ABSTRACT

“I’M ALWAYS FROM ELSEWHERE”: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO TWO ETHNIC GERMAN LIFE COURSES SHAPED BY THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by Philip Edward Sauer

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to shed light into understanding how two ethnic Germans experienced expulsion, flight, or displacement at the end of the Second World War and how these experiences shaped their subsequent life course. I conducted in-depth interviews with two ethnic Germans aged 71 and 91 about these life course experiences. Their unique narratives show how events can be perceived differently due to age-period-cohort effects. The narratives give insight into how individuals overcome adversity and strive for opportunity. The results suggest implications for the conceptualization of the life course.
“I’M ALWAYS FROM ELSEWHERE”: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO TWO ETHNIC GERMAN LIFE COURSES SHAPED BY THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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I was born in 1984 in southern Germany as the son of an English mother and a German father. During my childhood I would ask questions about my grandparents and their roles in World War II. I was in a fortunate position to have access to both the Allied and German experience. However, I never got to know my German grandfather as he died in 1972, and my German grandmother died when I was only three years old, so I only was able to quiz my parents about my German family history. My British grandparents lived until 2007 which gave me plenty of opportunities to ask them about their wartime experiences during our annual family summer holidays at their home in Scotland.

My German grandparents came from Breslau, Schlesien (Silesia), now Wroclaw in Poland, which was part of the German Reich, and had existed as a German city for many centuries until 1945 at the end of World War II. My grandparents’ family owned a draper’s shop in Breslau. However, in order to avoid being confronted by the approaching Russian soldiers my German grandfather, who at the time in 1944 was on sick leave in Breslau, organized the entire family to flee from Breslau, which the family did in January of 1945 when Breslau was declared a “fortress” and the cities’ civilians were asked to leave. The city was to be defended by a conglomeration of Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS soldiers, and the so-called Volkssturm, a mix of young teenagers and old men. During this unnecessary battle 170,000 civilians, 6,000 German, and 7,000 Russian soldiers died (Davies and Moorhouse, 2003).

During my undergraduate studies of gerontology, nursing science, and English at the University of Heidelberg Germany, I was required to do several internships in the field of nursing. One summer, in 2006, I did an internship at a dementia unit of a nursing home. It was early morning, when I was supposed to shower a 90 year-old female resident. Once we were about to begin the shower, she started to scream at the top of her voice: “Nein, nein! Hau’ ab! Lass mich in Ruhe! Hilfe!” (No, no! Clear off! Leave me alone! Help!)” I was very startled by this reaction, as I had never experienced it with any of the other residents. I went to my supervisors and told them what had happened. Later we learnt from her files that she was from Königsberg, Preußen (Prussia), and had probably experienced the expulsion of the German people, which oftentimes included brutalities such as the raping of women and girls, and the beatings and
torture of the male population. So, we had to consider that she may have been raped by Russian soldiers during the expulsion.

The topic of flight, displacement, and expulsion of ethnic Germans is highly complex, as it encompasses a tinderbox of sensitive history, politics, painful emotions, and personal tragedies. The Germans were responsible for both World War I and II. And being in that aggressor role it is extremely difficult to mourn the fate of 14.4 million expelled Germans from the eastern European areas, and the 2.1 million Germans who were declared dead or missing (de Zayas, 2006).

The biggest atrocity that Germany is confronted with and has taken full responsibility for is the Holocaust, during which Nazi Germany methodically murdered 6 million European Jews. Germany has come a long way in dealing with its past by educating its population about the Holocaust, and keeping the topic present in modern day Germany by erecting a 4.7 acre memorial site of concrete slabs with an underground museum in the heart of Berlin. In addition to the commemoration, most grammar school classes discuss the Holocaust and Nazi Germany for several years in history, political science and German classes, which often culminate in a guided tour of a concentration camp. By keeping the memory alive, it is hoped that Germany’s people shall not forget, and never let these atrocities happen again. However, the Holocaust is not the only atrocity Germany brought to Europe. Nazi Germany brought devastation not only to many countries of the world, but also to its own people. Historical estimates of total World War II casualties are estimated at over 50 million people (Roberts, 1999) from all over the world making it the deadliest war in history.

Over the last 60 years, it has been German policy to remain largely silent about the German victims of expulsion. By doing so it has become a favorite topic for historical revisionists, white supremacists, anti-Semites, and neo-Nazis of all walks of life and nationalities. However, it has been totally understandable that post-war Germany concentrated virtually all its foreign policy efforts on reconciliation and not confrontation by publically mourning the German civilian victims.
To this day the stories and commemoration of the fate of ethnic Germans remains a sensitive political issue between Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Especially, in the light of the planned German museum entitled: *Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen* (Center against Expulsions) which is planned to be located in Berlin and its goal is to commemorate all victims of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and expulsion of the 20th century including the European Jews, the Armenians, the Polish, ethnic Germans, and other peoples. There has been a heated debate over the location and the inclusion of mourning the expulsion of the ethnic Germans especially between Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Various other locations for the museum have been suggested in Poland and the Czech Republic. The fears of these states are that the German victims get too much attention at this center. The debate continues to this day.

World War II destroyed and disrupted the lives and life courses of millions around the globe. Children, teenagers, young adults, adults, and old people all were affected by the most devastating conflict the world has ever seen. All these different cohorts had their very own experience of World War II and its impact on their further life trajectories. One thing is certain that these wartime experiences, no matter which cohort one belonged to during the war, will forever be remembered. It is of paramount importance to pass on the forgotten narratives to the generations to come in the hope that these atrocities will never happen again and human kind will do everything to prevent such insanity in the future.
Chapter One: Introduction

At the end of World War II (WWII), between the years of 1944-1950, over 14 million Germans were expelled or had to flee from their homes in eastern Europe and 2.1 million did not survive this mass exodus and perished on the way or are presumed missing (de Zayas, 2006). What was supposed to be a civilized relocation of the German population under the watch of the Allied Forces and the agreements of the Potsdam Treaty, turned out to be far more chaotic than originally planned.

Ever since I was confronted with German victims of WWII during the time I worked in home-and-community-based services for elders in Germany, and collected multiple experiences during internships in long-term care settings, I began to wonder how these Germans experienced the end of WWII and how those experiences have continued to affect them throughout their lives. I was confronted by a woman with dementia who had presumably been raped, by women who told me stories of how they had lost everything virtually overnight, and by men who told me how they had lost the best years of their lives fighting for a worthless cause in arguably the most horrific war the world has ever seen.

From a gerontologist’s perspective, I became interested in a life course theory driven approach taking into account that most of the elders I was caring for at that time had experienced expulsion and displacement at around the same age I was then, that is, in their early to mid-twenties. Having grown up in a peaceful, wealthy, and reunified Germany I cannot imagine what this generation had to go through at such a young age and at such an early stage in their lives, to have to pick up the pieces of a shattered existence and start all over again. How was it possible to recover from these experiences? Moreover, I was interested in the questions of how these people viewed their end-of-war life experiences through the lens of old age, and how these early life experiences influenced their life trajectories.

This research study does not by any means intend to trivialize the atrocious war crimes, ethnic cleansing and genocide committed by Nazi Germany, during the Holocaust against the Jewish people, and against the civilians and soldiers across Europe and the world. However, for over six decades, the voices of German victims were largely silent. It is time for our collective historical review to be inclusive not exclusive. It should give all victims the right to mourn, but
also the right to have their stories heard and acknowledged, especially as they reach old age, which in part is characterized as a stage of life review. However, if the larger public is ignorant regarding the circumstance of these silenced victims they do not have the feeling of being understood and will resort to keeping their memories to themselves.

During my research I came across a lot of historical revisionist, anti-Semitic, and Nazi-propagandist publications ranging from white supremacist scholars, to internet discussion boards discussing the expulsion of ethnic Germans in a very fascist manner. This largely has to do with the fact that post-war German politics avoided a public position towards the expulsion of ethnic Germans and did not give public space to mourn for German victims, which understandably was probably the right thing to do in the light of rebuilding a war-shattered Germany, and most importantly its reputation in the world with the goal of reconciliation with its neighboring countries. However, creating this vacuum of ownership, led these neo-fascist radical movements to make the topic of expulsion of ethnic Germans their own and try to distort the topic.

Ethnic Germans, who immigrated to the United States have an especially interesting life story to tell as it not only includes the atrocities and hardship they experienced during and at the end of WWII but also the story of starting a whole new life across the Atlantic, in a country where they could begin again and create their lives in a totally new way, a way they had not thought of before.

Why is it important to understand expelled populations and their aging experience? The answer is not all that simple. According to a global report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the number of populations of concern in this world is estimated at 36 million of which roughly 10 million are refugees and they constitute the majority of populations of concern in North America and Western Europe (UNHCR, 2011). Many of these refugees will have experienced violent expulsion and horrific atrocities when they were forced out of their home countries. If they manage to stay in Western countries, they will move through all life stages into old age with their individual narratives of these horrific events and may require some type of home-based or institutionalized care in old age. Yet, how can we serve these people if we do not understand their biographies and are sensitive towards their past? How can we take care of women that have been raped, men who are traumatized by war, and people
who had to leave everything they owned and worked so hard for behind, if we are not aware of these facts?

The issue with this biographically sensitive approach is that human beings have their very own unique biographies and react differently to hardship and atrocities in terms of coping. We have to look at each individual’s personal life story and analyze the data they provide us within their own biographical narratives to understand how individuals cope with war-time violations and how they view these experiences in old age.
Chapter Two: Background

Historical Background

Ethnic Germans and the Potsdam Conference

All Germans who lived within the borders of Nazi Germany (1933-1945) were considered Reichsdeutsche (imperial Germans). In contrast, all German-speaking, self-identifying Germans outside the borders of Nazi Germany living in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, were in Nazi ideology considered Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans). This was nothing new, as ethnic Germans had lived outside of Germany a long time before Nazi Germany came into existence. The vast geographic distribution of ethnic Germans evolved over centuries.

Some minorities […] were the products of medieval conquests and colonization. Others, including […] the Swabians of the central Danube region settled among non-Germans as recently as the eighteenth century. The drawing of modern state boundaries had also created German minorities, as statesmen and monarchs altered frontiers, traded lands at conference tables, and won or lost them on battlefields with no thought given to the nationalities of the inhabitants. As a result, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe, in particular central and eastern Europe contained an inextricable mixture of nationalities.

(Lumans, 1993, p. 22)

To further explain this distribution, Table 1 provides an overview of the estimated number of Germans living in the world in 1935.

Table 1: Estimated German population worldwide in 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of Germans worldwide</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German Reich</td>
<td>65,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>6,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2,950,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danzig</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxemburg</td>
<td>285,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly 10,000,000 ethnic Germans lived as national minorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>3,318,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1,190,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania-Memelland</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alsace-Lorraine</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>30,000 - 40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Over 200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumania</td>
<td>750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>1,240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia and Estonia</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lumans, 1993
Total war and destruction committed by Nazi Germany on all the peoples of Europe, and the atrocities of the mass murdering, ethnic cleansings which culminated in the near extermination of all European Jews, had created a tremendous hatred towards nearly everything German by the end of WWII. Especially in Eastern Europe the hostility towards the ethnic Germans in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia was deeply rooted in the crimes that were committed against those people during Nazi aggression (Kertesz, 1953). Kersten (2001) notes that “in Poland itself there was near unanimity concerning the western border and expulsion of the Germans. Both the Communists and the opposition agreed on this point – annexing the western lands and removing the Germans became one of the few issues on which there was political consensus” (p. 79-80).

Consensus on the so-called “population transfer” had been reached even before the agreement of resettlement of ethnic Germans at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945, where the “Big Three” allied powers, the United States of America, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, came together to negotiate, among ample topics, the post-war borders of Germany and the question of what to do with the millions of ethnic Germans still living in eastern European countries. In the years prior to the conference the Polish exile government and Czech exile government had made it clear to the Allies how they envisioned their post-war countries. Polish political figure Aleksandr Zawadzki made his feelings heard:

We who have endured the horrors of Hitler’s terror in our country and the treachery of Auschwitz and Treblinka hereby state with absolute determination that we will not pursue any cooperation whatsoever with Germany, neither at the present time nor at any time in the future. An insurmountable abyss has arisen between the Polish and German nations and there will be no talk of cooperation or attempts to cohabit with Germans at the present nor in the future.
(Linek 2001, p. 125-126)

His fellow countryman and provincial governor Jerzy Ziętek describes his plans as the following, on 10 February 1945:

We will deal with the German population inhabiting these lands, which have been Polish since before the beginning of time, just as the Germans taught us. [They will get] 20 kilograms of baggage and 5 minutes [to leave]. In any case, we have work for them to do, and forests to clear – the most appropriate task for the Herrenvolk.
(Linek 2001, p. 126)

The Western Allies believed it would be the best to allow a civilized population transfer of all Germans living in eastern European areas instead of having long-lasting tensions between the
Czech, Polish and German people which would probably lead to further acts of war. President Roosevelt sent a letter to the Polish President-in-exile, dated 17 November, 1944:

If the Polish Government and people desire in connection with the new frontiers of the Polish state to bring about the transfer to and from territory of Poland of national minorities, the United States Government will raise no objection, and as far as practicable, will facilitate such transfer.
(de Zayas 1998, p. 10)

Prime Minister Churchill, in an address before the House of Commons on 15 December 1944, states:

A clean sweep will be made. I am not alarmed by the prospect of the disentanglement of populates, nor even by these large transferences, which are more possible in modern condition than they ever were before.
(de Zayas 1998, p. 10)

The position of the Allied forces seemed clear that the crimes committed by Nazi Germany were by no means comparable to a mere “population transfer” that was going to take place after the end of WWII to create ethnically homogeneous nation states. Kersten (2001) writes:

After World War II ended, even democratic societies decided that the resettlement of ethnic groups did not contradict accepted moral standards (especially when applied to the Germans). The practice of “cleansing minorities” to conform to border changes became legitimate. Further, Nazi crimes were often used as justification for the poor treatment of Germans. (p. 77)

In his London exile in 1944, Edvard Beneš, the President of Czechoslovakia, wrote:

If a solution of the minority problem is impossible in any other manner, I am prepared for the grim necessity of population transfers. … Such transfers can create many hardships and even injustices. But I am bound to say that they may be worthwhile if they help to establish a more permanent equilibrium and a lasting peace.
(de Zayas 1998, p. 34)

The atmosphere of the negotiations at the Potsdam Conference is described by Mee (1975) akin to jovial bargaining with human life, in which “real numbers of real individuals did not matter. (…) They were bargaining counters, of greater or lesser magnitude- and all of the Big Three could agree to increase or decrease the German population depending upon other imaginary constructs” (p. 135).

De Zayas (1998) concluded that

the Western Allies would have never given authorization to the transfer of the Germans if they had realistically foreseen the chaos that would unfold before their eyes. They had deluded themselves with the comforting idea of an internationally supervised transfer that would function as smoothly as a business transaction. It had been easy to plan orderly transfers on paper. Later, when these stampeded into grotesque expulsions, it was too late to stop them, and the Western Allies found themselves sharing in the responsibility for a catastrophe they had never intended. (p. 12-13)
The voices of Allied leaders and local politicians illustrate how Germans were viewed at the end of WWII and that some type of “transfer” of all Germans from Eastern European areas was the common standpoint. The consequences of a “transfer” for the ethnic German population were not considered. It was more important to the Western Allies to restore a sustainable piece and ethnic cleansing was considered a viable method, and agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. These forced expulsions at the end of WWII disrupted the lives of millions of Germans and shaped their further life trajectories.

Background Literature

**Life course perspective**

Studying life histories of individuals over time has become an essential approach to research for many different disciplines (Elder et al. 2003). Colby (1998, p. x) lauds the life course perspective for it is “widely shared internationally as well as across disciplines, (…) [and] one of the most important achievements of social science in the second half of the 20th century.”

There are five paradigmatic principles that comprise the life course perspective (Elder et al. 2003, p. 11-13)

1. *The Principle of Life-Span Development*: Human development and aging are lifelong processes
2. *The Principle of Agency*: Individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance
3. *The Principle of Time and Place*: The life course of individuals is embedded and shaped by the historical times and places they experienced over their lifetime
4. *The Principle of Timing*: The developmental antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events, and behavioral patterns vary according to their timing in a person’s life
5. *The Principle of Linked Lives*: Lives are lived interdependently and socio-historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships.

The life course perspective offers the unique opportunity to analyze the micro-macro relationships and interactions that shape the individual’s world more than anything else. Applying this perspective to the narratives of ethnic Germans at the end of WWII and throughout
their reconstructed lifespan from the vantage point of old age, enables an analysis that is profound and not only focuses on the individual but also takes into consideration the individuals societal context.

Age, Period, and Cohort

Winship and Harding (2004) illustrate in their equation that “Age = Period – Cohort” and thereby show the relationship between chronological age, the current historical period, and the birth year of the individual cohort. In my study I will account for the different chronological ages at which my participants experienced WWII as ethnic Germans and what that may mean for their different life trajectories and post-war lifespan development. The age-period-cohort issue makes it important in this study to have details of the contextual period setting when reviewing an individual’s life history at different stages. In order to compare differences in individuals’ narratives across time, the age-period-cohort constellation needs to be disentangled. In this study, a male from the 1920 birth cohort is compared to a female of the 1940 birth cohort. A male born in 1920, will most likely have served as a soldier in WWII, and will have been fully aware of the historical period leading up to WWII. These two factors need to be considered as possible influences on how post-war experiences of displacement were experienced. Period and cohort effects play a significant role in the way individuals present their life narratives and therefore must not be ignored in a comparative analysis of narratives.

Construction of autobiographical memory

Autobiographical memory is socially constructed (Meacham, 1995). Memories are influenced by the wisdom and vantage point of a certain life stage and are highly subjective recollections of an earlier life stage. According to Conway (1990, p.9) they “may be accurate without being literal and may represent the personal meaning of an event at the expense of accuracy.” In addition, Conway (1990, p. 12) notes that “autobiographical memories (…) represent interpretations or meanings of experienced events.” Moreover, according to Meacham (1995, p. 48) “all our reminiscences belong not to individuals, but to the community and to society.” This notion again reifies the close relationship between the micro and the macro, and demands that life narratives be studied within their historical context.
The younger participant in this study, Anna, was 5 years old when she experienced expulsion from the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia at the end of WWII. How far advanced is the memory process of a child’s brain at that stage? Autobiographical memories begin at around 2-3 years of age when concept of “self” is developed, and language abilities are acquired (Markowitsch & Welzer, 2010; Eacott & Crawley, 1998; Usher & Neisser, 1993). These memories become more vivid and are expressed in greater detail as the child grows older and its language skills improve (Haden, 2003). However, Mosak and Di Pietro (2006) caution us by stating that children under the age of 10 usually lack “continuous memory” and “sequential memory”, and therefore adults will “fill” additional content into their recollection of early childhood memory to keep a sense of coherence. In addition, Mosak and Di Pietro (2006, p. 3) stress how powerful “early recollections” are in understanding the adult persons who tend to “project their beliefs onto these memories.”

Narratives and Aging

Just as within the theory of life course, narratives go through a developmental process throughout life in which they are reinterpreted, retold, and restoried due to the fact that our world is constantly changing. Randall (1996) observes two things: a continuing restorying, and a sudden restorying. The continuing restorying occurs by actively adding new plots to life such as getting married, starting a family, and many more life events. The sudden restorying takes place after unexpected events occur without notice. Randall (1996) notes that in the case of sudden restorying

we are launched out of one way of storying our lives and landed, quite rudely, amidst another. Indeed, we are destoried and must story ourselves afresh. In such a situation (…) our life is like a diary in which we mean to write one story but are forced to write another. (p. 237)

Purpose Statement

The 65th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was celebrated and commemorated in 2010, and as the German population, which experienced the Second World War has all by now reached old age, it is becoming more and more important to find out how that population experienced the war and what effects it has had on their life course. Little research has looked at the long-term effects of war and displacement on the German population (Kuwert et al., 2007; Spitzer et al. 2008). In fact, Settersten (2006, p.15) points to a gap in
gerontological literature by expressing the “need for gerontologists to develop their historical imaginations, for the linkages between aging and history are significant and challenging new avenues for scholarship.” Kuwert et al. (2009, p. 748) published a representative survey study of Germans who experienced the war and or displacement (N=1513). The results showed that “forced displacement in WWII is significantly associated with higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of resilience and life satisfaction 60 years later.”

Most research done on expulsion of Germans focuses on historical and political facts-less on individual narratives of expulsion (McLaren, 2010; Süßner, 2004; Prausser & Rees 2004; Linek, 2004). Svasek (2002) looks at narratives of “home” and “homeland” amongst expelled ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland, which is now part of the Czech Republic. Her main focus is the construction of home and homeland amongst expelled Germans, not the meaning-making of their experiences during expulsion and how it has affected their life courses in retrospect. To my knowledge no narrative inquiry has been conducted about the experiences of expelled Germans at the end of the Second World War using the life course perspective.

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry is to focus on the experiences and narratives of Germans who experienced expulsion and displacement at the end of the Second World War. The two research questions addressed in this study are: How did ethnic Germans experience expulsion, flight or displacement at the end of the Second World War? How have these experiences affected them throughout their life courses? It is hoped that through reminiscence of these experiences the voices of these people will be heard and light can be shed on this topic.
Chapter Three: Methods

Qualitative Research

I chose a qualitative research to capture the meaning of a certain experience at one certain point in time and the resulting life course trajectories that originate from these experiences. According to Dey (1993) “meanings are mediated mainly through language and action.” (p. 10) By shedding light into the unknown, hushed world of ethnic German narratives, I as a researcher can try to find the meaning that evolves from the participants’ life stories. A qualitative research approach provides a platform for researching small groups of people, and looking at their experiences on a micro-level.

Narrative Gerontology

This study is not only about life stories but also about life course development. Narrative gerontology offers the combination of both narrative analysis and the life course perspective. It therefore is an ideal fit for this study where I want to shed light into the experiences of ethnic Germans and see how they view their life course from the perspective of old age. Kenyon and Randall (in Kenyon, Clark, and de Vries 2001) write “narrative gerontology offers a perspective, a way of seeing through which to investigate aspects of aging that may otherwise be overlooked. (...) [Essentially], narrative gerontology explores the various ways in which stories function in our lives, as well as how we ourselves function as stories.” (p. 3-4). Moreover, Randal (in Kenyon, Clark, and de Vries, 2001) notes that “stories are the context and currency of our lives” (p. 35). In other words, narrative gerontology not only offers a perspective to investigate the individual, but also the context surrounding them at any given life stage. In this study, I am looking at the experience of expulsion and displacement which occurred for my participants at a very early stage in life. For Anna it was early childhood, and for Paul early adulthood. Narrative gerontology gives me the opportunity to investigate both their narratives in respect to their unique individual experiences within their social contexts through their retrospective lens of old age.

Narrative thematic analysis

According to Riessman (2008, p. 12) “narrative study relies on (and sometimes has to excavate) extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units, rather than
fragments into thematic categories (…).” Narrative thematic analysis is an excellent tool to capture the full essence of an experience. As opposed to other analytical approaches, the focus of analysis “is on “what” is said, rather than “how”, “to whom” or “for what purpose”” (Riessman, 2008, p. 53-54). I will apply this analytical approach to the interview data and intend to represent the voices of the participants in a way that lets their stories come alive.

**Recruitment**

Ethical approval for my research was granted by Institutional Review Board (see Appendix for Informed Consent). I knew that if I had conducted my research in Germany it would have been easier to find participants as 1 in 3 Germans was a refugee or expellee from Eastern Europe by 1950 (Schulze, 2006). I recruited two ethnic Germans from the American Midwest for this study.

**Participants**

Both my participants\(^1\) Paul and Anna are professionals with a high socio-economic status, no cognitive impairments, and are physically fit and generally healthy. Paul, 91, a retired mechanical engineer, grew up in former Yugoslavia, whereas Anna, 71, a retired university professor, grew up in the Sudetenland and post-war Bavaria.

**Interviewing Method**

I used an adaptation of Wengraf’s (2001) biographic narrative-interpretive method (BNIM) which allows the participant a tremendous amount of freedom in answering the researcher’s question. The adapted version of the BNIM consists of three interviews. During the first interview, I asked my participants a single question aimed at inducing narrative (SQUIN). The SQUIN I chose was: Tell me about your life, especially about your experiences at the end of WW II. I then explained to the participants that they could use as much time as they wanted until they felt that they were finished with their response. The beauty of this method is that the researcher as the human instrument does not interfere with the narrative flow of the participant’s response. Moreover, I do not give them biased research questions, but rather let them decide what is meaningful and what is not. While my participants were narrating their response I took

\(^1\) Participants’ names are pseudonyms
notes of key in vivo quotes of important life events. Wengraf (2001) calls these the particular incident narratives (PINs). In my second interview, which was about a week after the first interview, I probed the collection of PINs directly with the help of an interview guide. After the completion of my analysis, I returned to my participants for a clarifying third interview.

Procedure

Both Anna and Paul agreed to be audio-recorded. I used a digital voice recorder and transcription software to transcribe the Mp3 files. Once the files were transcribed, I open-coded the data to find emerging themes and then continued my analysis using QRS International’s Nvivo 9 software package. The interviews took place at the participants’ homes and lasted as long as 180 minutes. Interviews number 1 and 2 were scheduled within a week of each other so that the memories of the first interview were fresh on our minds. Interview number 3 took place after the completion of the analysis to discuss the findings with each participant and check if my analysis matched their interpretations of their narratives.

Historical Sensitization

My main focus was on my primary data sources, the interviews with both Anna and Paul. In addition to the primary sources, I sensitized myself for the topic by reviewing secondary data sources which include historical documents, photographs, and documentary films. Among the historical documents were twenty-five personal narratives of ethnic Germans who testified about their experiences of expulsion at the end of World War II.

Challenges related to the interviewing method

My first participant Anna took to the method whereas my second participant Paul needed more structure. Anna found it fairly easy to respond to the SQUIN without requiring further prompting. Paul was not so comfortable with the SQUIN method and required more prompts than the method prescribes. This may indicate that the BNIM interviewing method is not suited for every participant. I modified the BNIM design by interjecting occasional questions when they were needed to move the interview forward.
Chapter Four: Analysis / Findings

This chapter has two objectives. First, I present summaries of the life stories of Anna and Paul. The goal is to give the reader an idea how they went through the different stages of their lives starting in their childhood, moving into their adolescent and adulthood years, into old age. Second, I present the overarching themes that Anna and Paul’s narratives have in common and those they do not have in common.

Part I - Narratives

Anna’s narrative

Anna, 71, was born in 1940 in the north-eastern part of Czechoslovakia in a small spa village which was situated in the Sudeten mountain range between the present-day Czech Republic and Poland. The name of the border areas which circumvented most of Czechoslovakia and where the majority of ethnic Germans lived was derived from this mountain range and called the Sudetenland.

I was born during World War II, but I was not conscious of any war until pretty much it had ended for everybody else. So I can say that my life, my whole life has been shaped, that’s how I see it, by what happened after World War II. And what happened after World War II was that we as ethnic Germans were expelled from Czech, then Czechoslovakia, then Sudetenland.

Anna describes her early childhood as “bucolic” being the center of attention.

So I remember my early life in my village as this very cherished child. I had a very good self image. I was just a very hot item, and I think where this came from was that my parents were married for seven years before they had a child, and they fervently, passionately wanted a baby, and so I was it and then I was it. (…) It is a spa village. (…) And so there were parks, and we would play there. And my grandmother would walk with me in the woods. (…) I just know that I had a very good sense of myself, and I am sure it came from my parents, from my grandmother, who doted on me. Everybody doted on me. I was made to feel pretty wonderful.

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2 Anna’s interview was in English. All the quotes are directly taken from the interview transcripts.
Anna was the oldest of four siblings of which three were born before the end of WWII. One sister was born in 1942, her brother in 1943, and her youngest sister born in 1949. Anna lived in the family house in which Anna, her parents and two siblings shared the upstairs apartment and her grandmother lived in the downstairs apartment.

*Expulsion from apartment / Looting / Dagger*

Anna quickly became aware of what war meant when Russian soldiers, who were on the retreat from Germany after the conclusion of WWII, invaded the privacy of her family home. That is when her expulsion narrative begins.

One night I was awakened and there were these soldiers standing over my bed. I don't know what I understood at the time, but it was later explained to me that these were Russian soldiers, and they made sounds that I couldn't understand, and my mother looked very frightened, and we had to leave our apartment and so we moved in with our Grandma downstairs.

Then something happened that seemed to sort of signally change, and later, and again you need to understand that this is from the memory of a four-year-old colored and interpreted through later accounts. But I do remember that Russians were retreating and they made a camp in our garden because now they had lots of time. And by the way, the other thing that was really scary was looting. It was usually soldiers, it was also Czechs who came who took anything so we didn't even lock doors, and I have this one memory which I think is important in understanding what people might consider my neurosis but for me it is a totally normal reaction. These soldiers came in, they were Russians, I always assumed they were Russians when I didn't understand what they were saying, so I was maybe four and a half years old, and my sister was two and a half years old, and my Mama had my baby brother in her arms, and these men wanted to get into an armoire. It was locked and there was no key. So this one guy takes out a dagger and puts it to my mother's throat. Well this is an event that is sort of branded in my brain. And then you know what happened? Then my little ditsy sister, she had a wooden train, and she had collected all the keys in the apartment and they were in these wagons, and so there was the key and they opened up the armoire, and [giggles] there was nothing in it because it already had been looted many times. So this is when my bucolic life was starting to fall apart.
**Baby brother abducted**

The violations and harassments continued when the Russian soldiers had time to set up camp in the garden of Anna’s family home.

Then the Russians were camping out there. And guess what they did? My little fat, like a little piglet brother pink and juicy, who was then a year old. They took him to the camp out there. They kept him in the camp out here. My mother was sure that they were beating him or something [laughs]. But can you imagine? Can you imagine? Again I have no idea how long this lasted. Whether it was a day, a night, or several days, but my mother was crying and praying and my father and we all felt totally disempowered you know. And then the Russians were folding their camps, and they brought back my little brother and you wouldn't believe but he looked just fine, I don't know whether they gave him Vodka or not.

Now that the concentration camps had been liberated there was plenty of space to take all the German men. Anna remembers that her father had been taken away but does not remember to where. While this was happening she also remembers women taking their children to a nearby quarry. “In the distance we could hear the cannon fire and the explosions, and the women were saying the rosary.”

Anna acknowledges the fact that she may not remember everything clearly and in the correct sequential order. She calls those early memories “disjointed”, and admits that they are partially constructed through later accounts and discussions with her mother about what had happened during those dramatic times of expulsion.

**Mother rounded up / intervention**

And then something happened that I did not learn until later. I did not experience it but when the men were gone, when my father was gone. Somebody came to get my mother, and what they were doing actually they were rounding up women and shipping them east to Siberia. These were now the Russians, the Czechs. This was retribution all over the place. And so my mother didn't even have shoes on, they just took her away. And I can easily convince myself that I do remember this but I don't think so. I think this was something that my mother told me later. They were going to take her away; they were rounding up women to ship them away. So they took them to the city hall. (…) In the Gemeinde, city hall, there was a woman, who was my father's colleague my father had worked there, and she spoke both Czech and German, and she convinced these people not to take away this woman,
my mother. She pleaded with them, and she told them she [Anna’s mother] had three children. Well, it was because of the intervention of this woman that my Mama wasn’t taken away. I can't even imagine, [stresses repetition], I can't even imagine, what life would have been like [pauses lowers voice] because my mother was the person [sobs] who held everything together.

The Germans were fleeing and at one point Anna’s uncle turned up with his car in the middle of the night and tried to escape with Anna’s family but to no avail as a tire burst and the escape came to a halt and the family returned to their home. Once the Russians had left the Czechs took over the family apartment.

*Expulsion out of home*

There was this policeman, this Czech policeman, who moved into our apartment. So, I remember we moved in with our Oma permanently down there and it was getting crowded, and then we were told we had to leave. And it was sort of you have one hour to pack. [pause]

It is totally amazing what people take when they, you get a really good image of what’s important culturally, when you have one hour to pack. Guess what they took? “Federbetten” [down covers]. It became pretty immaterial. And my mother, by then we had befriended the Czech, who had taken over our apartment, and since he was a policeman, Mama asked him what we should take, she asked for his advice and he said she should definitely take a sewing machine. And guess what happened? He was at the checkpoint where we all had to go through, and he took away the sewing machine and some other things. So! [emphasized] I still did not know that this was not normal. In the meantime, when this happened my father had come back, I remember how emaciated he looked, very emaciated; he was on this ox-drawn cart with some other men. And he never talked about it. They had, and I have no idea about the timeline either, you know. Everything gets sort of telescoped.

Anna picked up on the sentiment held by the ethnic Germans of her village that this would just be a temporary relocation.

So then we were leaving, and I do remember. [cheekily] I'm not kidding when I say I think I was pretty smart because I was listening to these adult folks, you know, talking about "Wir gehen heim ins Reich", we’re going home into the Reich, I had some concept of what the Reich was not really, and I do remember, I know this is my own experience, that this was totally temporary. Just until things settled down. You know, we would go to a safe place until things settled down.
So, we had some belongings. (...) And my father had buried stuff in the woods, things considered valuable.

Anna was expelled together with her entire family consisting of her grandmother, who by then was suffering from Parkinson’s, her parents, her younger sister and brother. They were being rounded up before being shipped out by train. Her father wanted to make her feel more comfortable and allowed Anna to take her little doll’s carriage along.

This was an organized expulsion by the Czech government in agreement with the Potsdam treaty. So some minor form of logistics had been prepared. Anna notes that she had a rucksack with her name tag and train wagon number on it.

Freight train

So, when we were loaded into these, they were not cattle cars because cattle cars have windows, they were freight cars without windows. I do remember the panic when they closed these doors and it was pitch-black, and now we were piled up and that is why I remember the "Federbetten" [down cover]. So, they would pile us up and then put the kids up there, and we all started to scream, there was more than one family, it was "vollgepfercht" [cramped]. Totally. So, when they closed the door, the children all screamed. (...) And that gave us the privilege of an ajar door, slightly opened, so we had some light. (...) And, again I have no idea of a timeline here, but I do know that there were stops and there were camps in between. (...) But I do remember the train stopping and there were latrines in open fields, and so we would go to the latrines. (...) My Oma [grandmother] was already ... she needed help with walking, and there were people from the village, and people helped each other, and so somebody helped Oma to the latrine and then anyway in the excitement we forgot Oma. [pauses] Everybody thought somebody else was taking care of Oma. (...) So, we were in the train when we realized that Oma was missing, the train started to move, and my mother had a hysterical fit, and they stopped the train. They stopped the train, and we retrieved her. (...) and I was gone once (...) there was one stop, I don't know whether it was for food or for latrines, but I got interested in other things, and when the train started to move I was grabbed into another wagon. So, my mother, for I don't know for how many hours, thought that they had lost me. So, I couldn't tell you again how long this lasted.

After their train journey across Czechoslovakia, Anna and her family arrived in a refugee camp on the Bavarian border. Camp life was harsh, people hung up sheets to create some privacy. There were no books to pass the time. “This was not a friendly place” Anna recalls. Women
were harassed and forced to clean the forest floor of pine needles. After some time spent at that camp a train took them deeper into rural Bavaria.

And then we were dumped out of the train in a place, in a railroad station near Wasserburg am Inn. So we slept there on the floor by which time we had very few things left but I think we still had a "Federbett" or two and then some beat-up pots and pans. (...) I do remember sleeping on the cement floor (...) in the railroad station at night and it was cold and we had no idea where we were, and we had no idea, and it just felt...now we were separated from the larger group. (...) And then in the morning a truck picked us up, a lorry, some beat-up pile of metal, and took us to this place. And, my first impression was of that church, in Bavaria they had "Zwiebeltürme" [onion-shaped clock towers], and they have of course the clock on that tower, and it was upside down in that the small hand was showing the minutes and the big hand the hours. It was all wrong. That was our first impression.

And then they took us further out, now we are in the deep, deep boonies of Bavaria, and they dumped us in this farmhouse. Now, it has nothing to do with farmhouses today. So and there is this hapless couple, this old couple, "old" [chuckles] she was probably 50 maybe 60. They didn't even understand our German, and we didn't understand what they spoke, deepest Bavarian dialect. And it was there where my [longish pause]. That's where I felt marginalized for the first time. [pause] And there was this stigma attached to "Flüchtlinge"[refugees]. And of course the farmers had food, and this was also the time when Munich was destroyed and people came out from the city on foot with "Rucksäcken". "Hamstern" do you know what that is? "Hamstern". They took their heirlooms, they took their jewelry. But it was really bartering to get butter, to get eggs, to get bread, there was no food in the city. So, this was the context in which I became conscious. (...)This dispersed settlement. There is this house all by itself and then maybe 300 or 400 meters is a mill, a gristmill, a flower mill, and then two farmhouses. They're all these hamlets I guess we call them, or single farm-steads. But this farm place had no running water, we had an outhouse, it was pathetic, it was dismal. We did not know what these people were saying and from where I sit today, I can just imagine how they felt having this family dumped.

Marginalization and humiliation

Anna and her family experienced what it means to lose everything overnight. Their societal status had gone from respected artisans, who had earned their living and owned a house through hard work, to impoverished marginalized refugees in post-war rural Bavaria trying to survive on food stamps.
(…) my mother sleeps with her mother, who by then is completely disabled and bed-ridden, and maybe my brother sleeps with them. And then maybe my father and I, and my sister sleep in this it's kind of a loft over the barn where my father was a genius. Well, there were "Strohsäcke" [haystacks], but there were also rats and mice. So my father got very thick "Packpapier" [packaging paper] I remember it was pink. And he would wallpaper the whole thing. So once in a while he would squash a mouse under the paper. Ja. This was abject misery! (…) I don't know how we managed. We lived like that for four years. (…) No work around. I remember. Humiliating. This is when I tell you that that's when my marginalization began. Now we were poor. For us now the war had started. During the war we were in a pretty good place. (…)Well, this is where I don't know how my parents. My father too. How they managed to impart upon us the difference between taking potatoes out of a field that did not belong to you because you were starving, and stealing. (…) And what it must be like not being able to feed your children. It must be horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible. Horrible! When you have not done anything to merit that kind of existence. [pauses] I think about my mother every day. Every day. Every day [emotionally]. I don't know how she managed. (…) oh by the way the old farmer had a brick fall on his foot, and of course didn't do anything and had gangrene and they had to amputate his leg, and now he couldn't get upstairs. So, my Mama had to carry this old man upstairs. Demeaning, horrible things like that. That makes you feel pretty marginal. (…) And when you have no shoes, and when you have no clothes, and when you have nothing that fits, you feel marginalized. Now a little bit was true of Germany on the whole, but the distinction between "Flüchtlinge" [refugees] and "Einheimische" [locals] was very clear because we didn't talk like them, and they didn't talk like us. (…) So ja we were from elsewhere, and we had nothing, and we looked poor, and we were poor.

Schooling / Education

Anna went to primary school in a nearby village. Because the school did not have enough space for all the kids they split the students into two groups. One half was taught in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. To get to school she had to walk through the woods. There were tales of a mass murderer who roamed these woods. Once they came across a man who said something threatening. Anna remembers: “So it was a horrible, horrible trial for me to go through these woods and so I would rush, I would run. So the whole world was always full of perils. Perils everywhere.” There were little supplies at the school and people had to be creative
and improvise. So they learnt to read by reading snippets from the local newspaper, and they learnt to write using chalk and a piece of slate with a little sponge attached to it.

Anna was not happy at this school. “I was disruptive and I was disruptive because I was bored stiff, and I needed to be in another school, and my mother tried to get me into a “Gymnasium” [grammar school].” Anna’s mother was told by the nuns who were running this grammar school that her daughter would not be able to do the work. This was again marginalization and discrimination towards refugees. Anna recalls: “They never saw me, they saw my mother, the poor “Flüchtlingsfrau” [refugee woman].” So her teacher had enough of Anna’s disruptive behavior and did the best she could do for her and enrolled her in a “Mittelschule” [middle school], a convent school, which was also run by nuns. Anna attended this school between the ages of 13 and 16 and graduated having learnt some English and French, and a lot of shorthand and typing. She got her first job in Munich working for the “Bayrisches Landesentschädigungsamt” [Bavarian Government Agency for the Restitution of Nazi Victims].

That's where my education began. I worked for a man who had spent eight years in Dachau. I was a “Schreibkraft” (typist). (…)So, anyway, this man, who was not Jewish, he had been a Communist, he helped Jews flee from Germany into Switzerland, and they caught him. And he spent eight years in Dachau. And so I am working in this office with this man, and there were sometimes, (…) a whole week, a whole week, when he talked and I sat there, and I cried. (…) So this is where my education begins, and I was thinking about all the shit the nuns told me about how I should be proud to be German [pauses] Merde! So, then I only had one idea. (…)Well, that's when I started thinking I cannot stay in Germany. I absolutely need to leave Germany. I hate my parents, I hate the church, I cannot stay in Germany, I am so ashamed. I was sixteen years old. It would be good to identify with the place in which you grow up. (…) Germany. How can I be German? (…) and so I went to England.

So, Anna left Germany at the age of 20 to work at a children’s hospital in Manchester, England. She wanted to improve herself so she went to evening classes to receive the Cambridge Certificate in English. After various jobs in England and Germany, Anna decided to be an au pair in Paris to learn French at the age of 23. She was able to establish a contact through her first boss, the concentration camp survivor, who had a friend in Paris. Again, Anna wanted to improve herself and learn French properly and she took classes at the Alliance Française. However, these regular language classes were not enough for her, so she decided to attend conversational classes. This is where she met and befriended a Jewish American woman, who at
the time was roughly the same age as her mother. A year later, Anna was back in Germany and had stayed in touch through letters with the American woman and her husband.

And then, this must have been 1965 around Christmas, I was looking through my address book thinking who do I need to write to, who do I want to write to. (…) And I thought, oh, they haven't written to me in a year now, never mind they dropped me, I am not going to write to them. And something made me think what the hell, I'm going to write to them. Just like that. Instead of feeling rejected, what the hell. I get this letter back, it turns out that they had a suitcase stolen in New York, and it had the address book in it and how smart of me to put the return address on, and how wonderful to have found you again. They were in Mexico at that time and so we were back writing to each other, and then I got a letter saying you sound pretty bored, you need a trip, we want to buy you a trip, and they knew I liked England, and had been to Spain. They said you can also come here, and visit us, but we are old and live in the country and it's pretty boring. (…) I thought oh my God! I need to see the world.

So, in 1966, the American couple sent Anna $2,000 in cash which was a tremendous amount of money in those days and she got on a ship to New York City. After a couple of months of traveling with the couple in the U.S. and Mexico, Anna decided to get a job in New York City. Being trilingual she had no trouble changing her tourist visa into a work visa. While she was working at an international non-profit organization in New York City she started to think about her future and her desire to get an education.

And, it was there that I started to plot in my mind. (…) I saw all these women, and thought I am just as smart as they are (…). I can go to college. I want to go to college. I want to go to university, I want to study. This was my burning desire. (…) I wanted to study. That’s what I wanted to do. Study! And it broke my mother’s heart. (…) So, I was plotting my higher education, and I go to NYU and they say well you don't have a high school diploma; you need to make up and come to evening school in a high school in New York. (…) And that's how I learnt, but I don't know how I learnt this that [there was a university that] took people like me on the basis of an entrance exam. Now I had to pass an exam, and if you pass the exam, which I did, you were admitted as a validation student for one year. (…) So, I started in fall of ’68. (…) When I walked on to that campus (…) every single day I felt like kissing the ground. Throwing myself on the ground, praising the goddess. And, oh my God! This was the height of happiness that one could possibly experience. Now this tells you how deprived I was, right?
Because normally you don't go overboard like that in your reaction to be in a place you want to be unless it was so out of reach and you wanted it so badly.

Essentially, Anna benefited from the G.I. bill which made it easier for the veterans to get a college education without having completed their high school education. The Jewish couple sponsored Anna’s first semester. She then applied for scholarships. Anna completed her undergraduate, master’s and doctoral education. While doing her doctoral research in France she met her future French husband. Anna continued her university degree with a post-doctorate and a teaching position in the southeastern United States and accepted a tenure-track professor position on her 50th birthday at a Midwestern university.

*Emotional homecoming*

By the late 1990s Anna had sponsored a young Czech student, whom she had gotten to know through an exchange at this Midwestern university, to get her Ph.D. in the U.S. It was with this student and Anna’s French husband that Anna returned to the Czech Republic to retrace her family origins. She was very adamant about not revealing her German identity there as she did not want to come across as someone who was trying to reclaim their lost property. And so they spoke French while touring the little village and Anna was very bashful about it all. She did not want the Czech student to ask the owners whether she could have a look around her family home. Her husband and the Czech student kept asking her whether everything was OK.

"Are you ok, are you OK?" Ja, what is your problem? What's your problem, of course I'm OK. So we went to a "Gasthaus" in town, a restaurant, where we ate something. (…) And so we were sitting in this restaurant, and all of a sudden I just wept and wept and wept and wept. [change in voice] Of course I wasn't OK, and the reason I wasn't OK was I kept thinking about my parents. [sobs] They were at the height of their success and of their life, you know. They had worked so hard to build this house. They were respectable artisans. It just was so emotional. I just needed to cry.

*Reflection*

*Long-term psychological effect*

Anna has been left with some long-lasting trauma from the time of expulsion. For instance she cannot tolerate the “slightest insinuation of violence on screens” and for her personal safety has had a burglar alarm installed in her house. Every time she travels and returns home, whenever
she turns the corner of her driveway she wonders whether her house is still standing. And until 10 years ago she kept a considerable amount of boxes in the basement just in case she had to leave at any given moment.

And I think it has to do with these early experiences when everything could always fall apart, and it was so amazing when it didn't just fall apart. And of course the reason that it didn't fall apart is because of my mother, when we were driven out, taken out, apparently we crossed the Elbe and my father wanted to drown us all because he was so desperate. So my mother saw to it that it didn't happen [chuckles]. I am laughing now, but there was some high drama.

The marginalized self

Those early childhood experiences of being marginalized through clothes, language, and status, led to a sense that Anna always feels a bit out of place wherever she is. This is by no means negative. She has actually embraced her marginalized self and did not even realize until pretty late in her academic career that she herself had always been studying marginalized people.

Wherever I am, I am from someplace else. I am always from elsewhere. I am elsewhere when I am in Munich now. I am from elsewhere when I am at my sister's house. I am from elsewhere when I am in France. When I am in the United States I can be from France, but when I am in France I am from elsewhere.

Concept of home

Anna’s concept of home is “situational”, “not a constant state”, “transitional”. It seems like she can make any place her home, if she is happy in it.

Well, I compare it to happiness. I feel very much at "home" in my garden when I have planted plants, and this is my baby back there. I feel very at "home" in Paris, but Paris is not my "home". I feel totally, totally at "home" when I sit on my porch in the summer with or without friends, drink a glass of wine, so it's situational and transitory. Everything is transitory. (…). I think it has to do with how you can live with yourself. I hadn't thought about that!

Mindful of other refugees’ situations

Anna is very mindful of other people’s suffering who have to go through what she went through or even worse.

I cry when I see the news. (…) Or just somebody talking about this. Every single day there are people who go through what I went through. Every single day. Inflicted by other human persons. I am not even talking about natural disasters.
Contingency and opportunity

Anna’s life story is heavily scripted by pure chance. It was a contingency when her father’s colleague intervened and negotiated with Russian troops to save her mother from being deported to Siberia; a contingency that they were not shipped to East Germany; a contingency that a Jewish couple whom she met in France would invite her to America.

If I had to summarize the gist of my life, it is a series of contingencies. [pause] A series of contingencies, and for some reason they all worked out. (...) When I think about the role of contingency. I think it is true in everybody's life but somehow when you are thrown out of your expected trajectory then who knows, there is no more script. (...) There are opportunities but you have to seize them, you know. You have to seize them. You have to embrace them. And so, I think my whole life is a totally unlikely story [pauses] totally unlikely.

Anna’s endless burning desire to overcome hurdles and barriers, to get the education she always dreamt of instilled in her an incredibly strong human agency which she aptly describes as “I shaped my life against all odds.” At a certain point in her life Anna took the risk and started venturing out, when she left Germany for the first time and went to England, this is when she began storying her life as opposed to an if-narrative that could have taken place if she had not shown such a strong urge to go above and beyond. She would not have had the life she storied for herself in Germany.

I think my life, if it hadn't been disruptive, my career would have been very different, because ten years later my baby sister (…) born ten years later, she could have had the life I wanted in Germany. Go to university. She didn't want to. Go to school. I have one niece who went to the University of Munich. (...). So, later on all this is possible. And I had to, I had to fight! (...) I was searching, and groping, and looking, and hoping, and hoping and wanting to have an education. That's what I wanted.

Self-acceptance of German heritage

For Anna it has been a long lasting process to accept her German heritage. The experiences of expulsion and the times in poverty after WWII will always be part of who she is as a person. She talks about a certain “maturity” that comes with old age.

Well, I think I can deal with it in a more mature way now. When I was younger it was...I had to... I fought this battle against Germany. Being German was such a hard thing. So, this is all gone now.
When Anna started out at Columbia University she was scared to speak in class. Again this has to do with her not feeling comfortable at all with her German heritage, especially when there were Jews around. It was quite a struggle for her to overcome this anxiety.

For the first two years in college I never said a word. I was bursting with ideas, I wanted to speak, and my teachers could not figure me out. I got As and I never said a word in class. And I wanted to speak so often and each time just the thought of speaking up with my accent gave me a heart-attack. So I didn't do it. And then eventually I did. I had to.

**Entering a new life stage**

Anna is beginning a new life stage, namely retirement, in which she reevaluates and contemplates about life and what the future may bring. Especially for her French husband who is a good ten years older than Anna, the past is an ongoing topic for him in that he likes to reminisce a lot.

To be married to someone (…), who understands all this, is a great comfort. Some place I read that one is only truly lonely when there is no one around who understands your history. And (…) I understand his history. (…) If it weren't for my husband, I think I would have had to suppress this whole experience. (…) He talks a lot about the past now, I also think it is a function of his age. And so, I live with someone who understands where I come from. He is the only person.

Anna is contemplating on writing her life story but is still searching for the right voice for her narrative. She wants it to be “full of humor and sadness, and joy of life”. As long as she has not found this voice she does not intend to start writing. However, she stresses that this would not be written for the sake that it is not forgotten, but to “clarify things for [herself], and to maybe create something that is aesthetically pleasing and will help [her] perspective, because (…) you learn through writing.”

**America and life satisfaction**

Anna stresses the importance America played in her unlikely life course. “I had figured out that unlike in Europe, in this country you are never too old to change your life. (…) It was the only country where I could change my life that allowed me to.” Where else would they have accepted a 50-year-old for a tenure track position? America offered Anna what she wanted the most - freedom and education.
Anna has storied an unlikely life and is fully aware of how lucky she was to have received all these opportunities which she embraced with utmost discipline and desire.

Oh my God. Ja. [pauses] Very, very content. So grateful! Gratitude is my middle name. (...) Thrilled. Blissful. Blissful. So grateful! So happy! Couldn't have imagined. That's why nobody should plan his or her own life because they couldn't possibly think of all the good things that can happen. So, yes I am totally enamored of my life.

Paul’s narrative

Paul, 91, was born in 1920, in a small town 2 hours north of Belgrade in present-day Serbia, which then was still part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croat and Slovenes, later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the age of 6, he moved with his family to the city of Novi Sad. After 4 years of primary school, during which he had to learn the Serbo-Croatian language in order to be accepted for the 8 years of grammar school, he successfully passed an entrance exam for grammar school. Here, at this classical grammar school, the emphasis was on languages (e.g. French, German, Latin, and ancient Greek) and natural sciences. All classes were in Serbo-Croatian. Paul was the best mathematician of his year. In fact, he would be asked by his teachers to give private coaching to struggling students. Once Paul had graduated from grammar school in 1939, he was studying mechanical engineering for 3 years until WWII had reached Yugoslavia. In 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and occupied it together with its allies Hungary and Italy. Paul recalls

3 The Hungarians were allies of Germany (...) and the Hungarians struck a deal with Germany. They said: We’ll give the Bačka [province were Paul was from], and you’ll give us all Germans in your land who are of German nationality and they will become Hungarian citizens. So, in May (laughs) we became Hungarian citizens. Not only were made citizens, but also swiftly drafted into the military in November or October. Because I was a university student I was directly sent to the officer candidate school. (...) This was a contract between Germany and Hungary. I already had a Hungarian uniform, as well as a Serbian uniform, but never got a chance to wear them. I was from the 1920 cohort, we were 21 year-olds and the best cannon fodder for the military. So, I didn’t wear anything. We had to report for duty in my home town. When I arrived there, it was full of

3 All of Paul’s interview quotes are translated into English from the original German
German officers. (…) There were doctors and all, and we were examined immediately. (…) 30,000 men were transported to Vienna. (…) There was a big SS barracks there. That’s where they divided us up. I was lucky because my papers stated that I was studying mechanical engineering. So, they sent me to the motor vehicle school. (…) When I arrived there, however, they said I needed frontline military training. That’s when I was sent to Dębica, Poland which was like a desert which is where the 7th SS-Cavalry-Division was stationed.

**Exploitation of ethnic German men for military service**

Paul illustrates just how “voluntary” this military service was. “Back then we were known as ethnic Germans. Today, we are known as Danube Swabians. As we were not permitted to serve in the regular German army, the Wehrmacht, they called us volunteers. And all of a sudden we were the voluntary SS division.” Two or three years into his duty Paul went back home on vacation. But because he was a foreigner, as an ethnic German, they were all sent via Vienna to get the correct paper work. And while he was waiting there for his vacation papers, he had to work as a prison guard in an SS prison. This is where he encountered an ethnic German from his hometown of Novi Sad.

I was walking around the prison fully armed, when all of a sudden I heard someone go: Psst! Psst! What is wrong now? I was looking around and I saw this guy trying to get my attention which was strictly prohibited. They could have imprisoned me immediately. Now what do I do? So, I got a little closer, did not stop, and kept on marching with my rifle. And then he said: “Don’t recognize me?” I couldn’t remember who he was. Then he said: “I am from Neusatz, you are also from Novi Sad, aren’t you?” Yes, I am. What are you doing here? “I did not report for duty,” he replied. The Hungarian police had arrested him and handed him over to the SS. This is the chance we faced if we didn’t report for duty. As if this was voluntary! I couldn’t say that I didn’t have any empathy for this guy. He passed a letter to me. He had a wife and three children. I went and visited them, and she hadn’t heard from him in two years and already thought he was dead. She had to promise me not to tell anyone about my visit. She kept her promise. And that is how voluntary we were.

**Harsh cavalry training in Poland, 1942**

Paul experienced very harsh horseback riding training in Poland. He like many of his peers had no idea of horses. They were not given a saddle and had to endure almost 5 weeks of this intensive training. Paul recalls having grazed his entire thighs and backside open. But his instructors had no mercy with his pain.
I was bleeding as I had grazed myself everywhere. At morning assembly, I stood out of line [sick people had to step forward]. “What is wrong with you?” Then I showed him my sores. “That’s no illness. Serve on!” he said. We were all lying in a big round pool. I wasn’t the only one. There were perhaps 10 or 20. We all sat in there with our backsides in the water. It burnt and was painful. (…) The instructors were like savages with us. I couldn’t get on top of a horse anymore. Then he grabbed me, pushed me up, and I fell down on the other side. (…) I just held my arms around the horse’s neck and that’s how we rode around in a circle. (…) One day high ranking officers showed up for inspection. I was assigned to accompany them with three horses. We had already cleared about 4 or 5 kilometers, when all of a sudden in the middle of a birch forest my horse jumped up and threw me off. And away it went. The officers yelled and yelled at me and I had to walk back the 5 kilometers. My horse had already returned to its stable. When you were punished, you had to clean out the stables by hand and pick up the horse manure and put it in a basket. It was inhumane labor and we were treated inhumanely. So, I was punished. And perhaps 2 or 3 days later, I was punished again. That’s when a horse hit me. It jumped up with its hind legs and got me right on the kneecap. My cap was broken and had to be operated on. And then I wasn’t able to do anything anymore. And that’s when someone found out that I was able to speak 3 languages. So, I was transferred to the cavalry reserve division in Warsaw.

Warsaw and Berlin
In Warsaw, Paul was used as an interpreter at the cavalry division court before he was sent out to interpret for the SS who instructed Jewish Croatian prisoners to dig out a drainage system. A Polish ethnic German, who was jealous of Paul’s “cushy” interpreter job, ratted him out to the supervising officers claiming that Paul was telling the slave laborers not to work so hard. Paul was arrested and imprisoned for 4 months in solitary confinement without being tried.

It was December and it was cold, the window was this high and the sun was just barely shining through, and I was lying in this hole and warmed myself. One day an Unteroffizier [sergeant] walks in screams: “Paul, what are you doing in here? (…) I will have to report this immediately.” He knew who I was because I had worked at the cavalry division court with him before. (…) They came back in the afternoon, I had to hand in all my cavalry uniform gear, grab a new uniform, and report ready for duty at 6 p.m. When I entered the office, there were 8 soldiers who guarded me, took me to the railroad station and put me on the express train from Warsaw to Berlin. Straight to the big dogs. [upon arrival in Berlin] “What should we do with you? They didn’t write anything in your transfer papers!” (…) Then I told them that I am able to speak three languages: German, Hungarian, and
Serbo-Croatian. “Oh, well then you will go to the interpreter division.” That’s when they sent me to the interpreter school in Oranienburg. I stayed there for a little while, and then they came back again. I was sent to the Experimental Motor Vehicle Institute.

This was in 1943. The only reason why Paul was able to work there is because prior to the war he had studied mechanical engineering and had already advanced considerably. After two weeks there he was already promoted to the rank of Gefreiter (private). They even wanted to promote him to the rank of officer, however, they noticed that he lacked frontline experience and so he was sent to the western front instead.

Saved again by skills
When Paul arrived in the border region between Belgium and Germany it was late November 1944. He was not well-received there.

When they found out where I came from they said: “Oh, these slackers that don’t do anything! What do you want here?” I replied that I am supposed to get frontline experience. “People like you don’t need any frontline experience, as they are worth nothing anyway!” I was accepted anyhow. I was there for 4 weeks. [The western front] was full of bugs. It was all terribly dirty. And then the time came when the Battle in the Ardennes began. Anyways, we received some quick training there and then we had to form up, and all 4 companies were standing in line. All of a sudden the office clerk turns up and shouts: “Paul! Paul!” Here! I replied. The company leader pulled me out and asked: “What do you want with this guy?” “We need a driver and, and Paul has 4 licenses.” They had two trucks and no driver. “Hand in all your uniform and gear, and take over a truck!” I took the truck, and that was my luck. They gave me instruction which route to take. There were very important papers in the back of that truck as they were all locked. The destination was perhaps 50 kilometers from the western front near Bonn. I drove the truck to the house, it was a bike dealer. And they forgot that I was there. I spent Christmas with those people. They had an empty room and a nice bed. I stayed there until February, [1945] I believe.

Flight of Paul’s parents: unlikely helpers
While this was going on Paul’s parents fled from their hometown of Novi Sad. They fled from the Russian and communist Yugoslavian partisan forces that were moving in quickly. Paul’s father had a tractor from the company he worked for. Paul’s parents packed all the important
company documents together, took the typewriters and a few personal belongings. They travelled north from village to village. They travelled from Yugoslavia to Hungary to Austria as far as the Lake of Constance. There they were sent to Silesia and then back again. Paul recalls

I did not know where my parents were anymore, I only found them after the war. In Breslau, Silesia, the mayor told them they had to turn back. They were stopped by the Czechs and they stole everything. The tractor, all the typewriters, everything. In Czechoslovakia, they were lying on hay in a school. The school was full of refugees. The Czechs had even stolen my mother’s clothes, they had simply taken everything. And then she was sitting outside on the stairs and was crying because she had lost everything, when a Jeep came along. It was a Russian Jeep. And the officer saw that my mother was crying, got out, and began speaking in Russian. My mother said that she can’t speak Russian. Then he continued in German. My mother said that he spoke perfect German. She told him what had happened and he said: “Come back here together with your husband at 3 a.m. in the morning. And bring whatever belongings you still have along with you.” And in the early morning he returned with a driver, put my parents in the back of the Jeep, drove them to the Danube near Bratislava, put them on a Russian motor boat and crossed the Danube. (…) And then people say that there’re only good and bad people. (…) And from there they carried on to Vienna because my cousin and her husband lived there and they had a spacious apartment.

*Flight of Paul’s wife*

Paul’s wife, whom he did not marry until after the war in 1948, fled at the very last moment. The Russians were there already. My wife, her sister and mother (…) gathered as much together as they could already hear the thunder of the cannons. “It’s time. We need to get out of here before we die,” they thought. They were afraid they weren’t going to make it and so they left. They were perhaps able to take a suitcase not more. They hitch-hiked from Novi Sad all the way to Germany. There, the German government sent them all to Silesia first of all. But it was all over there as the Russians were already coming there too. They stayed at a little farming village on a farm near Breslau.

In the meantime Paul had found out from his cousin in Vienna that his wife and her family had fled to a village near Breslau. By chance Paul was able to get some vacation papers and was able to join the trio in that village.

The Silesian farmer had a tractor and my wife, her mother and sister fled from Breslau. Meanwhile, I had arrived there. And the farmer said: “Oh well, there is room in this tractor you can come along!” So, I too went along and travelled with
the family for 8 hours. We were just ahead of all the artillery shelling. And it was thundering and lightning everywhere. And then the farmer got stuck because the snow was so deep. He got too annoyed with it all and decided to turn around.

Back in the village Paul came across his future father-in-law’s brother who also wanted to get out of this place. When Paul got back to the railway station, a neighbor told him he should try and ask the military perhaps they will get them out.

So, I went there [where the military was stationed], and they were all SS. “Heil Hitler, comrade! What can we do for you?” “I’m lost, and would like to get out of this hellhole! And what are you doing here?” I replied. “We’re leaving early tomorrow morning.” “I have five people including me. Can you take us with you?” “My dear comrade, did you think we were going to leave you?” he said. He immediately got this comrade tone, you know. The Wehrmacht would not have done this for an SS-man. So, we left early next morning. (…) The snow was deep and we had minus temperature, it was very cold. I had even managed to get them to take my father-in-law’s brother and his wife and two children, in addition to the family of my wife. All of a sudden we came to a halt. It was the German military police. They [the families] were all clear but I was in trouble. They got me off the truck. The asshole started yelling at me. I told him: “I’m a Yugoslavian-German, an ethnic German. We are fleeing from communism and I have my wife with me and she has no means to get out of here. And finally I have found a way, and I want to get my wife out of here now.” “We can take her along for a certain stretch,” he said. (…) Now we were all at a Catholic monastery. So, they took us all off the truck and took me away. And I negotiated with them for so long and told them “Now my wife is going to get lost again!” And then a major came and gave me new service papers. And from there I was sent to Frankfurt am Main because they thought the SS was there. (…) My wife and family carried on westward until Thuringia. Away from the thunder! Always westward! The roads were full of refugees. Thousands, hundreds of thousands. (…) They went there, because they knew someone in Thuringia, and from there they carried on to Bavaria.

Paul’s final WWII experience

Paul was sent from Frankfurt to Berlin. There he tried to get out of having to face the Russians by escaping to the nearby motor vehicle institute he used to work for before he had been sent to the western front. They knew exactly where his division was and issued him the correct service papers. They sent him to Hungary near Lake Balaton. What normally would have taken them 5 or 6 days by train took them 4 weeks due to all the end-of-war chaos which had spread all over
Germany. Paul recalls: “On the inside I did not care about it all anymore. The war was over. It was total chaos.” They would stop for several days at a time in various different locations. It was a very long journey. It was March, 1945 already.

And then finally we arrived in Hungary and my division was actually there. This is where it almost all came to end for me (…) I was immediately sent to my unit and the company leader, who couldn’t speak Hungarian, assigned me to be his interpreter. So I travelled with him in his Volkswagen. (…) I was sent to the frontline. The Russians came with such force that I was already injured on day 5 or 6 of the battle. They came with tanks, and we didn’t have any. They drove over our trenches, turned around, and buried us in them. We all jumped out of our holes. I was shot from behind. (…) The Russians went over our heads, and we all fell flat on to our faces. Those who were still alive were shot in the back of the neck. I pretended to be dead and waited. I think my nerve endings froze up there. It was freezing cold in March. (…) I have tons of dead nerves in my foot. (…) So, I was lying there and I couldn’t go anywhere as they were all around us. Every now and then a soldier came along and kicked someone with his foot to see if they were still alive. So, I was lying there like that from 2:30 p.m. until 11 p.m. at night. I was half-frozen. And then in the cover of darkness it got quiet, and I started to crawl on all fours. There was a farmhouse, and I saw a wall and pulled myself up on it, and I let out a sigh of relief, as I saw German soldiers. “Hello! Help me! Help me!” I cried. Then one of them turned around and shouted: “Germanski!” They were all Russians, who were wearing German uniforms. Let me tell you something, I could not walk anymore, but when I heard them, I jumped up like a rabbit, down the hill, all the way down, and then I collapsed and couldn’t go any further. That’s when I didn’t care about it anymore; if I was going to be shot, I was going to be shot. I may have been there for another hour or so. I was lying in a ditch so I had a little cover. All of a sudden I heard this noise: “Click, click, click.” Oh dear, now what am I supposed to do? (…) I did not have a rifle I just had a pistol. He came closer and closer, and it rattled and rattled. (…) And when he had almost made it to me, I pulled my revolver and said: “стоп!” (Freeze!) I was able to speak a bit of Russian. And just as I had said it, all of a sudden he said: “Paul, is that you?” (…) The company leader had sent someone out to search for me. “You can put your hands down now! I am not going to hurt you!” He was pushing a motorbike, and because it was rattling and he knew the Russians weren’t far, he was scared of starting the engine. He put me on his motorbike and took me to the next field doctor, who was already half undressed, the cannon fire was thundering all over. He put me on the table, took of my boot and blood came running out of it. He cut everything open, gave me all sorts of injections, and with the first transport I was shipped out to Ráb and then to Regensburg. And while I was in hospital there the war had ended.
**American prisoner of war**

Three days later the Americans came and took over the hospital, rounded up all the men and put them into a prisoner of war (POW) camp just outside of Regensburg. From there they were transferred to a larger detainee camp outside Nuremburg which was full of ethnic Germans from Rumania and Yugoslavia, almost 100,000 SS men according to Paul’s estimates. By chance Paul knew the tailor of the camp. He allowed him to leave the camp with a guard. And that’s when he met his future wife again. She had found out about him through the tailor and through the common search method everyone used.

They were all German women whose husbands were dead or missing, and had no one and were refugees. They would go from village to village and look for their husbands. They left their addresses everywhere and also checked other addresses, and I was on one of them, and that’s how my wife found out where I was, and then she found out from a different list where my parents were. And she wrote to them telling them where I was.

Paul, was lucky, when he returned to camp one day, all the Yugoslavs had been handed over to the French and shipped away to serve in their Foreign Legion in Africa. He was then transferred to a detainee camp for officers near Landshut. These officers needed servants to clean out their cabins and polish their boots.

**Attempted repatriation and remainder of POW time**

The Americans tried to send the Yugoslavian-Germans back to Yugoslavia. Paul recalls

> All of a sudden we got the order: “All Yugoslavian-Germans step outside! We are going home to Yugoslavia!” Nobody wanted to go because we knew that it wasn’t going to end well for us. Three thousand men. That was a long train. It was a disgrace. We couldn’t even go to the toilet. I had to squat down at the Salzburg station and go about my business on the platform. There were 40 people in one wagon. We went from Landshut via Munich and Salzburg all the way down to the Yugoslavian border. The Americans tried to hand us over to the Yugoslavs. Of the 3,000 men, they took about 260 or so. And apparently they were all shot on the other side of the border. (…) So, the train had to turn around and we headed back to Germany to Bad Aibling. And from then on it got better for me.

Paul got a job at the camp in Bad Aibling as he had the skills to drive big trucks and the Americans needed truckers. 4,000 POWs applied to get the job and only 25 were accepted. For
the remainder of his POW sentence which lasted 1.5 years until 1946 he drove this truck with a Polish guy from New York who was a bit of crook.

We often drove to Munich, because it was only an hour’s drive. And he always had all sorts of stuff with him and knew exactly where the black market was. He even would have sold the truck if I had let him. I told him that I would be imprisoned if he did. (...) He also bought cloth for suits, and I would take them to my tailor friend in the camp, and he would make suits for us. (...) When the day of my release came I had maybe 300 to 400 American cigarettes, two tailored suits, three pairs of shoes, and all sorts of other stuff. (...) I was dressed better as a civilian than the people who lived there. That was the nice part, but everything else was shit.

Paul went back to stay with his future wife’s family. They had an uncle who had lived in America since 1921 and he sent them all necessary travel documents so they could emigrate to America. Paul could not go along, because he was automatically flagged as a war criminal having been a member of the SS. His future wife did not want to leave him behind so they quickly got married in 1948 and her parents could not object. So, they left Paul and their daughter behind until they were ready to emigrate.

*Life in post-war Germany*

Paul and his wife lived in one room of a farmhouse. The government confiscated the room and gave it to refugees. Everything took place in this little room: cooking, washing, bathing, sleeping, all in one room. The owner of the farm was not amused, but his kids did not mind the company. In the first couple of years they froze a lot as they did not have any firewood. Paul knew a metal manufacturer who lived in Stuttgart and made nails but did not have any food. They had enough food on the big farm. So, Paul would trade food for nails. Even the mayor of the small village wanted to have nails so Paul sold him some nails. Then the Catholic priest of the village wanted to have nails and the Catholic Church there did not like to interact with the refugees, but Paul had nails and so they paid in firewood. They did not have to freeze anymore.

People were creative and made the most of the little opportunities they had to survive. There was a flourishing black market and everybody was bartering goods. After two years of living in the small room, they were able to move to a two-roomed apartment and improve their life quality a little.
Hostilities towards ethnic Germans

Paul recalls that it was difficult being an ethnic German in Bavaria but he never felt marginalized.

The Bavarians did not like us. They said we prolonged the war. They claimed that if we ethnic Germans hadn’t come, the war would have been over a lot earlier. Now it has calmed down, but back than people were very hostile towards ethnic Germans.

De-Nazification process

Despite the fact that Paul was never a Nazi party member and was a non-voluntary SS soldier, it was standard procedure to put all SS men on a war criminal list until proven innocent. This made it impossible for Paul to get a job or continue his university education. He had to report his whereabouts to the U.S. military police on a monthly basis. His defense statement to the Bavarian Spruchkammer [civilian court] demonstrates that he was ordered to serve in the Hungarian army until Germany and Hungary signed a bilateral agreement that all ethnic German soldiers of the Hungarian army were to be placed at the disposal of the Waffen-SS for the duration of the war.

It took Paul a full 2 years to prove his innocence. Paul was acquitted on March 25, 1948. The courts explanatory statement reads

4The thorough examination of files has lead to the following facts. The person concerned was a member of the Waffen-SS from 1942 to 1945. (...) According to article 34 of the law he made use of his rights to convince the court by providing it with credible evidence that he was not a voluntary SS-man but was forcefully enrolled into this unit. He delivered this proof credibly. Due to the bilateral treaty between Germany and Hungary he was transferred from the Hungarian army to the German Waffen-SS. He did not carry rank in this unit. No evidence emerged that he made himself culpable of any crimes during his service. He also was never a fascist party member. (...) There are no suspicious facts to be found that the person concerned fundamentally advanced and supported the Nazi system of violence, brutality and crime. Due to these facts the court came to the conclusion: He was not a voluntary member of the Waffen-SS, was not a member of the party or any other fascist organization. (...) The case is closed.

4 Translated from the original letter of acquittal Paul received from the Bavarian Spruchkammer
Off to America in 1952

Paul was relieved to have his status cleared. Now he was ready to follow his wife’s family to America. When he went to the consulate in Munich to get his papers ready the officer in charge asked why he had disclosed all of his military history. Paul replied that he did not want to go to America as an imposter. Paul recalls

The consul was a great man. He issued me a special political refugee passport which was for people who were being prosecuted by communists. The only condition was that I had to leave the country within 10 days. Our uncle [in America] quickly did all the paper work for us. He quickly changed the boat ticket into an air ticket. So, we flew from Munich to Copenhagen, and from Copenhagen to Hamburg, and from Hamburg via Scotland to New York. It took us 24 hours I believe. The weather was so bad they could not fly on. Luckily enough I had a cousin there and she begged the authorities that we could spend the night with her as we had our 7-month old daughter with us. Back then it was still called Idlewild Airport, but it was just a bunch of barracks. There were no big buildings. Dirt everywhere. It was pelting it down, and I was dirty up to my ankles. And the next day we flew to [the Midwest] and our uncle picked us up with his car.

Starting a work life

Paul was not able to speak much English and he had not completed his engineering degree, so he decided to pick the closest apprenticeship which was tool and die making. He signed a contract for the job on the second day in the U.S. at the age of 33. Paul was quickly awarded more responsibility as he knew a lot more than an apprentice. His boss even gave him a $7,000 loan so he could start off his life and rent a house. 10 years later he moved on to a big car manufacturing company. Paul recalls working 16 to 18 hours a day. “I worked hard. I wasn’t the youngest anymore. I had to see to it that I got somewhere.” He retired in 1985.

Reflection

Initial hesitation to stay

The year they came to the U.S. Paul had the flu three times, and did not deal well with the unfamiliar heat. In fact it was so hot that he slept in a bath tub of cold water one night. His wife was scared he might drown. So, Paul told his boss that he could not stay any longer because his health was such an issue. And his boss urged him to stay another year. “If you can get used to it,
then you can live anywhere in the world,” he said. The following year was a beautiful summer and Paul felt great and did not miss a single day.

After 3 months, Paul was able to speak a small amount of English as he was required to take lessons. However, he never lost his German accent. He remembers going to his kids’ school parent meetings and not being able to say all that much. Over the years they acquired the language, by “reading and watching TV. It was learning by doing.”

*Concept of “home”*

Paul remembers that in the beginning he did not feel at home because he could not express himself in the way he wanted to. He just spoke broken English for a considerable amount of time. Paul defines his concept of “home” through citizenship.

We are both American citizens here. If someone, an American, asks me, I replied: “I’m German.” I never deny it, even if they call me a Nazi. That’s something that does not belong there. Then I say: “I’m German, but I’m of German origin.” If they say something against that, then I say: “Well, nobody was Indian here. They are all something else. They are Irish, Italian, or whatever they are.” “So, I continue by saying: “I’m not a national. I’m not an American national. I am of German origin, but I am an American citizen.”

*Return visit to Yugoslavia in 1967*

In 1967, Paul and his wife were allowed to return to their country of origin for the first time since the 1940s. He recalls almost being almost hugged to death by his Jewish friends.

It was my former neighbor, a Serb. (…) He told me exactly what had happened back then. He said that my parents left at 2.30 a.m. in the night because the Russians were so close already. At 6 a.m. our house had been occupied already. The partisans moved into our place, and they cleared everything out and by midday it had been completely looted.

Paul remembers from reports of his mother-in-law’s aunt that those ethnic Germans who were not in the position to flee faced some atrocities.

The Russians took as many people as they wanted. My mother-in-law’s father died in Siberia of homesickness. They took them all along and they had to work in mines in Russia and Rumania. (…) Many women were raped. That’s what my mother-in-law and wife were so scared of. For instance my mother-in-law’s aunt
was raped by 20 Russian men and others just stood around and watched. There was a lot of hatred. They were raped and nobody could do anything about it.

Coping with WWII experiences

Paul says that he has overcome these experiences for the most part. Very rarely does he have flashbacks and that is only when he create some associations with his past. He personally does not reflect much about it. “What I’ve forgotten, I have forgotten anyway,” he adds. He does not have an inner need to tell his stories so they will not be forgotten. He sometimes tells his grandchildren about his experiences, but generally shares very little. They have asked him to write a book about his experiences. Paul notes: “I do not have enough interest in the topic that I could write a book about it. (…) I’ll be 91 in three weeks. I want to have time to spend with my family.” In regard to his wife, he believes that she has outlived it all. Paul, however admits: “Sometimes I get annoyed about what they did with us. But it’s history. It’s over.”

America

The reason Paul emigrated was the fact that he wanted to finish his studies in Bavaria but was not allowed to do due to his legal status. He could not start an apprenticeship either because he was too old as they normally take teenagers and not 28-year-old adults. And nobody accepted his university education because it was not a completed degree.

Paul is very satisfied with the way his life turned out and that it was the right decision to leave Germany and come to America. He is very thankful for having been given a second chance to start all over.

I immediately understood that here in America, if you want to carry something out, then you do it. And you can actually do it. Who would have employed a man [in Germany] who is 33 years old when he starts his apprenticeship? In Germany the maximum age was 14. (…) Well, here I was able to create a whole new existence. I came here and the following day I was an apprentice already. Just one day. Over there [in Germany] I would have had to wait an additional year perhaps even longer because they never accepted older adults as apprentices. (…) I have everything I need here. I am satisfied.
Part II – Thematic Analysis

The narratives of Anna and Paul have common themes as well as stark differences. Figure 1 presents an overview of the themes. There are five themes in common and four themes that distinguish Anna and Paul from each other.

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Figure 1: Overview of Themes

Violations

This theme contains all the violations in the narratives of human rights, privacy and property. The violations in Anna and Paul’s narratives of initial expulsion and flight from their homeland included violence, revenge, rape, flight, expulsion, confiscation of property, and train transports. There are, however, slight differences in the way that Anna describes violations compared to Paul. Anna experienced the violations as she was actively expelled whereas Paul was forced into the military and did not experience expulsion, but was involved in it only once when he organized the flight of his wife and her family. They both experienced the deportation by train yet from a different perspective, namely that of a child and that of an adult. The difference here being that Paul actually was fully aware what was happening and knew where he was headed to, but Anna had only a vague concept of what was happening which is probably more traumatizing for a child than for an adult.

Contingency

Both Anna and Paul’s narratives are filled with contingencies. The biggest contingency is that they are still alive, survived this horrific time in their lives and get to tell their stories. Anna specifically refers to her life as a “series of contingencies”. The plea of her father’s colleague to save her mother from being transported to Siberia is a contingency. It is a contingency that a
Jewish couple invited a German girl to come to America. These contingencies always led to new opportunities to go down a new path. They gave Anna a new way to story her life against all odds.

*Education*

Education played a very important role in both narratives. It literally saved both their lives. If Anna’s father’s colleague had not been able to speak Russian to intervene and plea for their mercy, nobody knows what would have happened to Anna and her siblings. Paul’s education prior to WWII, especially his language and engineering skills, saved his life on numerous occasions. He would not have been saved at Lake Balaton, he would not have been pulled away from the Western Front to drive a truck, and not have had the luxury of driving a truck as a POW in Bavaria.

Anna was yearning for an education which she was denied in Germany because she was a marginalized ethnic German refugee and in patriarchal, rural Bavaria of the 1950s girls were prepared to be good Bavarian house wives, not scholars. Anna was able to get this education abroad through a string of contingencies paired with tremendous desire to improve herself and acquire the university education she had always dreamt of.

Paul already had an almost completed university degree in mechanical engineering before he was forced to serve in the SS. After he was released as a POW in Bavaria, he desperately wanted to finish his degree but was not allowed to due to his war criminal status. Not being able to speak much English, the fastest way to make a living was to start an apprenticeship in the U.S. as a tool and die maker.

The theme of education can be assigned to the first principle of the life course in which Elder et al. (2003) note that human development is a lifelong process. Education is a key factor of human development which in the case of Anna and Paul led to new opportunities over time. Mirowsky and Ross (2005) attribute life-long education with accumulating advantages such as higher socio-economic status and better physical health in old age. These effects are visible in both Anna and Paul’s narratives.
Human agency

The individual agency to survive and not give up is evident in many different aspects of these narratives. In Anna’s narratives about her mother being the rock and “keeping it all together” when times were very tough in post-war rural Bavaria shows how important human actions are for further life course trajectories. Not only are they actions within the families but also from strangers that shape the life course trajectories (i.e. the intervention of Anna’s father’s colleague; Paul being rescued; Paul’s parents being helped by Russian soldiers).

Both Paul and Anna showed remarkable human agency when they decided to start out in America and story a new existence for themselves by embracing the opportunities they were given and investing an incredible amount of hard work to fulfill their dreams and overcome boundaries. Elder et al. (2003) define agency as the second principle of the life course perspective. Individuals go beyond societal constraints by actively making life choices, embracing opportunities, and shaping their lives into certain directions.

“If-narrative”

Both Anna and Paul came to a major crossroads in their lives before they immigrated to America in which they had the option between the path of the “if-narrative” in Germany and the “storied-narrative” in America. By actively choosing to emigrate, they began to story lives which ran parallel to the “if-narratives” which functioned as an extra source of motivation to succeed with their chosen paths. Anna hints at this by stating what may have been possible for her in Germany: “I would have been a dissatisfied, frustrated housewife, divorced, you know.” She certainly would not have been able to fulfill her dream of a university education in post-war Germany.

Societal forces

Societal pressures waged on both Anna and Paul in post-war rural Bavaria. In this regard, the cohort difference between the two makes a huge difference. For an adult who was independent it will have been a lot easier than for a small girl who had to grow up in these hostile environments. Paul felt more disempowered being an ethnic German, whereas Anna felt totally marginalized. Paul had an education and was not allowed to work or study due to his legal status; he was not dressed poorly and did not lack food on the farm. Anna, however, did not have an
education and was denied access to a Catholic school just because she was a refugee. Moreover, her family barely survived at their assigned living quarters in the barn of a tiny farm and food was scarce.

*Self*

Again the cohort difference becomes clear. Paul, having come of age before and spent his young adult years in the military, did not deny his German identity. Whereas, Anna on the other hand, went through an identity crisis after she had worked together with the Dachau concentration camp survivor at the age of 16. She began to hate everything German when she found out about the horrific crimes against humanity committed by Nazi Germany. Only later in life did she become more comfortable with her origin and accept her German heritage. Their concept of “self” also expresses itself in their concept of “home”. Anna sees “home” as a transitional state of happiness which is not necessarily geared towards one specific location. Paul defines “home” through his American citizenship. It is clear to him that he belongs here and that this is his home, but he does not deny his German origin.

*Time and place*

Time and place is also essential to their life course development. Paul experienced WWII in the military, whereas Anna had a beautiful early childhood in the small spa town of the Sudetenland. The war started for her when it ended for Paul. They both ended up in rural Bavarian farmhouses. Yet their experiences were very different. Paul and his wife were assigned a farm that had plenty of food and was located in a small village, whereas Anna’s family barely had any food on a farm that was isolated. This was certainly to the disadvantage of Anna and her family.

Elder et al. (2003) note time and place as the third principle of the life course perspective. Depending on historical time and geographic location, an individual may experience varying impacts on future life course trajectories in terms of advantages or disadvantages. When Anna came to America she profited from the G.I. Bill which created educational admissions that allowed people to go to university even if they had not graduated from high school. She was at the right place at the right time and she had what it took to succeed. Post-war Bavaria was the wrong place at the wrong time for her which was not the case for Anna’s 10 year younger sister.
who could have gone to university if she had wanted. This was not an option for Anna though. The same can be said about Paul. When he came to America he was fortunate to get an apprenticeship at the age of 33. He had the skills to succeed and make a living. He did not have those opportunities in post-war Bavaria.

Campos (2010) suggests a two-dimensional model of place over time. He suggests there are four quadrants which explain how contingencies affect the life course (see Figure 2). In the light of the narratives of Anna and Paul, there are numerous examples which fit into the four different quadrants. Anna for instance, was in the wrong place at the right time in Bavaria to get a higher education which she so desperately wanted and by chance got the right place in America at the right time. Paul was in the wrong place at the wrong time when Germany and Hungary signed an agreement to conscript all ethnic German men into the German military. Life course trajectories are affected by these constellations which are out of our control and subject to fortune. Yet, as the life courses of Anna and Paul show that strings of contingencies led to opportunities which, paired with tenacity and hard work, led to success.

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*Figure 2: Quadrant of Chance and Circumstance*
*Source: Campos, 2010.*

**Timing**

Due to the events of WWII and flight and expulsion, the normative life courses of Anna and Paul were interrupted. This led to delays in their envisioned life trajectories. Paul had to start all over in his 30s. Anna fulfilled her dreams by going to university in her late 20s and receiving her tenure-track professor position on her 50th birthday. Yet, the struggle for Anna to get an education was greater because of the timing. She had to go through the marginalizing and humiliating experience of being an impoverished refugee girl in rural Bavaria. She and her
parents had to fight for her to get an adequate education. Whereas Paul already had an education with an incomplete degree, and knew that he could not get a job or finish his degree in Germany and was fortunate to have an affluent uncle who sponsored the emigration to America. There is also a difference in how they dealt with their experiences. For Anna it all occurred in early childhood. It has had long-lasting psychological effects such as wondering whether her house is still there upon return from a vacation, or storing empty boxes in the basement. Whereas Paul who did not experience expulsion, but was involved in the flight of his wife and family, did not mention any such lingering effects. It seemed like he had been very lucky to not have seen much action until he was wounded at the end of the war. It is also possible that he simply did not feel comfortable sharing these emotions with me.

Elder et al. (2003) list “timing” as the fourth principle of the life course perspective. Life events have varying impact on life courses depending on the timing of these events in an individual’s life. If the timing of expulsion and displacement had been different for Anna and Paul, their lives may have taken a totally different path. If Paul had had a completed degree in mechanical engineering he may have stayed in Germany and got a job. Anna may have never emigrated to America if she already had completed her education prior to expulsion.

**Life course perspective**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the life course perspective lends itself well to these life narratives. The five paradigmatic life course principles of life-span development, agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives presented by Elder et al. (2003) are all included in these narratives to varying degrees.

Anna and Paul show a tremendous amount of growth throughout their life courses in all phases from early childhood to adulthood and old age. Anna’s path is quite staggering. Starting out as a typist at the age of 16 and accepting her tenure-track professor position at the age of 50 demonstrates her development through constant self-improvement. Paul does not start an apprenticeship as a tool and die maker until he is 33 but finishes as a top mechanical engineer for a major car manufacturer when he retires at the age of 65.

The principle of agency is evident in the way Anna and Paul turn adversity and hardship into actively seeking to improve their lives. Taylor (1983) describes this psychological process as a step of cognitive adaptation in which the life prior to the stressful event tries to be restored.
Anna even managed to overcome the disadvantages she faced as an impoverished refugee child, and make the right life choices (i.e. going to the UK and France) to accept opportunities that were provided to her due to her fearless human agency. Without her endless yearning for an education and actively seeking these life contingencies, she would not have been presented with these opportunities. In other words, passivity can severely hinder possible life trajectories. If Anna had been passive and not desired for more French classes and enrolled in a conversation class, she would have never met the Jewish American woman who turned out to be her springboard to America.

The principle of time and place is also highly relevant to the narratives of Anna and Paul. When analyzing these data one has to keep in mind that these events took place in different geographical locations at different points in time. Paul’s childhood took place between 1920 and 1936 in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as the son of an academic. Anna’s childhood from 1940 to 1956 as the daughter of an artisan, for the most part took place in the war-battered and recovering Bavaria. Times and places changed for Anna and Paul throughout their life courses and influenced these life narratives considerably. Alwin and McCammon (2003, p.24) note that “how people think about the social world around them may depend as much on what was happening in the world at the time they were growing up as it does on what is happening in the present.” This may explain the difference in which Anna and Paul view their experiences of WWII and post-war Bavaria. For Anna these were the formative years of her childhood. For Paul, as 25 year-old man, the end of WWII meant a time of being a POW and the struggles to create an existence for him and his wife after his release.

The principle of timing is an important factor in life course perspective. The timing of an event can have varying long-term effects on the individual (George, 1993). Anna experienced marginalization as a child in post-war Bavaria for the first time in her life. This feeling has not left her as she states in her “I’m always from elsewhere” narrative. The question is what made Paul’s experience of post-war Bavaria so different that he did not feel marginalized. Perhaps it is the issue of timing, or the age difference between the two, or the luck of being placed on a farm that had plenty of food and was not isolated. It may be a single factor or a combination of many that led to the different experiences of post-war life in Bavaria. Moreover, it may well also have to do with the timing of the interview in Paul’s life course. If it had been 20 years earlier, he may well have had totally different feelings and insights about his experiences.
The principle of linked lives is illustrated by the fact that historical event of expulsion had an effect on all the interdependent family structures. Anna’s mother is depicted by Anna as the person in the family “who kept everything together”. The desperation of Anna’s father in post-war Bavaria will have effected how Anna felt about her situation. Not only were there effects on the micro family level, but also on the larger group. While they were being shipped out on trains Anna recalls that “people helped each other” especially when the trains stopped.
Chapter Five: Conclusions

In this narrative inquiry, I wanted to shed light into the life courses of ethnic Germans who experienced expulsion, flight or displacement at the end of WWII. I wanted the reader to get an impression of how Anna and Paul experienced these life events in their own words. Having their voices heard was an important part of this study.

Before the data collection began for this inquiry, I had decided to focus on two research questions: How did ethnic Germans experience expulsion, flight, or displacement at the end of WWII? How did they transition through the life course with these experiences? These questions do not have straight answers. There is no single theme that answers all, but instead it is a combination of themes that can shed light into understanding these phenomena. I was able to find nine themes in the narratives of which five were common themes (violations; contingency; education; human agency; “if-narrative”) and four distinguishing themes (societal forces; self; time and place, and timing). The experiences these two ethnic Germans had at the end of WWII were influenced by several factors such as the timing of these events in their lives, where they were at the time the events occurred, and what their societal contexts were. These experiences are highly individual and vary in their scope and depth. Both Anna and Paul have unique narratives. They faced and overcame adversity by starting a new life in America, by taking their destiny into their own hands, and actively “storying” their lives as opposed to a non-satisfactory “if-narrative” they may have had in Germany.

Regarding the question of how ethnic Germans dealt with these life experiences over time, Kuwert et al. (2009, p. 748) report that WWII expellees are significantly linked to “higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of resilience and life satisfaction 60 years later.” Anna’s narrative shows some long-term psychological effect, i.e. having kept empty moving boxes at hand, or thinking that her house is gone upon return from vacations. Yet, her resilience levels and life satisfaction appear to be very high. If she had not started a new existence in America, would she have been in line with these findings by Kuwert et al.? The answer to this question will never be known. Anna says that the experiences are part of her and that she thinks of her mother every day, yet she does not reflect much about the early childhood events that profoundly shaped her life. For Paul, who is 20 years older than Anna, these events are history and he does not think about them at all anymore, unless specifically asked about.
Major points

First, the age-period-cohort effect is clearly evident in the way Anna and Paul tell their narratives and how it affected their lives, especially in post-war rural Bavaria. Living through these harsh times was a lot easier as an independent adult man than a dependent young girl. Anna and Paul grew up in different countries, in different political systems, and under different economic circumstances. This constellation, in combination with the age-period-cohort effect and the life course principles of timing and time and place can be seen as the basic reason for the differences in the WWII and post-war experiences of Anna and Paul. The life trajectories of Anna and Paul also relied on a lot of contingencies.

Second, the plasticity of the life course is not achieved through scripting one’s life but through embracing opportunities presented to one and applying the necessary human agency to convert them into successes. However, these opportunities do not always lead to success and may well create new barriers especially in different historical periods. Moreover, the life course is not scripted and these narratives prove that life courses can be rather unlikely, full of turning points, contingencies, and adversity, which cannot be foreseen in advance. And the effects of these contingencies, no matter to which of Campos’s (2010) combinations they can be assigned to, were significant to the further trajectories of their lives. The plasticity is largely a result of the individual’s human agency to overcome adversity, to not be satisfied with one’s situation, to want to improve one’s life, and not accept that destiny or fortune controls one’s life. In short, human passivity ends the ability to create life chances and opportunities for oneself.

Third, the life course can be seen not as a set of phases but as an ongoing narrative which individuals can story to a certain extent. Randall (1996) notes how life narratives can be “restoried” when facing profound change on a micro or macro level. Yet, life narratives can only be “restoried” if the societal context is conducive to individual human agency. The example of Paul’s narrative shows how the macro forces hindered Paul to “restory” his life in post-war Bavaria and led him to seek a new existence in America. Hence, the macro forces have a considerable power in shaping life course trajectories of the individual; they can either inhibit or advance them.
Fourth, education proved to be essential in the life courses of Anna and Paul. Without education they would not have survived. Education was the key to their successful life course trajectories. However, education alone was not enough. It required a tremendous amount of hard work and endurance to overcome the adversity they had to face and start a new existence in the United States of America.

Limitations

Considerations about the sample size

In Groger, Mayberry, and Straker’s (1999) “What We Didn’t Learn Because of Who Would Not Talk to Us,” several important sampling challenges are raised. It is important to consider what insights I may have gleaned from a larger and more diverse sample. Furthermore, the moment we add one narrative to the first, we begin the business of comparison, and comparison in qualitative projects with their small sample sizes are inevitably linked by the characteristics of a few and raises more questions. I would have liked to have participants that matched Anna and Paul in terms of origin, cohort, and gender. Would their stories be more alike or create new insights? What about ethnic Germans who were not successful in overcoming the adversity they faced, who perhaps were not that lucky, or were in the wrong place at the wrong time? What about those who stayed in Germany? How did their life courses play out? There are numerous questions that remain unanswered and suggest foci for future inquiry.

Outlook

This study has provided some insights into the way that two ethnic Germans experienced and overcame adversity in the wake of expulsion, flight, and displacement at the end of WWII. Future research with larger sample sizes could show if the themes presented in this study are present in a larger sample. In addition, similar narrative inquiry on different peoples who also experienced expulsion, flight, or displacement may provide a cross-cultural body of research.
References


Appendix

Informed Consent

I understand that I am one of maximum 6 individuals participating in a study titled “Experiences of Expulsion and Displacement of Germans at the End of World War II.”

The study is conducted by Philip Sauer, a master’s student in Gerontological Studies at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. I understand that I will be interviewed face-to-face for up to three interviews lasting no more than 90 minutes each. I will be interviewed about the experiences of expulsion and displacement at the end of World War II and the meaning-making of these experiences throughout my life. The interviews will be tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

My participation is entirely voluntary. There are no physical risks involved in this study. If I am uncomfortable with answering any question, I am free to not answer. If the recollection of traumatic experiences is too emotionally disturbing, I am free to take a break, call a friend, and quit the interview. Moreover, I am free to withdraw from this study at any point in time.

The benefits of being involved in this study include the opportunity to share my story with a person who is really interested and to give me a chance to reflect on this topic. Furthermore, my participation will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of experiences of expulsion and displacement of Germans at the end of World War II. The findings will be published.

Additional information:

All information about me will be kept strictly confidential. Fictitious names will be used in any written product evolving from my data so that none of my narratives can be linked to me. However, it is possible that people who know me well are able to identify me through my narratives.

The researcher and principal investigator will be the only one using the audio recordings of the interviews. His three committee members may have to review his transcripts to help him with the analysis. All interview transcripts will be stored safely in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher will have access to. Electronic data will be stored on a password secured folder on Miami University’s computer network.

Questions about the study can be directed to Philip Sauer, Miami University Department of Sociology and Gerontology, at (513)-529-2914. Mailing address is Department of Sociology & Gerontology, Miami University, 396 Upham Hall, Oxford, OH 45056. You may also contact my academic advisor, Dr. Kathryn McGrew, at (513)-529-2914. Any and all questions or concerns are welcome.
For any questions regarding human research and your rights as a research participant, please do not hesitate to contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513)-529-3600 or humansubjects@muohio.edu to voice your concern.

Please note your signature indicates that you have read and understood all the information within this consent form, and that all of your questions have been adequately answered. Your signature indicates your willingness to participate in this study. Your collaboration and willingness is greatly appreciated.

___________________________________ Signature of participant

Date: ___________ ________________ Initial here to agree to be audio-recorded

___________________________________ Signature of researcher (Philip Sauer)