unfolds.)

The presence of summative claims is consistent with a hermeneutic theory of the self, one that can readily be derived from Ricœur's writings. Under this view the self is not only the subject who interprets, but also the fundamental object of interpretation. Ricœur has noted that the subject interprets and reinterprets itself, indirectly, through narrative texts. I have contended that identity is the interpreted self, within the range of culturally given possibilities. This identity is continuously established, following Ricœur, through autobiographical reflection, inscribed or internal. It should be noted that the range of possible meaning of the self extends temporally, across the life course, as well as socially, across the community. Identification is not merely a process of claiming similarity and difference relative to reference others, but also one of claiming similarity and difference relative to oneself at different reference times. In this sense, my identity is at once a set of claims as to who I was, who I became, who I am and

who I might be. This can be made clearer by examining the nature of these four kinds of claims.

1. Comparative Claims

The comparative claims, as indicated above, identify the self relative to significant others. In these statements the subject compares his/her self to other selves by noting similarities and differences on some range of personal attributes. As with the other types, comparative identity claims may refer to the subject and significant others as individuals or collectivities such as gangs, classes, genders, and families. Reading these claims vertically, as elements in a common list, provides insight into the range of significant others, personal attributes, and social types deemed relevant for the subject in terms of self-identification. This list is, of course, also interesting to the extent it is able to suggest categories of others and categories of attributes that are notable in their absence. The comparative claims thus appear to circumscribe the basic cultural schema used by the individual to organize experience of the world as a social field.

2. Sequential Claims

At the sequential level a listing of occurrences are found anchored loosely in developmental stages such as age or school grade levels. Some identity claims of this kind are not directly linked to any specific point in the life course, but simply refer to events happening 'then.' The further analysis of this level involves an explication of the age-grade or other develop-

mental references used to organize the life history at the most basic temporal level. It is at the sequential level of the life narrative that objective and subjective time become interlaced.

3. Consequential Claims

At the consequential level of the life history a sequential account is found; but one that includes analysis, in the form of either causal attribution or patterned recognition. Change across time is referenced with mediating determinants. Change is not emergent or developmental as with the sequential account. Rather, it is attributed to the agency of the subject, significant others, or social conditions, or mystical forces. The analysis of the consequential level involves the explication of styles, of mediation (e.g., agency/structure), and the kinds of content of causal change or patterns of repetition. This level of life description bears a continuity with Denzin's notion of significant life events or epiphanies.

4. Summative Claims

Finally, identity claims are found that contrast the life as a whole to other lives, to other potential ways of living, to their present, and to their anticipated future life. It is in this interpretive moment that the life history becomes summative and evaluative. It is this final level that we, as readers, anticipate the outcome of the subjective life account. As we read the life history we are lead, by the direction displayed in the text to expect a limited range of potential outcomes. The outcome we anticipate in following the

narrative of a life is a 'resolution' given in the form of a overall interpretation, a final reflection on who the subject has become in light of the reviewed past. This expectation is continuous with the notion that the autobiography primarily is a narrative account of identity, as opposed to an objective record of events.

Tables 2-11 illustrate the range of identity claims - comparative, sequential, consequential, and summative - found in the three texts (page numbers from the published text are shown in parenthesis). The statements have been selected in order to give the reader a clear sense of the differences between claim types and the distribution across social contexts.

Table 2: Comparative Identity Claims (selected), Maria Campbell Text

We spoke a language completely different from the (other clans). We were a combination of everything: hunters, trappers and ... farmers. Our people bragged that they produced the best and most fearless fighting men - and the best looking women . (24)

Then there were our Indian relatives on the nearby reserves. There was never much love lost between Indians and Halfbreeds. They were completely different from us. (25)

Treaty Indian women don't express their opinions, Halfbreed women do. Even through I liked visiting them, I was always glad to get back to the noise and disorder of my own people. (26)

(The white immigrants) looked cold and frightening, and seldom smiled, unlike my own people who laughed, cried, danced, and fought and shared everything. (27)

By the time I reached the age of ten I had the same attitude as Cheechum about Christians, and even today I think of Christians and old clothes together. (28)

At the age of seven I was kept home with Momma and the ladies while my brothers went with Dad to the store and to the homes of his friends. (32)

Because it was a mixed school, whites and Halfbreeds were gathered together officially for the first time, but the whites sat down on one side of the room while the Halfbreeds sat on the other. (48)

Karen was the first person I ever confided in, other than Cheechum. We had many dreams, the two of us, but so different from each other's. She took her lovely home for granted and all the things they had, but admired the way we lived and preferred to be with us; my constant ambition was to finish high school and take my family away to the city, giving them all Karen had and more. (94)

I was only fifteen and Smoky had a reputation that made even Halfbreeds shake their heads. He was twenty-four and I don't know why he ever noticed me. (112)

I remember sitting there with her and thinking, Here we are, the two of us, and we weren't any different from any other women. What happened anyway? I wondered then if good, straight women ever experienced the torment, agony and loneliness we had to face, and it they did, how in hell did they cope? (153)

Table 3: Sequential Identity Claims (selected), Maria Campbell Text

I was born during a spring blizzard in April of 1940. (18)

At the age of seven I was kept home with Momma and the ladies while my brothers went with Dad to the store and to the homes of his friends. (32)

Like many other kids, I ran away from home. ... I was eight years old then. (65)

(Cheechum) gave me strength to carry on my work - I was only twelve and with Momma gone and Dad away, I had to take over not only as mother but father as well. (80)

We got a housekeeper that fall, a young Indian girl who was able to get along with and manage the little ones fairly well. (87)

While Grannie was with us for those few months, I had time to be just a fourteen-year-old girl and I started to notice boys for the first time. (95)

When school was let out I started to work part-time, cleaning for people for a couple of dollars a day. (106)

From the time I was twelve I longed for the night I would be allowed to go to the dance in town. Daddy let me go to the dances at our school with a chaperone. But the dances in town were forbidden. (111)

I had met a guy that summer at the horse races and my only chance to see him was each Saturday night when we went to town, and if Dad had known he would probably have grounded me. (112)

I was married on October 27th, 1955. I had a husband and I could keep my brothers and sisters. I was fifteen years old. (119)

Not too long after that Darrel arrived, saying he was sorry and that he wanted us to come back with him. ... This time everything would be different. I said yes. I just wanted to get out of Kristen. I didn't care how. (129)

When I was discharged from hospital I moved in with a girlfriend who had two children and was living on welfare. (154)

During this time I began writing to AA inmates at Prince Albert Penitentiary. (170)

One spring day, in May of 1966, I got a phone call from my father. Cheechum had fallen from a runaway horse and buggy and had died almost immediately. (183)

Table 4: Consequential Identity Claims (selected), Maria Campbell Text

By the time I reached the age of ten I had the same attitude as Cheechum about Christians, and even today I think of Christians and old clothes together. (28)

At the age of seven I was kept home with Momma and the ladies while my brothers went with Dad to the store and to the homes of his friends. I became very resentful and jealous and did all sorts of things to attract attention. (32)

We had a lot of fights with the white kids (at school), but finally, after beating them soundly, we were left alone. There were many remarks made but we learned to ignore or accept them as time went on. (49)

He reached down and gave me a hug and from that night on Jim Brady was my hero and I loved him as I loved no man but my Dad. ... I felt something new inside me. It was like an emotion that is hard to describe - almost like happiness, pride and hurt all at once. ... That night was the first time the feeling ever came; it was a feeling I was to get often in my life. (73)

Everything seemed to go wrong after Momma left us. We never realized before what a pillar of strength she was, and how she had kept our lives running smoothly. (76)

My relationship with Dad changed after that, and we had many more fights. We seemed to drift apart and our closeness was gone. I disobeyed his rules whenever I wanted to and fought back when he got angry with me. I made life miserable for Sarah, who did her best to keep peace between us. (117)

Everything was all right for the first couple of months, but then Darrel began to drink. I was pushed around the first few times he was drunk, but then he started to beat me whenever the mood hit him. ... The rest of the year was grim. Darrel would be gone for days at a time and when he came home he would jeer at me and call me a fat squaw. (122)

I knew that as long as I stayed away (from Indian people) I would somehow always survive, because I didn't have to feel guilty about taking from white people. Then there was a part of me that hated them as well. ... If they had only fought back, instead of giving up, these things would never have happened. (143)

When I came back from Saskatchewan, the horrible conditions of my people and my talk with Cheechum made me feel there was no time to waste. The more I became involved in street work the angrier I became. (177)

Table 5: Summative Identity Claims, Maria Campbell Text

When I think back to that time and those people, I realize now that poor people, both white and Native, who are trapped within a certain kind of life, can never look to the business and political leaders of this country for help. Regardless of what they promise, they'll never change things, because they are involved in and perpetuate in private the very things they condemn in public. (137)

At this time, I felt Eugene could do no wrong. He was one of the 'brothers' Cheechum had talked about. When, following his example, I too began to speak out, his attitude towards me changed. At the same time I was hurt and discouraged because to me he was a special person, but it doesn't matter anymore. since then I've met many Native leaders who have treated me the same and I've learned to accept it. I realize now that the system that fucked me up fucked up our men even worse. (168)

Today, although Stan and I each go our separate ways, he is still an important person to me, and I love him as a brother. Sometimes I feel sorry for him. The pain I feel is without the bitterness I felt as a young idealistic Native woman, and I don't blame him. I can only hate the system that does this to people. (170)

At the time I loved it. ... I look back on this experience now with bitterness. Marie and I had been manipulated and divided just as my father and those leaders from my childhood had been. Although it was done in a more sophisticated way, the end result was the same, and today, when we should be working together, our feeling keep us apart. (180)

Cheechum lived to be a hundred and four years old, and perhaps it's just as well that she died with a feeling of hope for our people; that she didn't share the disillusionment that I felt about the way things turned. (183)

For these past couple of years, I've stopped being the idealistically shiney-eyed young woman I once was. ... I believe that one day, very soon, people will set aside their differences and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another, but because we will need each other to survive. Change will come because this time we won't give up. There is growing evidence of that today. ...The years of searching, loneliness and pain are over for me. ... I have brothers and sisters, all over the country. I no longer need my blanket to survive. (184)

Table 6: Comparative Identity Claims (selected), Marta Sánchez Text

But I was more like Roberto, the rascal. We were really wild. He didn't like school anymore than I did and would escape by climbing out the classroom windows. (134)

But I was not like Consuelo. She led a quiet life and had almost no friends. She couldn't go out like I did because my father was always taking care of her. (134)

I don't know whether he meant to call me a rabbit or what, but indirectly he did and it made me mad. Who was he to talk? At least I took care of the children I made! He never loved his children enough to be close to them. The trick of having children is not just to bring them into the world, but to feed them and send them to school and give them the attention the need. What use is it to bring them up like animals? (452)

My *papá* treated us girls like royalty. He fed us, bought clothes, sent us to school, and didn't let our brothers mistreat us. He hardly paid attention to them, except when we complained. Then he would grab them and beat them without mercy. (134)

It's true that my character is the worst in the family. I am very rancorous; I *never* forget and I stop speaking to the person who does a thing to me. If he is in the wrong, I hate him all the more. Delila always says that Manuel and I were the best because we get even with others by shutting up. They soon forget their anger, but not I. (455)

I never went out without my children. They were always at my side, otherwise I felt something was missing. Their father (Crispin), on the other hand, never liked to take them anywhere and scolded them if they turned their heads. And he almost never bought them anything. (318)

Baltasar warned me that if he saw me spank Chucho, I would be given mine, and we he left the house, he would say, "Remember, let the boy do what he pleases." I never spoiled my children that way. Baltasar says I am hard on them. (472)

If I didn't know how to control myself, I would have gotten the drinking habit, like Irela and Ema. ... Irela and Ema would steal - once they stole money from the school bank - but I never joined them. I didn't have that desire for extra money or things. (144)

My mistake was that I never made made my husband jealous. I couldn't be like other women, Irela, for example, who was completely without shame. The great respect I had for my father was like a wall, separating me and the decent life from a life of sin. (291)

I may not be very Catholic, but neither am I a Mason or a free-thinker. I send my daughters to Catechism in the Casa Grande every Tuesday to prepare them for their first communion. After that, if they want to stick close to the Church it will be because of themselves, not because of me. (317)

There are still some terrible *vecindades* around here. They are called "Lost Cities" and are made up of wooden shacks with dirt floors. The Casa Grande (her community) looks like a queen along side them. (146)

Table 7: Sequential Identity Claims (selected), Marta Sánchez Text

I spent three years in the first grade and another two in the second. At the end of the fifth grade, when I was 14 years old, I quit. I never planned to be anything in life, like a nurse or a dress maker. (133)

I was about eight years old when my *papá* went into the bird business. (135)

I was ten years old when Elena died. My papá said Manuel and Roberto (brothers) killed her. He may have right, but I believe it was mostly the operation that killed her, because when they took out her ribs she kept losing weight until she died. (136)

Later when Antonia went wild and ran away with some boys, my *papá* locked her up in Elena's empty room, and he slept with us again. When he bought another bed is was for Antonia. He slept with us until we were quite big. (137)

I had my first *novio* (boyfriend) when I was twelve. Donato was the son of Enoé who worked for us. (145)

On my fifteenth birthday, my friends came to my house with a record player and made a *fiesta* for me. My *papá* had planned to give me a big fifteenth birthday party, with a new dress and everything, but since I was no longer a virgin and didn't count for much anymore, the only thing he gave me was a pair of shoes. (154)

I was 16 when I my daughter was born. (294)

I thought Crispín (husband) would pleased about the pregnancy, but it was then that he showed me what he was really like. Do you know what kind of man he turned out to be? One of those who like to have a wife and children, but without being responsible for them! (289)

When Concepción was a year old, I had to wean her because I was pregnant with Violeta. (295)

That year I went to Chalma (religious pilgrimage) for the first time. (314)

When my time drew near, my father told me to quit my job and move to the Casa Grande. Delila no longer lived there because she was pregnant again and was ashamed of the neighbors and my brothers and sisters. (318)

Table 8: Consequential Identity Claims (selected), Marta Sánchez Text

When it came to my father, I never interfered. I was a spectator, just listening and watching, and keeping my mouth shut. I never felt free to say to my father, "Just think, so and so says that ... " I was afraid that would get angry and hit me. In his presence, I always trembled a bit and was careful how I spoke. (137)

I really didn't miss my mother until I went to school. On Mother's Day when all the children made presents to give to their mothers, I was left with my gift in my hand. Mother's Day was the saddest day in the year for me. The older I grew the more I needed my mother. (138)

I was thirteen when I began to go with Crispín. From that time on, my fears, scares, chases and beatings began. My brothers, especially Roberto, were always watching me. My *papá*, who had never before hit beat me three times, once with a whip and twice with a strap, because he saw me talking to Crispín. (149)

My father didn't speak to me for a month, and treated me badly. I felt terrible and was ashamed to look him in the face. I had been his favorite and couldn't take my punishment. ... I asked him to forgive and he said, "Don't be a fool. I am your father and will never abandon you." After that I felt better. (154)

A week later, I went to live with Crispín in his mother's house, once and for all. He no longer spoke of us getting married, but I was terribly afraid of becoming pregnant while I was still living at home. Again, my poor (father) had to run around looking for me, because I was afraid to tell him where I was. (154)

Crispín and I began to have difficulties all over again, partly because of my sister-in-law and partly because he had taken up with a woman again. He didn't hit me as much in that house because he knew Sofía would hear hear us. He hit me only when we were alone, but this time I'd hit him right back, for the sake of my daughter. Why should I let him kill me? They would be the ones to suffer. (297)

All my life I had wanted to go (to Chalma) with my aunt and would cry when my father wouldn't allow me. ... When I married, it was Crispín who wouldn't let me go. (314)

I talked like that ever since the time I had tangled with him on the street, when we beat each other. You might say that was the day I freed myself from him. From then on I said what I had to say with strong words. (444)

With Baltasar I was no longer sad. I had more courage because I saw that at least I received more respect from people. Before, I led the disagreeable life of an unmarried mother, with even my own brothers and sisters calling me a whore and marrying me off to any man that came along. (461)

Since that argument, I lost a lot of my respect for him. Before that, I had never used bad words in his presence and I wasn't as vulgar with him as I am now. He thinks I am real depraved, the way I talk, but if one doesn't speak up, one is left behind. (466)

Table 9: Summative Identity Claims (selected), Marta Sánchez Text

Manuel never acted like a father because he wasn't obliged to. He knew that even if he didn't work or give expense money, he could always count on eating and having a place to sleep in my father's house. If my father had made us work when we were small, if he had said, "If you don't work, you don't eat," we all would have been different. (453)

I don't have the patience to answer the children's questions. ... I shut them up them right away. I am becoming more like my *papá*. ... My poor little girls are becoming withdrawn, the way Consuelo used to be, because I don't hold them or embrace them anymore. (472)

I go to the Merced Market everyday, to see my father's face. When things go bad for him and he is sad, I am sad. ... While my father lives, I have nothing to cry about. After that, yes, the world will end for me. (475)

I have never been so afraid of a birth as of this one. ... I feel as though I am going to die, the way my mother did. I'm not worried about myself, but about my children. If it hadn't been for them, I would have wiped myself off the map long ago. (476)

I say the thing that pains me most is that I broke up my home with Crispín. Perhaps, if I had waited a bit, Crispín and I might have gotten together again. I hurt myself and the children by joining up with Baltasar. I was used to being alone, so I should have remained that way. (476)

Of all the women I know, my aunt Guadalupe was the one I most admired. She was the kind of woman who knew how to suffer! I wish I had her courage to go on, to never let trouble conquer and to be resigned to whatever happens. (312)

I should have been able to develop a shell and be like other women who do not pay attention to what their husbands do outside the house, especially since mine was trying to get me back. (448)

Table 10: Comparative Identity Claims (selected), Manuel Sánchez Text

Consuelo says that I didn't love Paula, that I never showed her affection. But it is that I followed my father's school, because even when was he was living happily with Elena he never permitted himself to show affection for her in our presence. I was the same way with Paula. (188)

I was, well, careful, but Roberto was like a volcano; you just touched him and he exploded. If anything wrong took place, if something was missing, whatever it was, Roberto was blamed. (30)

(When) my mother noticed that I was jealous (she) said "No, no, son, you know you are my favorite. Don't believe anything else." It was true, because when she went out selling she always, always, took me with her. (23)

Alberto was a year or two older than I, but he had had a lot more experience especially with women. ... He life was harder than mine, because his mother had died when he was a baby, and his father had abandoned him. (36)

When it came to sports, to physical strength, I was first in my class. I have always been a good runner and in the sixth grade I came in first in the 100 and 200 meter races. (35)

We didn't have bad characters like some gangs. There was one bunch in our neighborhood that was known for stealing money from drunks, and for taking marijuana. (39)

Life around here is raw, it is more real, than among people with money. ... People with more means can afford the luxury of allowing their sons to live in world of fantasy, of only seeing the good side of life, of protecting them from bad companions and obscene language, of not hurting their sensibilities by witnessing scenes of brutality, of having all their expenses paid for them. But they live with their eyes closed and are naive in every sense of the word. (38)

Whenever you (men?) hate the world it is practically always because of something a woman has done to you, or because a friend has betrayed you. The women are the ones who go most against the rich, possibly because women feel privations more than men, don't you think? (33)

To me, one's destiny is controlled by a mysterious hand that moves all things. Only for the select, do things turn out as planned; to those of us who are born to be *tamale* eaters, heaven sends only *tamales*. (171)

The thing is, there is no equality here. Everything is disproportionate. The rich are very rich, and the poor are infamously poor....If the rich people knew how the poor managed to exist, it would seem like a miracle to them. (340)

Thinking of Mexico's system of life, I am very disappointed. It is just that when I was living in the United States, I could see that people were glad when a friend got ahead, you know what I mean? ... Instead of trying to raise a person's morale, our motto here is, "If I am a worm, I'm going to make the next fellow feel like a louse." (339)

Table 11: Sequential Identity Claims (selected), Manuel Sánchez Text

I was eight years old when my mother died. (17)

I was six years old when Consuela was born. (23)

(The year I started school) I met my friend Santiago. He was my guardian angel in school, and used to protect me. (24)

I stayed in that school until the fourth grade. (25)

By the time I was in the fifth grade, I had my first girlfriend. She was Elisa, the sister of my friend Adán. (31)

When I was about thirteen, some of the older fellows in the gang wanted to take me to a whore house on Tintero Street. (39)

I began to get wind of the existence of my half-sisters, Antonia and Marielena, when I was about fourteen. Before that I had no idea my father had another wife and other children. (46)

It was about that time that I learned to play cards, to gamble. (51)

Well, she made up her mind, and instead of going home, she came with me. That's how we got married: I had just turned fifteen and she was nineteen. (59)

When Paula was five months pregnant, Raúl Alvarez asked me to come to work in his lamp shop. (165)

When the baby was about three months old, we went to visit my father. (167)

Our fourth child, Conchita, was born soon after we moved in. (182)

I [illegible] (in Mexico) at about six in the morning, on the twentieth of November, the anniversary of the Mexican Revolution. I remember because there was a parade that day. (341)

Table 12: Consequential Identity Claims (selected), Manuel Sánchez Text

We were a very happy family while (my mother) was alive. After she died, there were no more parties at our house and no one ever came to visit us. (19)

My father was very, very happy when his daughters were born. He really would have preferred to have had only girls. He was always more affectionate to my sisters, but I didn't notice it so much then because while my mother was alive my *papá* still loved me. (23)

Well, after we buried (Elena), my father's attitude toward us became more bitter and gruff. His grudge against us grew bigger, he always blamed us that he couldn't live happily with her. Life at home became worse and I spent more and more time out of the house. (48)

At the end of the school year they handed me my flunk notice. ... After that, I lost interest in my studies. (35)

(My employer said) "All I can give you is 100 *pesos*, take it or leave it!" Well, I had to take the money, but that is when I began to hate to work for a boss. (51)

Graciela became my *novia* (girlfriend), all right, just as soon as I started to work. (51)

A wife needs to be watched. If you don't act that way toward a Mexican woman she begins to take the reins in her own hands and runs wild. ... So I have always dominated my women, in order to feel more manly and to make them feel it too. (160)

Then I did'nt know how to ask my father to lend me five pesos. Five pesos, and I couldn't find the words to ask him! But he understood what was on my mind. ... I almost felt like crying because I felt I wasn't man enough to make a living. At that moment, I began to hate humanity because I felt I was incapable. (165)

I really felt like somebody in California! Everybody treated me well, both in the hospital and on the job. (338)

Yes, I was happy to be back, but after having been to the United States, everything looked very poor and dirty to me. I realized what poverty we lived in, and when I saw the market, with oranges and tomatoes piled on newspapers on the ground, I felt so sad, I wanted to go right back to the U.S.A. (343)

I had the reputation of being a hard worker, and I had come back with the intention of keeping it up. But from the first night I felt disillusioned because my father let me sleep on a burlap bag on the kitchen floor, the way I had always done. I had expected different treatment, right? (343)

Since I've been working at Tepito, some people have a poor opinion of me. They think that everything in the market is stolen goods. (350)

Table 13: Summative Identity Claims (selected), Manuel Sánchez Text

I used to envy my schoolmates who could buy lollipops or tidbits. Well, you always feel bad then. But *papá* couldn't make enough for so many of us. I understand this now. (31)

After my graduation, I told my father I was through with studying and wanted to go to work. It was the biggest mistake of my life, but I didn't know it then. ... My father was pretty sore because I didn't want to study for a career. I think if he had talked it over with me like a good friend, I might have continued school. (50)

I loved my wife even more after she was dead, just as my father loved my mother more. I believe my life is a repetition of my father's, except that he took care of his four children, and I didn't. (189)

My life has been so sterile, so useless, so unhappy, that, *por Dios*, sometimes I wish I could die. I am the kind of guy who leaves nothing behind, no trace of themselves in the world, like a worm dragging itself across the earth. I bring no good to anybody; a bad son, a bad husband, a bad father, bad everything. (370)

Looking back over my life, I see that it was based on a chain of errors. I have treated it frivolously. ... But now I feel a little more self-confident and more reasonable. I would be proud to set up a modest home, to educate my children, to save my money. I would like to leave something behind me, so that when I die everyone will remember me with affection. ... I know if I am to be constructive I shall have to fight against myself. More than anything, I must win in the fight against myself! (370)

In sorting out the different levels of the life histories, it was observed that the four types of identity claims (comparative, sequential, consequential, and summative) were dispersed more or less uniformly throughout the texts. The only exceptions to this pattern were a tendency for comparative claims to be more prominent in the opening pages and a corresponding tendency for summative claims to be more prominent in the closing pages, as one might expect. In the descriptions of their childhoods both Marta and Manuel focus on comparative claims within their family, particularly between siblings. Identity in the earlier life stages may be founded more on comparative than temporal cognitions. (Alternatively, it may be necessary to establish the primary comparative identity claims first as a foundation for the more extensive temporal claims. In other words, the slight emphasis given to comparative claims in the early stages of the life account may be a function of the social process of narration.) That interpretive statements appear toward the end of the texts is not surprizing. It is noteworthy, however, that such statements are also found throughout each text. As indicated above, this pattern suggests that the subjects were shifting in and out of different temporal orientations throughout the course of the narration.

Since the identity claims reflecting each of the four different levels of the life narrative were interspersed throughout the text, one function of the coding and sorting procedures was to factor out these distinct levels. This process in turn permitted a clearer view of the variation between and within the four levels. Nonetheless, even after separation, the original location of each statement was retained in the data base to permit further checks for dependence of levels of narration upon stages in the life course.

This practise would also enable a reader to assess the reliability of the earlier transcriptions.

On a final note, the pattern in which the four kinds of claim were found suggests that the subjects were taking temporal orientations in a manner somewhat uncorrelated with the manifest temporal organization of the final text. An effect of identity claim analysis, then, is to challenge the narrative sequence apparent in a surface reading of the autobiography. In my view, the subjective bases for identity claims, including temporal claims, exist atemporally or, more correctly, at once in memory. Regardless of the context of recall, it is possible for memories to be reported in anecdotal form, along with their underlying identity claims, in an order quite different the from of occurrence of the actual events.

C. Narrative Levels

The four types of identity claim that emerged as a result of these analytic procedures may be viewed in two ways: separately as self-descriptions or together as an 'identity narrative' of the whole text comprised of three related levels.

The former view can be more readily understood if one imagines that each type of claim is a different and, to some extent, an independent way of representing the self. First, a subject could describe his/her self by only making comparative claims, without any explicit reference to a temporal dimension. Second, a subject could describe his/her self by only making sequential claims grounded in material events. Third, a subject could describe his/her

self by only presenting consequential claims of their life including causal attribution and pattern recognition. Finally, a subject could describe his/her self by only presenting interpretive claims that reflected upon his/her life as a whole. It may be the case, however, that the comparative and sequential claims facilitate the presentation of consequential and summative claims. Similarly, summative claims may be dependent upon consequential claims being presented earlier in the narrative process.

More significant, however, is the realization that the descriptive levels of the life history text may also be viewed together as coherent identity narrative. Whereas a vertical reading of the separate levels as discrete claim types provides a paradigmatic view of the text, a horizontal reading across the narrative levels gives a syntagmatic view of the text.

The comparative and sequential claims together present the conditions of existence, a mapping of the social world across time and community. I contend that this 'map' establishes basic reference individuals, groups and times upon which more complex levels of identification are constructed. Together these claims form a grid of social and temporal reference points that serve as the internal context for the autobiography. I would also infer that this grid of textual referents reflects, in part, the referents used by the subject in the course of identity production within and beyond the autobiographical project.

The consequential claims present the relations between human agency and the conditions of existence. According to Ricœur, narrative is always based on a mimetic representation of human action in response to social

and cultural aporias. Beyond being significant events recalled in the life of the individual, as reflected in Denzin's concept of epiphany, the sequential claims characterize the subject as an actor in light of the challenges and opportunities of the life world.

Finally, the summative claims function to resolve the tension arising in the narrative. It is important to note that the tension resolved is not social or cultural; rather, it is a narrative tension. It is a tension built up in the process of telling and following the narrative that is captured in the question implicitly asked by teller and follower alike: 'who has/can the subject become now?.' Whereas the range of comparative, sequential and consequential claims suggests the identities deemed possible within the life world, the summative claims question alternative or potential identities. This is the level of critical self-reflection.

Thus, while the four types of identity claims have been observed in the texts, their empirical range can be recast in terms of three primary narrative levels: social world referents, self-world relations, and self-reflection (Table 14). These levels of autobiographical narrative correspond to the moments given in Ricœur's general narrative model: initial conditions, tension, and resolution.

Table 14: Identity Claims and Narrative Levels

Comparative Claims and Sequential Claims	=	Social World Referents
Consequential Claims	=	Self - World Relations
Summative Claims	=	Self - Reflection

Notes

1 From an ethnomethodological perspective, it is noteworthy that the complex temporal shift from the level of the episode to the level of the anecdote is typically signaled by the simple phrases 'once' or 'one time.'

2 While the complete transcripts have been archived, they cannot be accessed for several more years. It is my understanding that this restriction is part of the agreement to protect the identity of the informants.

Chapter VII - Comparative Analysis

This chapter takes the primary structures conceptualized above as the starting point for exploring in a comparative context, the method of identity claim analysis with the selected texts. The guidelines for this exploration gravitate around a concern with achieving a continuity between the presuppositions of Ricœur's framework, the interests of critical theory and the empirical features of these life histories.

A. Distribution of Identity Claims

To this point it has been argued that the fundamental descriptive operation in these life history texts is manifest in the various identity claims. Specifically, it has been contended that the text, as a work of self-description, finds its principal organization in the sets of claims of that run through each text. On the basis of this understanding I will now go on to consider how a paradigmatic analysis and a complementary syntagmatic analysis may be conducted for each text. Whereas a paradigmatic analysis will work towards bringing out the range of self-descriptive operations in a text, a syntagmatic analysis will work towards grasping how different operations combine to give the narrative structure of a text.

The strategy in a syntagmatic or horizontal reading is to first discern the spheres of experience within which the life is represented, and, second, to ask which of these spheres are used in conjunction with any or all of the three narrative level. The importance of discerning such spheres of experi-

ence can be traced to both Ricœur and Sartre. Ricœur has reminded us of the need to complete a textual interpretation by returning it to the world of the subject. Under the present framework, this world is the range of socio-cultural contexts meaningfully constructed and represented by the subject in the autobiographical text.

In this sense, I am wanting to ask what aspects of the social world are presented as relevant contexts for the separate narrative levels of the account as well as for the account as a whole. Sartre's discussion of the progressive-regressive method demonstrates the centrality of spheres of experience or 'mediations.' An understanding of the role of various mediations, such as the family and other primary groups, in the life of an individual is essential to grasping the dialectic of agency and structure in that life.

The formal representations arising from this reading of the three selected autobiographies is provided in Tables 15 - 17. The presence of a '•' in each of the tables indicates the recognition of at least one identity claim of a given narrative level and social mediation. Thus, the concern in these tables is with the distribution of identity claims across levels and mediations, and not with their relative frequency. The mediations have been set out in a manner that captures, in my judgement, the predominant clustering of claims in each text. (The strategy of identity claim analysis does not include formal rules for selecting relevant social contexts and relationships.)

1. Maria Campbell Text

Within the social world referents of the Maria Campbell text the main emphasis is placed upon social comparisons rather than on sequential identity claims, although the latter are certainly present in terms of births, deaths, sexual development, and place changes. The Campbell text is notable, relative to the Sánchez texts, to the extent comparisons with others take place at the collective level. Campbell compares her people, the Metis, with Indian people and with non-natives. These comparisons are generally favourable to her own people; however, she does not refrain from noting the ways in which the Métis had not, in her view, worked to counter their impoverished condition. Comparisons based on gender are also found in the text. Campbell compares Métis women, such as herself, with Indian women; the latter being characterized as less assertive. Later in the text a comparison is found between Campbell and other women 'like herself' during her stay in a psychiatric ward. The similarities and contrasts drawn out of the collective level of referents anticipate a reconciliatory attitude expressed in the level of self-reflection.

At the individual level comparisons are found between Campbell and other members of her family, particularly her brothers, and between friends she meets throughout her life, both male and female as well as native and non-native. The discussion of significant individuals in her life, however, is largely deferred to the level of relations as manifest in consequential identity claims.

Within the set of consequential identity claims, emphasis is given first to the system of institutions that act as constraints on her life and more generally the lives of native people living in a non-native dominated society. Secondly, and equally significant, emphasis is given to the actions of herself in overcoming such constraints, and to the role of other individuals, particularly her grandmother (Cheechum) and various women friends, as resources in meeting the challenges of her life. Thus, it is within this narrative level that Maria makes claims about individuals, herself included, as enabling agents relative to the constraints presented by the white community and its institutions.

Three aspects of the self-world level require elaboration at this point. First, some consequential claims express the negative impact of some of the men in Maria's life. These claims, however, are placed in the context of a society distorted by racial prejudice and the abuse of political and judicial position. Thus the negative conduct of males in her life is portrayed in relation to social pathologies arising from the system, such as poverty and the turn to substance abuse for which individuals are not held directly accountable. Second, a number of consequential identity claims, that seem to be important in anticipating the self reflective level, describe subjective rather than material transformations in Campbell's life. These consequential claims make reference to how certain life experiences with individuals, events, or places lead to either a decline or increase in her sense of self worth. The instances of increased self worth are often associated with an acquired realization about the order of the world presently and in her past.

And third, it is significant that some consequential identity claims point to the repetition of causal events, in terms of resources or constraints, within the author's life and the lives of those individuals and communities identified with at the collective level. Such statements bear testament to an ability, not only to conceptualize the life world in causal or structural terms, but also to generalize the recognition of these relations to other times and people. This ability, it will be argued later, is fundamental to a critical subjectivity. Thus the self-world level of Campbell's autobiography offers a series of claims about a self struggling with and, to a significant extent, transcending the limiting features of her world. This is the dominant level of the Campbell text.

Finally, within the reflective level of the Campbell text, an interpretation of self is found involving an integration of identity claims about the past into the autobiographical present. The low frequency of these claims in the text relative to the other kinds of claims discussed should not be taken as an indicator of insignificance; rather, these few statements are very much the 'pole of attraction' for the entire narrative, to borrow Ricœur's phase. In a few summative statements Campbell pulls together her identity from across the past, the present, and into the future.

In this final narrative level Campbell claims to have recognized the common lot of natives and non-natives, men and women, against a system that lessens individuals and peoples. She claims to be someone who recognizes the commonality of forces in her life with those operating in the lives of significant others, particularly her father and other native activists. She

claims now to be someone who has transcended the bitterness and idealism of youth. Finally, she claims to be a person who is disillusioned, relative to the expectations of her childhood, while now having the social support and frame of mind to continue living toward her vision of a just world.

Now, turning to the syntagmatic analysis of this account, patterns of interest can be discerned that run across the three narrative levels of the life history. About fourteen principal spheres of experience or mediations, to use the language of Sartre, are found in Campbell's account (Table 15). These mediations include individual perspectives such as experiences in her childhood family, in her marriages, and in the drug culture of street life. Also included are collective perspectives such as the common experience of Métis people and women. These mediations range in scope from those involving relationships with significant individuals to those with households, communities and institutions. Virtually all of these mediations are evident in the social world referent level of the Campbell (and other) narratives. The important question is concerned with which mediations remain salient in the other two higher order levels of the text.

In the Campbell autobiography virtually all mediations evident in claims about referents are also evident in claims about relations between the author and her world. Another way of stating this pattern is to say that Campbell perceives structured or directed change in her life across the full range of her social world; that is, all such mediations in her life are open to reflexive analysis.

This comprehensive pattern changes, however, within the third level of self-reflection. Here we find that only certain mediations are apparently relevant to Campbell's final integration of self in the present. The salient mediations include her relationships with her father, friends, and grandmother. But most significant for viewing herself in terms of her life as a whole are her experiences as a woman with native activism, the Métis people, and the 'system.' The Campbell text and, by inference, her identity, are articulated primarily in terms of these aspects of her world in that they integrate these narrative levels. (The mediations not referenced in this level, even though they were relevant in the lower-order levels, include her relationships with her mother, siblings, school, church, local communities, husbands, and street culture.) Moreover, the integration of the text for the reader derives mainly from the continuity of at least some of the mediations across the narrative levels.

Related to this proposition is the idea that the reader's experience of directionality or momentum toward the reflective level of this text is dependent upon the comprehensive inclusion of mediations in the relations level. The structural and directed changes expressed by Campbell at this second level lead us to ask about how she will represent herself in the final interpretation. The final level resolves that tension for us, as readers, and the author, as reflexive subject. As well, the self-reflective claims tend to integrate not only the identity claims occurring across the first and second narrative levels, but also the mediations. In the course of making these self reflective claims Campbell bridges her experiences with friends, activism, family, and the institutional order. Thus the Campbell autobiography tends

toward displaying a continuity across both narrative levels and social world mediations. On a final note, the movement across narrative levels is not one restricted to separate mediations. On the contrary, each narrative level seems to provide a foundation for the next as a whole level, rather than as a discrete sub-plot.

2. Marta Sánchez Text

The account of Marta Sánchez can also be described in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic analyses. Within the referents levels, a wide range of social and temporal reference points are evident. In contrast to the Campbell text, Marta's autobiography involves more emphasis on sequential claims (temporal referents) than on consequential claims. Generally speaking, then, this second text works less toward the analysis of events in terms of constraints and resources, and more toward giving an image of the social world. Seemingly less important events are found, such as particular family conflicts, in addition to the major events used as temporal referents in the Campbell text, such as births and deaths. A greater use is made of constancy statements, that is, those statements which offer temporal referents by noting the ways things 'always' or 'never' were in the life world.

Turning to the other aspects of the referents in Marta's text, social comparisons occur largely at the individual level. Marta compares herself systematically with each sibling, male and female. (Comparisons with her father are deferred until the reflective level. Her mother died when Marta was still an infant.) While she compares herself to some of her female

friends, a greater emphasis is place on comparisons with her two husbands, Crispin and Baltasar. Some limited comparisons are made at the collective level between Marta's *barrio* and other communities. The main collective comparisons take place between men and women in general and between Mexican and American lifestyles.

The self-world relations level of Marta's text is not nearly as developed as that found in the Campbell text. Generally, consequential identity claims are found that present her father, husbands, and other family situations as determinist forces in her life. It should be noted, however, that with respect to her husbands, Marta places more emphasis on causal attribution (self-world relations) than on the lower-order social world referents. In other words, Marta presents her husbands even more as resources and constraints in her life, than as referent individuals in her world. Moreover, within claims about these relationships, some evidence is found that Marta views herself as a force with which others must contend. The role of her father in this regard, however, remains one of complete authority and reverence.

Relative to the Campbell text, Marta's text claims less in the order of subjective transformations. The claims found in the text range from her becoming despaired as a result of her marital and economic situations, on the one hand, and her gaining courage from the respect given to her by other people. Again in contrast to the Campbell text, little evidence is found that her women friends or relatives are positive resources in her life. In fact it is the same males who constrain her existence, her father and her husbands, that Marta claims dependence upon for material and emotional support. In common with the Campbell text, however, some recognition of patterns

across her life can be discerned within Marta's consequential claims. These pattern recognition statements include references to her father having to help again, her husband disallowing her to partake in religious pilgrimages as her father had when she was younger, and her repeated claims of despair over the conditions of her life.

The reflective level of Marta's autobiography is considerably different from that found in Maria Campbell's text. Here, little is found in the way of realization or insights into her life as a whole, beyond a generalized sense of despair and regret. Marta only recognizes the continuing decline of her life on the future horizon. After reviewing her life she concludes that she has become more like her father in the way she has alienated her own children. Finally, a form of self interpretation emerges in the reflective level of Marta's account that has no parallel in the Campbell text. Marta claims that had she, as an individual woman, been more resigned to past conditions, then her life might have been easier to endure in the present. Thus, in her own final interpretation Marta finds herself at fault for her lot, rather than any of the individuals who have been constraints in her life according to her own consequential claims.

Marta's non-critical orientation becomes clearer through a syntagmatic view of her text. As with the Campbell text, various mediations can be discerned, given relevance by their reference in Marta's autobiography (Table 16). A most striking difference between the two texts is evident in the range of mediations. The life world variation displayed in the Marta Sánchez text is far more restricted than that displayed in the Campbell text. Marta's entire life occurs within the slum areas of Mexico City, except for a brief stay in

Acapulco. Similarly, Marta reports no contact with individuals from other social classes, cultures, or ethnic groups. Her mediations include, at the individual level, primarily relationships with family members, various men, and her own children. Within the context of her family the relationship with her father is the salient one. In addition to these mediations references are found to her peers, work, and church experience. At the collective level Marta refers to the experience of her gang, local community, and Mexican women in general.

By examining the extent to which the mediations are evident across the three levels of this text, it becomes clear, as with the Campbell text, that virtually all mediations are relevant to the laying out of referents. In contrast to the Campbell text, however, Marta's account displays a more selective focusing of mediations in the relations level. Marta's account involves consequential identity claims within the context of primary relationship, including family, marriage, friendships, and work, with the greater emphasis being given to familial and marital relationships. Shifting to the level of self-reflection, a further specification of relevant contexts is to found. Marta, in the final interpretation, appears to define herself primarily in terms of her relationships with men, including her father and husbands, and with her own children. In addition, summative identity claims are found that speak to her regret over not being sufficiently resigned to the difficulties of life. The ego has become a mediation itself to be contended with in the world.

In summary, this text lacks direction in that the reader is not keenly drawn towards discovering the final self-interpretation. This occurs, I con-

tend, because there is a lack of text work in the narrative level describing relations in terms of consequential identity claims. In other words, the expectation that Marta will have an integrated final interpretation is less because her autobiography operates mainly at the level of referents. Without displaying the self in tension with the social world, little basis exists for Marta to interpret herself as an agent, or for us to expect such an interpretation. Finally, a lack of integration across mediations is suggested by the focused articulation of the text within only a limited range of social contexts.

3. Manuel Sánchez Text

The pattern found in the analyses of Marta's text anticipates much of what is discerned in the text of her brother, Manuel. Nevertheless, some notable differences can be discerned. Beginning with a paradigmatic analysis of the referents in Manuel's text, a distinct pattern with reference to women and children may be discerned. Manuel always uses reference to women and children, within this first narrative level, as temporal referents and never in comparison to his own self. Manuel makes an extensive series of identity claims in which he compares himself with his father, his brother (Roberto), and his closest friend. His relations with women and children are restricted to functioning as milestones in his life mainly in terms of sexual adventures and childbirth.

Manuel's text is different from Marta's in the emphasis given over to friends. Manuel compares himself over and over with his friend Alberto. Almost without exception, Alberto is not mentioned in terms of temporal

referents. Manuel's text also differs from that of his sister in its greater display of referents at the collective level, and particularly with respect to class differences. Like Marta, Manuel makes some comparisons between the Mexican and American way of life, although his are informed by his work experience in California. As with his sister, the identity claims found in this text for the most part fall into the referents level.

Consistent with the text of his sister, Manuel's conceptualization of self world relations is found to be much less developed than the expression of referents. And, as with the previous text, the reader's sense of directionality is correspondingly low. Within the self world relations level of this text, consequential identity claims emerge that almost exclusively describe Manuel as a passive actor relative to other agents or circumstances in his life. Manuel never describes himself in terms of his own agency, except in a few references to fighting and his relations with women. Some of Manuel's consequential claims suggest subjective transformations, including (1) his questioning the church after reading the bible, (2) his sense of degradation after seeing how members of the upper class lived, (3) his sense of self worth and his realization of Mexican poverty while in the United States, and (4) his subsequent disillusionment after returning to live at his father's house in Mexico City. While this text does show some evidence of positive shifts in consciousness, Manuel's account, like that of his sister, is ultimately one of increasing despair in his relation to the social world.

More generally, both Manuel and Marta tend to describe the elements of their world as a series of reference persons and events, rather than as a system of constraints and resources. On this point, the texts of Manuel and

Marta are most distinct from that of Maria Campbell. Another point, however, differentiates Manuel from both of the women. Whereas Marta Sánchez and Maria Campbell each recognize patterns of repeated resources or constraints across their lives with the consequential identity claims, nothing in the analysis suggests that Manuel takes a similar turn in his consciousness.

With respect to the self reflective level of the Manuel Sánchez text, a pattern is found similar to that of his sister and quite dissimilar to that of the Campbell text. Manuel's self-reflective identity claims cluster around a common theme of regret over how he, as an individual, had conducted his life. In the text of Marta the self or ego is in the final analysis the source of inadequacy specifically in terms of a lack of resignation. In the text of Manuel the personal inadequacy, is expressed in terms of a lack of will. This orientation is particularly clear in two statements. In the first Manuel claims that "looking back I can see that my life was a chain of errors" (Lewis, 1963[a]: 370). In the second Manuel completes this interpretation by claiming that "more than anything I must win the fight against myself" (Lewis, 1963[a]: 370).

With a syntagmatic analysis of this text, a range of mediations may be discerned that are generally the same as those found in the Marta Sánchez text (Table 17). The main difference between the mediations evident in the two Sánchez texts is that Manuel's life has included a period of stay in California where he was employed as a farm worker. While Marta discusses her stay in Acapulco, it is not given the same emphasis as Manuel's odyssey to the United States and back.

The significance of this venture for Manuel, while somewhat limited, is evident in the relevance it has across the first and second narrative levels. As with Marta all of the mediations discussed in his text are relevant in the laying out of referents. Unlike Marta, however, Manuel carries over all of these mediations to the level of self world relations, except for his collective experience as a gang member and as a male. Amongst those mediations that continue to be relevant at the second level are both individual and collective orientations, the latter notably including his experience as a member of the lower class in Mexican society. Thus, overall Manuel displays a broader range of mediations in terms of consequential identity claims than Marta, although still not as extensive a range as found in the Maria Campbell text. In other words, relative to his sister, Manuel displays a somewhat greater capacity to conceptualize relations between himself and his world.

Finally, with regard to the reflective level of this text, a continual extension of several mediations is evident, but the main emphasis is given to Manuel's experience with his father, poverty, and his struggle with his own will. Thus the most articulated mediations across the three narrative levels concern his father and his material condition; with respect to both of these he tends toward identifying himself as personally inadequate.[1] At one point, Manuel claims that his life has been a repetition of his father's life. (This is a single instance in which he recognizes patterns more commonly found in the texts of Maria and Marta.) Yet even in this potentially insightful claim Manuel concludes that he is inadequate. "My life has repeated my papa's, except that he cared for his children." As well, the potential for at-

taining critical realizations is not fulfilled within his experience as a member of the impoverished class. Even though some consciousness of class differences and relations is evident in the earlier two narrative levels, in the final level of self reflection Manuel, like Marta, focuses on the inadequacy of himself rather than on the conditions of his world.

In summary, the two Sánchez texts work away from the articulation of identity in emancipatory terms, in contrast to the direction of the Campbell text. In the concluding chapter the theoretical and critical implications of this general method and these specific readings will be drawn out more completely.

Table 15: Distribution of Maria Campbell Identity Claims

Social Mediations	Social World Referents	Self-World Relations	Self-Reflection
1. Mother/Siblings	•	•	
2. Own Children	•	•	
3. School	•	•	
4. Church	•	•	
5. Community	•	•	
6. Husband/Men	•	•	
7. Substance Abuse	•	•	
8. Grandmother	•	•	•
9. Father	•	•	•
10. Friends	•	•	•
11. Activists	•	•	•
12. System/Institutions	•	•	•
13. Métis People	•	•	•
14. Gender			•

Table 16: Distribution of Marta Sánchez Identity Claims

Social Mediations	Social World Referents	Self-World Relations	Self-Reflection
1. Community	•		
2. School	•		
3. Church	•		
4. Gender	•		
5. Country	•		
6. Gang	•		
7. Mother/Siblings	•	•	
8. Peers	•	•	
9. Work	•	•	
10. Husbands/Men	•	•	•
11. Father	•	•	•
12. Own Children	•	•	•
13. Ego (resignation)			•

Table 17: Distribution of Manuel Sánchez Identity Claims

Social Mediations	Social World Referents	Self-World Relations	Self-Reflection
1. Gender	•		
2. Gang	•		
3. Country	•	•	
4. Church	•	•	
5. Friend (Alberto)	•	•	
6. Peers	•	•	
7. Class	•	•	•
8. Father	•	•	•
9. School	•	•	•
10. Work	•	•	•
11. Mother/Siblings	•	•	•
12. Wives/Women	•	•	•
13. Own Children	•	•	•
14. Ego (will)			•

B. Summary

The strategy of identity claim analysis can be summarized by referring to the following procedural steps applied to a given life history text.[2]

1. Read the whole text to grasp the range of identity claims -- comparative, sequential, consequential, or summative -- and the overall direction displayed by the narrative.
2. Read through the text again denoting each identity claim.
3. Transcribe each statement, without paraphrase if possible, along with a record of its location in the original text (i.e. page and line number).
4. Code the statements with respect to the kind of identity claim they manifest: comparative, sequential, consequential, or summative.
5. Sort the statements vertically into social world referent, self-world relation and self-reflective levels of narration.
6. Sort the statements horizontally into relevant mediations or spheres of experience.
7. Conduct a paradigmatic or vertical reading within the three narrative levels and across the range of mediations.
8. Conduct a syntagmatic or horizontal reading within the mediations and across the three narrative levels, discerning levels of articulation and integration.

The function of analysis is to render an interpretable representation of the text. The depth interpretation flows from this analytic representation and seeks to discern evidence of sociocultural discourses of various orders.

The potential theoretical value of this procedure can be grasped first by considering the vertical analysis of the three narrative levels: referents, relations, and self-reflection. The value of this procedure for a critical theory perspective, however, is more evident at the level of the identity narrative. The procedures described here are consistent with a Ricœurian methodological framework, and they appear to give voice to the essential levels of the life history texts examined in the study. It remains, however, to assess the method in terms of the extent to which it enables argument about and elaboration of relevant theoretical positions.

Before concluding this chapter, I want to raise three general point of interpretation. First, the given sets of identity claims reflect, within the text, the three levels of narrative. The presence of an immanent narrative suggests the possibility of articulated self-narration. In this sense, text displays the potential consciousness of the subject (Goldmann, 1977). While the final connections may not be made, the narrative levels contain the elements of self-knowledge necessary to produce a coherent autobiography. Moreover, reading across the three levels, a relatively distinct narrative movement emerges at certain mediations. Life histories may vary in their degree of internal articulation, and such articulation, in my view, is a manifestation of actual as opposed to potential consciousness. (In the following chapter I will argue that the recognition of this latent narrative provides a continuity with the concerns of critical social theory.)

Second, I want to be clear regarding the difference between narrative identity and its expression in a linear narrative text. Whereas the conventions of narration work to constrain the expression of self, the temporal

levels of narrative identity co-exist in consciousness. In the course of the life history interview the narration is further shaped by the researcher's line and sequence of questioning. The problematic of the method being developed here is one of explicating the outline of narrative identity through a structural analysis of the text.

Finally, it has been observed that the identity claims, around which the work of the text gravitates, can be grouped in levels that correspond to the levels of narration at the centre of Ricœur's discourse on time and narrative. These same levels may also be viewed as parallel to the three levels of Ricœur's model of interpretation. Specifically, I am suggesting three points of continuity between the observed claims and the moments of textual interpretation. First, the narrative level consisting of social and temporal referents in the life world can be viewed as a surface interpretation. Second, the narrative level consisting of consequential claims regarding relations can be viewed as an explanatory or explicative level. Finally, the narrative level consisting of summative claims can be viewed as a depth interpretation in the context of self-reflection. Thus, the autobiographical narrative is a movement of self-interpretation consistent with Ricœur's general framework in terms of both his theory of interpretation and his theory of narrative identification.

Notes

1 These orientations are corroborated to some extent in Paz (1985), an insightful discussion on the tensions common to Mexican national character.

2 On a technical note, the coding and sorting procedures involved in identity claim analysis can, in principle, be handled quite readily on any microcomputer spreadsheet that will accept textual entries. For the particular analyses described in this study, I used MicroSoft Excel on a MacIntosh SE with a 20k hard drive.

Chapter VIII - Conclusion: Autobiography and Critical Social Inquiry

This concluding chapter attempts to demonstrate the theoretical value of identity claim analysis by applying the reconstruction of these texts to Lewis's culture of poverty thesis and to a feminist account of autobiography. The chapter will be primarily concerned to summarize the insights gained from the empirical application outlined above. It will go on pursue the implications of the Ricœurian framework for critical methods in sociology. Finally, this chapter will draw the dissertation to a close by discussing emergent issues and projects that, while beyond the objectives of the present study, still warrant further investigation.

A. Theoretical Assessment

The assessment of theoretical warrant can be conducted by considering hypotheses generated from two distinct orientations: the culture of poverty thesis (Lewis, 1963[b]) and an interpretation of women's autobiography (Jelinek, 1980). The former theoretical perspective would claim to account for the commonality of the two Sánchez texts considered here, while the latter would claim to account for differences between the texts. Thus, especially with respect to Marta, these two theories are potentially in competition with one another. Both theoretical positions are the result of empirical generalizations based upon the examination of autobiographical texts.

The relation between the reconstructed texts and relevant theoretical perspectives can be examined in two basic ways: correspondence and elaboration. In both these relations the analyst may work from patterns evident

in the form or content of the text. From a Ricœurian view the focus will be upon how the narrative structure of the text reveals the world experienced by the subject. In other words, it will be primarily concerned with elaborating theoretical accounts of how the style of a particular text is associated with a sociocultural form of life.

Theories such as the 'culture of poverty' thesis contain propositions about the expected forms of subjectivity and self-reflection. These perspectives are not, however, themselves necessarily based on a narrative model of identity. This is less true of Jelinek's interpretation of women's autobiography than it is of Lewis's thesis. To the extent that this limitation is real, the question of correspondence is restricted to the separate structural levels of the text, rather than its overall narrative configuration.

1. The Culture of Poverty Reading

Lewis's theory is, to some extent, based on his own reading of the accounts taken from the members of the Sánchez family. The thesis has been summarized by Winter (1971: 17-28) as follows. (1) The poor are characterized by feelings of marginality, helplessness, dependence and inferiority. (2) These characteristics, among others, constitute a sub-culture that, once it comes into existence, tends to perpetuate itself. (3) This sub-culture is most typically found among the poor in stratified, highly individualized, capitalistic societies.

From a theoretical perspective the 'culture of poverty' thesis has been attacked for implying that the poor are responsible for their own poverty,

rather than linking their condition to structures of domination (Ogien, 1978). The thesis focuses upon the intentional meaning of the text as the subjective accounts of the informant. This is done to the relative exclusion of how the social world is constrained by the wider social system, and how the system is, in turn, dependent upon systems of discourse at work in the sociai world. In this respect, the inability to derive a depth-interpretation is endemic of an inability to take critical stance toward the world of the text.

Lewis has asserted, in the introduction to The Children of Sánchez (1963[a]), that the individual personality within a 'culture of poverty' will display a number of traits. Among these traits are the following: (1) a strong present time orientation, (2) a sense of resignation and fatalism, (3) a belief in male superiority, and (4) a martyr complex among women. I will now consider the extent to which these assertions from Lewis's original reading can be supported by the mode of depth interpretation developed in this study. In the course of this review I will also point to the structural aspects of the text which are relevant to the 'culture of poverty' thesis, but which were not reported by Lewis, presumably because these aspects were not made evident through his surface interpretation.

With respect to Lewis's claim of a strong present time orientation, an examination of the sequential statements for both Marta and Manuel suggests that the present is not a strong reference time. These individuals compared themselves extensively from one past time to another. If the claims displayed in the text suggest anything, then it is that their childhoods were major reference times. Moreover, an examination of the interpretive statements suggests that both individuals take the future to be a focal point

in time. Both speak of projects, resolutions and fears. By concentrating on their inability to defer material gain to the future, Lewis incorrectly negated the temporal dimension in the lives of his informants.

Similarly, Lewis's claim must be qualified that these individuals displayed the characteristics of fatalism and resignation. The text given by both individuals contained a significant analytic dimension in which causality was attributed to themselves and other individuals. It is correct, however, to say that they tended to perceive themselves as the objects of causation, rather than as agents of change. As to the question of resignation, both individuals displayed themselves in tension with, rather than resigned to, conditions of existence. In fact, Marta explicitly contrasts her-self with those women who are able to be resigned. Marta does recognize that resignation is a way for enduring life that is acceptable in her culture. Nevertheless, the direction indicated in her text is a movement away from resignation and toward defiance. With respect to the reported martyr complex among women, the analytic level of Marta's text suggests that she, at least, is able to value and assert her-self as against the oppressive males in her life.

Finally, the belief in male superiority among men in this class of Mexican society is well documented in the ethnographic record. It is further supported in the comparative claims of Manuel's text. Manuel systematically compares him-self with all the significant males in his life including his father, his brother and his friend. Almost without exception, Manuel's text is devoid of explicit comparisons with women. On my interpretation, Manuel's culture guides Manuel to a range of possible identifications all of which are relative to other males. By extension, female identifications are

not deemed possible for males within his social world. In contrast, Marta's account displays an openness to identify her-self with both females and males within the community. Moreover, when Marta compares males to females, on an individual or collective basis, it is rarely done in a manner that places the males in a more positive light.

The theoretical limitation of the culture of poverty thesis becomes more evident when applied to the Maria Campbell text. While Campbell came from a culture quite removed from that of the Sánchez family, she still experienced poverty and oppression within a stratified society. The Campbell text, in principle, could be used to assess Lewis's formulation. This text, however, serves more to contradict the culture of poverty thesis, or at least to point out its shortcomings. Specifically, the culture of poverty thesis is unable to suggest how Maria Campbell, or Manual and Marta Sánchez for that matter, are able to manifest emancipatory styles of identification at all in these autobiographical texts.

The present study has revealed evidence of awareness and realization about the world in the Campbell text, despite her having lived under social conditions that would have to characterize as impoverished. It is not possible under the culture of poverty theory to account for the emergence of her awareness and agency. One might be inclined to suggest that Campbell is a remarkable native woman, which is no doubt true; but this would be an inadequate sociological account. Thus, the present method is able to point toward the theoretical limitations of the culture of poverty thesis by offering a more systematic reading; in so doing it calls for a more adequate theoretical treatment of these kinds of texts. As I will discuss below, this implies a

movement toward critical theory in general, and the work of Freire in particular.

Moreover, in contrast to the method detailed in this study, Lewis's analysis would appear to have been inadequate for gauging emancipatory moments of consciousness in such accounts. Lewis's method, while apparently unintentional, emphasized the pathos of particular anecdotes; whereas, the method used in this study focused on the deeper and more general structure of identity claims. The effect of Lewis's treatment was to suggest a preferred reading of the Sánchez texts in which the audience is encouraged to experience the accounts in an sympathetic but not necessarily a critical manner. This preferred reading is suggested by reviews of the work published along with The Children of Sánchez. Turning to the reviews given on the back cover, an authoritative reviewer (Elizabeth Hardwick, New York Times Book Review) presents The Children of Sánchez as follows:

> In this book ... , the anthropologist Oscar Lewis has made something brilliant and of singular importance, a work of such unique concentration and sympathy that one hardly knows how to classify it all. It is all, every bit of it except for the introduction, spoken by the members of the Sánchez family. They tell their feelings, their lives, explain their nature, their actual existence with all the force and drama and seriousness of a large novel. The stories were taken down by tape-recorder, over a period of years, and under various circumstances. The result is a moving, strange tragedy, not an interview, a questionnaire or a sociological study (Lewis, 1963[a]).

All three of these texts could be interpreted in only this sympathetic manner, or they could also be interpreted from a critical perspective in keeping with Ricœur's theory of interpretation and as manifest in the present study. The risk of relying on the sympathetic interpretation is that, without a critical interest, it is easy to slip into what might be crudely referred to as a soap-opera form of reading (Green, 1983). In this orientation the reader celebrates their empathy with the subjects without critically appraising the world of the subjects. Documentary material thus becomes transformed into a commodity for mass consumption. The success of The Children of Sánchez in the North American market may have more to do with its presentation as such a commodity for soap-opera reading than with its potential for enabling a critical analysis of consciousness under conditions of poverty. The present study has been, in part, an effort to salvage such texts from commodification and to permit their critical interpretation.

2. Critical Theory and the Culture of Silence/Agency

The affinity suggested between the method of life history analysis developed in this study on the basis of Ricœur's framework, on the one hand, and the perspective of critical social theory, on the other hand, brings us back to the discussion in Chapter IV. In that discussion it was noted how a social science could be viewed as a theoretical approach that directs us to consider the narrative unity in social life. As Fay has claimed, critical theory attempts to construct a narrative depicting "the underlying principle of change at work in the emergence and disappearance of the numerous forms

of human life" (1987: 69). Moreover, a critical theory approach is concerned with the continuity, or lack thereof, between principles of change and our consciousness of such principles. In a manner consistent with Ricœur's hermeneutics, Fay argues that "it is by disclosing the narrative unity of a people's existence that their revolutionary potential is revealed to them" (Fay, 1987: 69, my emphasis). Similarly, Freire (1970[a]) has expressed a pedagogy that assumes that consciousness is always to be understood as a tension between the actual and the potential conditions of existence.

Consciousness for both Ricœur and Freire, as indicated earlier is not a state of unmediated awareness; it is an ongoing process of interpreting texts. The application of a critical interpretation in the previous chapter affirms the position that the text constituted through autobiographical reflection is paramount among the catalysts available to consciousness. By extension, life history tests provide at least a partial window to the subject's consciousness of the social world and of his/her self within that world. Following Fay, it provides a basis for understanding the manner in which the narrative unity of the social world, temporally and socially, has been subjectively disclosed in the act of autobiography.

In more concrete terms I want to ask how the specific life histories considered here speak to these concerns of critical social theory. By reconstructing each autobiographical text through a systematic ordering of identity claims, and by subsequently conducting both paradigmatic and syntagmatic analyses of the text, the present method is able to trace the narrative (dis)unity of consciousness about self and world. With respect to the paradigmatic analyses, I am first able to trace the relative awareness of indi-

viduals, communities, and classes as points of comparison or in relations of support and constraint. At the same time, I am able to gauge the extent to which the subject is conscious of self as an individual or a collectivity -- such as a member of an oppressed community or social class. Second, I am able through an examination of consequential claims to assess the extent to which the subject is conscious of self -- individual or collective -- as a passive object or an active subject. In this sense, the question of actual and potential consciousness agency may be considered relative to the limiting conditions of existence. Third, the manner, if any, by which subjects are conscious of continuities underlying their life may be discerend by examining the form of life reflective claims. It is in this third and final moment of paradigmatic analysis that their recognition of potentiality may be construed.

The syntagmatic analysis of the life history text, across the narrative levels and within the mediations of the life world, fulfills most completely the interests of a critical theory perspective. It is within the context of this analysis that I am able to describe the text -- and the consciousness it discloses -- in terms of two crucial properties: articulation and integration.

On the one hand, articulation is the quality of continuity across the three narrative levels with respect to particular mediations. In other words, it is the extent to which one or more spheres of social experience serve as a context for all three modes of self presentation: referential, relational, and reflective. From a critical theory perspective, the location of integration in the life history text points toward the mediation or set of mediations that are dominant in the consciousness of the subject, such as family or social

class. The level of articulation in the Campbell text, for example, is high relative to that found in the Sánchez texts. This is evident in the range of mediations used beyond the first narrative level and into the second. This represents a shift from viewing significant individuals and collectivities as only reference points in the social world to viewing these same others in causal relations with the self. One prerequisite of critical consciousness is the recognition that at least some mediations are relevant for comprehending one's life at all levels. Psychoanalytic theory, in this sense, directs this recognition to the mediation of infant-parent relationships.

On the other hand, integration is the quality of dependence or commonality between mediations within the reflective narrative level. In other words, it is the extent to which the subject links two or more relevant mediations in making any summative identity claims within the reflective narrative level. From a critical theory perspective, the overall integration in the life history text expresses the degree of narrative unity, to use Fay's term, at work in the process of consciousness. Again, the level of integration in the Campbell text is high relative to that found in either of the Sánchez texts. This is evident in every one of her reflective identity claims. Campbell discloses connections between activism, people, and relationship with her friends, father, and grandmother. A second prerequisite of critical consciousness is that the relevant mediations in one's life are intertwined. To use the therapeutic analogy again, psychoanalytic theory directs the recognition to the interdependence of childhood memories and adult relationships.

Thus, both articulation and integration are qualities of autobiography and consciousness pertinent to critical social inquiry. Both qualities are made available by the hermeneutic approach developed in this study. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that while these qualities may be present in a given life history text, they may be latent in the consciousness of the subject. This leads to Goldmann's concept of potential consciousness. In discussing the sociology of the novel Goldmann (1977), suggests the comprehension of the society evident in major literary works is indicative of the potential consciousness of the society in general, even though the population at the moment displays a less developed actual consciousness. In other words, the elements of consciousness displayed in the literary texts are, in principle, the range of insights capable of coming together as a coherent world view at that historical moment. By analogy, the textual qualities of articulation and integration may be viewed as potentially qualities of the subject's consciousness. The presence of the qualities at the textual level suggest what is potential in consciousness, such as the recognition of an oppressive relationship as central to the conditions of existence; but their presence does not confirm actual consciousness.

Before closing the discussion of continuities between the interpretive method and critical social inquiry, I want to return to the question of accounting for emancipatory potential within conditions of poverty. How is it that the Campbell text is able to display such a high degree of narrative articulation and integration despite the similarities between her life and the lives of the Sánchez family? This question cannot be answered here adequately, but some speculation is warranted. The answer may be found in a

comparison of the texts themselves. Two factors emerge that differentiate the Campbell text from the other two. First, Campbell claims in a number of statements the impact that certain individuals had on the manner in which she made sense of her own life. Not the least amongst these was the influence of her grandmother in prescribing a narrative model for Maria at an early age. Campbell's account returns repeatedly to that model that seems to have sustained her and provided a basis for reconstructing herself in the latter part of her life.

The idea of narrative modelling provides a basis for grasping the processes of sociocultural reproduction within the context of autobiographical analysis. The implication that individual consciousness is in some degree dependent upon the availability of narrative models extends the culture of poverty thesis toward Freire's more elaborate culture of silence/agency thesis. If emancipatory narrative models are available within a given sociocultural system, then individual and, by extension, community identification may be structured along lines that emphasize the qualities of articulation and integration. Whereas the Campbell text appears to fulfill an emancipatory impetus, the Sánchez texts do not offer any evidence of positive narrative modelling. In contrast to the Campbell text, the Sánchez texts indicate nothing in the way of evidence that their style of self reflection has been positively influenced by significant others. If anything, the accounts suggest that the father in the Sánchez family encouraged his children to view themselves as worthless individuals completely at fault for their lot in life. Thus the mediation encompassed by this parent-child relationship reproduces the cultural traps implied in the theories of Lewis and Freire.

Secondly, Campbell's text is based upon a considerably wider range of mediations than that found in either of the Sánchez texts. This reflects the degree with which Campbell's life circumstances lead her out of her original community and into a plurality of challenging contexts. In contrast, Marta and Manuel have had relatively little experience outside of their community of birth. The exception is Manuel's visit to the United States as a migrant farm worker. It is notable, given the present discussion, that the identity claims emerging from this section of his life history tend to report either collective social comparisons or transformations in subjectivity. Moreover, the latter are reversed on his return to the mediations enclosed by his family and home community. As Berger and Pullberg (1965) have suggested, variety in social life works against reification and toward self-consciousness.

The combination of this factor in the Campbell text with the evidence of narrative modeling suggest some directions for theoretical elaboration and social research. Such an inquiry will be more informed by a 'culture of silence/agency' view of consciousness than the more non-critical 'culture of poverty' thesis. The discussion thus far has sought to demonstrate the value of using a hermeneutic analysis in conjunction with critical theory as opposed to using less explicit methodology, such as Lewis's, in conjunction with a culture of poverty orientation. Yet, the issue remains as to how the life history method developed here can be coordinated with other critical approaches, and specifically the perspective on identity and autobiography offered by feminist scholars.

3. Women's Autobiography and Gendered Identity

Up to this point in the discussion I have been considering the fit between the interpretative method and a general critical sociology perspective. This perspective speaks primarily to the difference found between the relatively emancipated account given by Maria Campbell, on one hand, and the two Sánchez texts, on the other hand. In order to further demonstrate the theoretical relevance of the method developed in this study, I will now to consider the extent to which it can facilitate comparisons between men's and women's autobiography.

To this end I will now turn to the empirical generalizations reported by Estelle Jelinek (1980). Her study of autobiography points to some rather profound differences in style between those written by women and those written by men. First, whereas women's autobiographies tend to be personal and social in orientation, those given by men tend to be public and individual. Male autobiographies "concentrate on chronicling the progress of their author's professional or intellectual lives, usually in the affairs of the world, and their life studies are for the most success stories" (Jelinek, 1980: 7). In contrast, Jelinek found that women's autobiographies "concentrate instead on their personal lives - domestic details, family difficulties, close friends, and especially people who influenced them" (Jelinek, 1980: 8).

Second, whereas women's autobiographies tend to be understated and to interpret the author's life, men's autobiographies tend to be overstated and to mythologize the author's life. "In order to deal with their feelings, (authors) use various means of detachment to protect and distance them-

selves from the imagined or real judgements of their unknown audience. ... However, men and women tend to distance themselves from their material in different ways, and this stylistic difference is an important distinguishing feature of their autobiographies" (Jelinek, 1980: 13). Thus, Jelinek finds that men "tend to idealize their lives or to cast them into heroic molds to project their universal import. They may exaggerate, mythologize, or monumentalize their boyhood and their entire lives (Jelinek, 1980: 14). She goes on to note that if men celebrate personal crises, these will be crises of adult life and not of their childhood. In contrast, Jelinek found the autobiographies of women tended to distance themselves from emotional crisis through understatement and reflection. "What their autobiographies reveal is a self-consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding" (Jelinek, 1980: 15). Any reference to crisis in childhood is treated with explanatory import, but generally underplayed with respect to its emotional experience (Jelinek, 1980: 16).

Third, whereas men's autobiographies tend to be linear and coherent, women's autobiographies tend to be non-linear and incoherent. Men "unify their work by concentrating on one period of their life, one theme, or one characteristic of their personality" (Jelinek, 1980: 17). The autobiographies of women tend to be "disconnected, fragmentary, or organized into self-sustained units rather than connecting chapters" (Jelinek, 1980: 16). According to Jelinek, the final differences observed in autobiographical style are not surprizing given the socially conditioned "unidirectionality of men's lives" and the "multidimensionality of women's socially conditioned roles" (Jelinek, 1980: 17). In these differences, and the ones outlined

above, one must remember that Jelinek has used autobiographies drawn mainly from the western literary tradition with its emphasis on men and women of letters.

Notwithstanding this caution, it will be useful to assess the ability of identity claim analysis to facilitate an assessment of the degree to which Jelinek's findings may be generalized to other texts. Her research would lead us to expect that the accounts given my Maria and Marta will be characterized by (1) a focus on everyday interpersonal relationships, (2) an interpretive orientation to their lives, and (3) a diffused, segmented narrative structure. Moreover, it leads to the expectation that Manuel's text, in contrast, will be characterized by (1) a focus on individual adventures beyond the local communities, (2) a mythologizing orientation to his life, and (3) a coherent, linear narrative structure. As I hope to show, these expectations, while only being partially fulfilled, can be assessed through the use of identity claim analysis.

The crucial issue here is not whether the particular texts used in this study correspond in their patterns with the findings of Jelinek; rather, it is to show that such a correspondence can be readily assessed through the application of identity claim analysis. Specifically, the qualities of autobiographical texts, brought out through this methodological strategy, can be identified relevant to the three variable characteristics identified in Jelinek's study.

First, whether a subject focuses upon everyday interpersonal relationships or upon their individual adventures beyond the local community can be assessed by examining the range of mediations revealed in the texts. In

the Campbell text considerable emphasis is given to both significant relationships and her experience with historical events concerning Canada's native people, the latter tending to serve as a context for the former. While Campbell identifies herself in terms of significant others, as well as her experiences of poverty and oppression, the text also presents her autobiography as a metaphor for the history of the Métis people. In contrast, the accounts of both Manuel and Marta focus almost entirely upon interpersonal relationships, primarily those involved in their immediate family. While Manuel does present a broader range of mediations, including class membership, his account remains firmly rooted in his familial ties. As indicated earlier, this focus only shifts during his visit to California, and only temporarily.

Second, whether a subject takes primarily an interpretive, questioning stance in the autobiography or a mythologizing stance can be assessed by considering the emphasis given to the self-world relation level relative to the self-reflective level. The Campbell text is more developed, in terms of both of these levels, than the two Sánchez texts. Within the Campbell text, more text work is devoted to explication of the relational aspects of her life than is given over to summative reflection. I want to be careful, however, not to confuse frequency of claims with autobiographical significance. It is not the relative frequency of summative claims that suggests their importance, but their ability to tie together the main threads of the life being represented. On this criterion, the Campbell text is recognizably more interpretive than either of the Sánchez texts. Also, both Maria and Marta are more inclined to make pattern recognition claims than Manuel. Yet, the Sánchez

children are more inclined to speculate how their lives would have been different had their own attitudes to conditions varied. In a certain sense I would also argue that both Maria Campbell and Manuel Sánchez mythologize at least parts of their lives. An odyssey motif, wherein the subject is confronted with and ultimately endures challenging circumstances can be discerned, especially in the Campbell text.

Finally, whether the life history text is organized around a diffused, segmented structure or a coherent, linear structure can be assessed by referring to the qualities of articulation and integration. Recall that Jelinek associates diffusion with a lack of historical progression and linearity with a singularity of themes (Jelinek, 1980: 17). In the Campbell text an historical progression occurs along with the narrative articulation of mediations across the three descriptive levels. Moreover, her range of mediations tends to become integrated or unified within the self-reflective level. In contrast, both the Sánchez texts are characterized by their relative lack of articulation and integration.

In this last instance, as with the earlier two, either the characteristics identified by Jelinek are not correlated with the gender of the subjects, or her distinctions are inadequate to the description of their explicated texts. In fact, the characteristics serve to differentiate the more emancipated text of Maria Campbell from the texts of both Manuel Sánchez and his sister Marta. It is difficult to assign these subjects, particularly Maria Campbell, to fixed categories based on a distinction between historical and communal perspective, since the texts display an interplay between these levels. As for the mythologizing-interpretive distinction, identity claim analysis brings out

levels of self description not included in Jelinek's scheme. I am here referring to the life-world referent level in which the subjects identify themselves relative to significant others and significant events. Thus, I would argue, on the basis of the textual patterns suggested by this empirical analysis, that Jelinek's distinction should be modified to include stances toward self and life description: referential, relational, and reflective. Finally, with respect to the distinction between diffused and linear structures, I would argue that the qualities of articulation and integration made available through identity claims analysis, offer a way of conceptualizing autobiographical structure that is more descriptive of the fundamental operations in the text, while at the same time providing a continuity with critical sociology.

B. Methodological Reintegration

Having shown that the method of identity claims analysis is capable of rendering a view of autobiographical structure relevant to theoretical concerns in critical sociology, I will now turn to the question of reintegrating the study of life histories with other modes of social research. In examining this issue I want to be careful not to view life history methods as being supplementary to more dominant research practices. Instead, I want to consider what life history research in general, and identity claim analysis in particular, offers in the way of a unique perspective. The potential contribution of autobiographical studies is especially salient when examined against the concern of sociological inquiry with the reciprocal constitution of identity and society, biography and history.

The most obvious point of reintegration builds upon already established strengths of the life history approach. In general, what has been accomplished in this study is a conceptualization of an analytic approach that, in turn, permits the fuller emergence of such strengths. The basis for this analytic approach is found primarily in the coherent theory of interpretation put forth by Ricœur. It is from that source that I have taken the model of textual interpretation that proceeds from a surface reading to a critical reading by way of a structural analysis. In the present formulation, the mediating structural analysis has been founded upon a conceptualization of identity claims.

Identity claims analysis is built upon not only Ricœur's methodological framework, but also upon his hermeneutic theory of the subject. It is this view of the subject, contending with an always unstable narrative identity in a world of interpretive struggle, that has given this methodology its critical focus. It has been assumed throughout that the subject of the autobiographical text is a de-centered self continually striving for identity through the interpretation of experiences in the world - a subject telling and following it-self as text. These reflexive processes are revealed in the autobiographical account, consistent with Ricœur's idea of narrative representation, in terms of three levels of identification: referential, relational, and reflective. The analysis of identity claims discloses the subjective configuration of the self at a present time and under given social conditions. This configuration expresses a self in terms of its social complexity and temporality; a self interpreted against a life world consisting of significant others and significant events.

Another contribution of identity claim analysis, especially with respect to social phenomenology, is the manner in which it discloses the project of self identification relative to the life world. This self-world disclosure occurs in four respects. Within the first narrative level, the identity project is brought out in terms of comparative and sequential identity claims; that is, as primary of self relative to the significant persons and events comprising the life world. At the second narrative level, the self is now identified not merely in terms of referent points, but also in terms of causal relations with significant persons and events. At the third narrative level, the moment of reflection, the self is evaluated in terms of the subject's overall response to the social world both through action and recognition. On the basis of such summative readings subjects project themselves into the future as potentiality. In addition to these kinds of self descriptive operations, each made relative to the social world, identity claim analysis discloses the basic relevant spheres of experience comprising the subject's world. Such spheres have been presented in this study, following Sartre, as the fundamental mediations between the individual and society. The syntagmatic phase of identity claim analysis sheds light upon the relative salience of given mediations within the organization of subjectivity in terms of articulation and integration.

Flowing from the analysis of individual styles of self identification is the possibility for discerning generic structures. While differences apparent between the structures in the Sánchez and Campbell texts may be due to their particular forms of collection, the basic continuities across these texts suggest otherwise. The fundamental structural features defined through

identity claim analysis can be recognized in all three texts, despite the fact that only the Sánchez texts have resulted from interviewing procedures. I would suggest that variations occurring in the common structure are likely associated with differences in the concrete life experiences and available cultural resources. This line of reasoning is further supported by the empirical differences revealed through identity claim analysis of the texts, in which autobiographical patterns conform to expectations arising from a Freirian culture of silence/agency thesis. Moreover, the conceptualization of identity claims suggests that the structural levels of these texts are relatively independent of subject and interviewer intentions. To the extent that the above assumptions can be accepted, generic autobiographical structures, such as those that are gender or class specific, can be sought by way of comparative analysis.

The method of identity claims analysis also serves as a basis for developing complementary forms of life history elicitation. Although a detailed discussion of this possibility is beyond the scope of the present study, some brief comments are warranted. On the assumption that an analysis proceeding from identity claims renders some sociological insight, interviewing strategies that ensure the valid and full representation of such claims need to be considered. Given the emergence of identity in the non-elicited work of Maria Campbell, a first consideration will have to be whether life history interviews are useful, or should researchers simply ask subjects to write their own accounts without interference. I would suggest that we must continue to value the life history interview, if only because subjects may often be incapable of producing extended texts unaided by an external focus; but

we must give thought to the nature of the focus we offer. A strategy is required that encourages the subject to reveal their subjective organization of life experiences in terms of identity claims across narrative levels and mediations. The challenge is to accomplish such a strategy and yet not end up with textural patterns that are little more than artifacts of the research process. For the moment the offer of a systematic and theoretically informed analytic method can only serve as a catalyst for the development of an appropriate collection method.

As well, the list of methodological contributions of this approach to life history analysis can include its potential for facilitating specifically critical social research. The interpretation theory of Ricœur reminds us that a depth interpretation implicates a critical interpretation. In this sense, I would view the life history account as a text that opens the way to personal and social emancipation. It should be remembered in this regard that the giving of a life history is a rare act. Few of us will ever generate such an account, and those who do will almost certainly never repeat the experience. The production of the autobiography is a significant event in itself, and perhaps the most significant such event in the life of the subject. While the contents of the account are, theoretically, based upon an ongoing internal complex of identifications, the experience of disclosing one's life into a text is no doubt profound. Ricœur and Freire lead us to consider the manner in which a life as text may act as an emancipatory catalyst for its author. To reflect upon one's self objectified in autobiography is to be given the opportunity to reorganize subjectivity. In other words, subjects may be able to refig-

ure latent narrative structures that have been partially lifted into consciousness.

Finally, the question of emancipatory potential for the individual subjects in turn suggests the methodological value of my framework for the study of narrative identification in primary social groups and communities. Recall that the selective construction of identity, against a range of possible meanings for the self, is always the locus for intersubjective struggle. The conscious restructuring of identity represents a challenge to the dominant order, in general, and to significant mediations, in particular. Thus the critical study of identification and historical narration needs to be extended to the level of collective processes, especially to the local negotiation of identity claims. Ferrarotti (1989) has already pointed out the importance of conducting life history interviews in the presence of other family and community members precisely to reveal the interaction product of the accounts. The framework developed in the present study suggests the lines along which such intersubjective struggle may take place, including referent persons and events, causal relations, forms of self (individual and collective) evaluation, and the recognition of narrative unity within and across social mediations. At stake is not only the structure of individual biography, but also the processes by which communities and classes reproduce and, potentially, restructure their histories.

Arising out of this overview of methodological contributions are a number of avenues for additional research and theoretical elaboration. First, a wider selection of autobiographical texts needs to be examined to establish the cultural limits of identity claim analysis. It is an empirical

question as to whether the method remains valid for autobiographical accounts founded upon non-European cultures. Major differences in the conceptualization of the individual self and narrative organization may preclude the application of Ricœur's premises and this method.

Second, within the range of cultures for which the method may be validly applied, further comparative research is required to confirm the main generic forms of autobiographical structure, as suggested by this study. My preliminary investigation has suggested some differential patterns in the sense of restructured and elaborated texts. Further study might include the analysis of accounts from dominant class members, as well as a more extended comparison of life histories across gender.

Third, the present strategy needs to be extended to the collective level. As indicated above, there is a need to gain a clearer understanding of the narrative process within various social forms such as families and communities. Specifically, the approach developed in the present study holds much promise for critical research into intersubjective struggles over individual and collective identity, and the implicit reproduction of sociocultural orders.

Finally, a strong continuity is evident between the types of identity claims arising from the present textual analysis, and the forms of communicative action that Habermas (1984) has deductively arrived at through his formal pragmatics. A correspondence emerges on all three levels of my framework as indicated in Table 18. It is quite evident, for example, that the generic functions of speech indicated by Habermas fit with the specific func-

tions I have discerned, following Ricœur's lead, in concrete autobiographical texts. This observation offers, first of all, some independent theoretical support for the approach developed in this study. It also suggests that this study may provide inductive validation of the formal scheme developed by Habermas.

Table 18: Correspondence between Narrative Levels and Habermas's Formal Pragmatics

(adapted from Habermas, 1984: Figures 16 & 19)

	Narrative Levels		
Formal Pragmatics	Social World Referents	Self-World Relations	Self-Reflection
Type of Action	Normatively -Regulated	Conversation	Dramaturgical
Functions of Speech	Establishment of Interpersonal Relationships	Representation of States of Affairs	Self-Representation
Basic Attitudes	Norm-Conformative	Objectivating	Expressive
World Relations	Social World	Objective World	Subjective World
Knowledge Type	Moral-Practical	Empirical-Theoretical	Aesthetic -Practical
Validity Claim	Rightness	Truth	Truthfulness
Argumentation Form	Practical Discourse	Theoretical Discourse	Therapeutic and Aesthetic Discourse

More significant, however, is the potential for theoretical elaboration based on an examination of how well the two representations fit together. I can anticipate some modification and extension of my thinking as a result of such an exploration. In terms of the objectives for present study, this potential correspondence may be able to expand my conceptualization of the autobiographical project of self-identification by showing its continuity with the generic forms of communicative action. At the most general level, the correspondence promises, contingent upon further theoretical work, a further possibility for merging the contributions of Habermas with those of Ricœur.

C. Summation

The examination of the three autobiographical texts lends support to the thesis presented at the onset of this paper. It would appear that a Ricœurian framework can be employed effectively, and in a manner compatible with the interests of critical sociological inquiry. The approach presented here has promise in that it gives a perspective on (1) the sociocultural contrasts that give form to the intersubjective world of the subject's language community, (2) the identity of the subject as a self-locating actor who belongs to a language community, and (3) the identity of the subject as a self-formative actor who finds unity over his/her life course.

The task of interpretation is to discern the form of life implicated in the structure of narratives and the tensions obtaining between the levels of identity. In this context, it is important to recognize, following Ricœur, that

the teller of the life history is at the same time following and interpreting his/her own account. It should also be noted that the structural features immanent in the text must not be confused with the intended meaning or referent of the subject. The subject may well only intend to speak of manifest events, but in order to do so s/he must necessarily draw upon the sociocultural foundations of his/her experience. These foundations are, in turn, revealed in the structural features of the text.

This study has taken as problematic the self-evident interpretation of life history documents in social science. In order to make the interpretation of life histories accountable I have drawn upon the theory of interpretation and the concept of narrative identity developed by Ricœur. This has led to the formulation of a hermeneutic framework for reading such texts, in which a structural analysis of identity claims lifts into view the latent narrative organization of the text and, by extension, of narrative identity. It was demonstrated that this systematic method of analysis is able to reflect the patterning given in empirical texts. Moreover, the analysis renders a view of the autobiographical work that speaks to central concerns of critical theory perspectives in sociology. The procedures developed here hold promise for the critical analysis of lives as texts, and for the critical re-appropriation of such texts as expressions of social life.

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