

Given up by parents for survival: Separation narratives by formerly persecuted elderly Belgian Jews

Adeline Fohn¹, Souad Bouhmidi², Ekujtesa Bushati², Diane Mba², Eylem Yesilgöz³, & Tilmann Habermas²

¹Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, ²Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany ³Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany

Fohn, A., Bouhmidi, S., Bushati, E., Mba, D., Yesilgöz, E., & Habermas, T. (2017). Given up by parents for survival: Separation narratives by formerly persecuted elderly Belgian Jews. *Journal of Applied Research on Memory and Cognition*, 6, 74-81. Doi: 10.1016/j.jarmac.2016.07.015

Author Contributions. The first author collected the data and prepared separation-related parts of life narratives. These were coded by the second to fifth authors for their Master's and Bachelor's (Mba) theses. The paper was written by the last with the substantial support of the first author. **Acknowledgment.** We thank Fernando Vidal for editorial support.

Abstract

Theories of psychological trauma have suggested that trauma narratives are fragmented, lack emotion and cognitive terms (narrative evaluation), and show linguistic indicators of reliving (narrative immersion). We tested the relation between narrative evaluation and immersion on the one hand with PTSD symptoms (Impact of Event Scale Revised) and remembered dangerous/frightening qualities of the experience on the other hand. A sample of 26 elderly Belgian Jews narrated their lives. As children they had been separated from their families to be hidden and saved from Nazi persecution. We analyzed sections of their narratives regarding separation from parents. PTSD symptoms correlated only with a lack of positive evaluations, and narrative immersion correlated with the scariness/dangerousness of the original events. We suggest that the emotional quality of memories is sufficient to predict narrative qualities that signal reliving, but that the lack of positive emotions is specific to the presence of PTSD symptoms.

General Audience Summary

Suffering from memories of traumatic life experiences influences how these memories are narrated. Which, however, are the typical narrative signs of trauma? This study sets out to answer this question on the basis of the life narratives of elderly Belgian Jews who as children had been separated from their parents and hidden to save them from being murdered by Nazi Germany. Because children rely on parents for their safety, we chose sections of life narratives dealing with the separation from parents. We found that a lack of positive emotions was related to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, whereas narrative signs of reliving the traumatic past were related to the intensity of remembered threat. These findings demonstrate the importance of speaking about traumatic experiences with others to integrate and re-evaluate them.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is defined by four sets of symptoms, two directly related to an extremely threatening event, namely intrusive re-experiencing and avoidance of situations that might remind of the traumatic experience, and two more general ones, psychic numbing and increased arousal. The same extremely threatening event may turn out to be traumatic for some individuals, creating a “wound”, leading to psychological symptoms, but not for others. Consequences may be more severe and generalized if the traumatic experience was experienced repeatedly and embedded in a temporally extended situation such as living in a relationship with a violent husband (Herman, 1992) or being held in a death camp (Krystal, 1968). Even after many decades, Holocaust survivors still display a high level of symptoms of PTSD (Barel, van Ijzendoorn, Sagi-Schwarz, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2010).

Core symptoms of PTSD thus concern both the intrusion and the avoidance of memories of traumatic events. Some theories describe the event as being too overwhelming to be assimilated psychologically. In terms of memory processes, this suggests that traumatic experiences are not encoded well which in turn produces difficulties in intentional and complete remembering (e.g., Brewin, 2001). Other theories locate the difficulty not in the initial processing of the experience, but in the process of remembering (Rubin, Bohni, & Berntsen, 2008), including retrieving and narrating the memory. Here we focus on difficulties in narrating traumatic events.

Three major difficulties have been suggested. First, a difficulty in telling an integrated story (van der Kolk & Fessler, 1995) or in integrating the event into the life story (Janet, 1919), leads to fragmented trauma narratives or disintegrated life stories, and facilitates intrusive re-living. A second suggestion expects a reduced use of explicit *evaluations* (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), which reflect the subjective processing of events. They comprise *global evaluations* (e.g., “That was really awful”) and the use of *mental state language* concerning perception, cognition, volition and emotions. A reduced use of evaluations might reflect psychic numbing. A third suggestion expects trauma narratives to reflect the loss of distance experienced in reliving the traumatic experience. Laub and Auerhahn (1993) contrasted such *overpowering narratives* to *witnessed narratives*, which include not only the past protagonist’s perceptions, but also the present narrator’s and others’ cognitions about the past experience and its meaning. Such an immersion in the past experience also takes place when the event is actually narrated step by step, which produces rather lengthy narratives. Finally narrative immersion is displayed in a dramatic narrative style (Chafe, 1994), which includes such stylistic elements as use of the present tense for past events (historical present), of direct speech, and the shifting of the reference of deictic temporal and spatial expressions from the *here* and *now* of the narrator to the *there* and *then* of the protagonist, for example by using *now* or *here on my side* to speak about the past and the protagonist’s position.

Many, mostly small, studies have provided little evidence for fragmentation, mixed evidence for a lack of emotional and cognitive evaluation, and some evidence for narrative immersion (cf. Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016; O’Kearney & Parrott, 2006; Römisch, Leban, Habermas, & Döll-Hentschker, 2014). The most recent research offers no support for fragmentation (Rubin et al., 2016), but clear (Jaeger, Lindblom, Parker-Guilbert, & Zoellner, 2014) and mixed support for reduced emotional and cognitive evaluation (D’Andrea, Chiu, Casas, & Deldin, 2012; Filkuková, Jensen, Hafstad, Minde, & Dyb, 2016), as well as support for immersion manifest in increased length (Fernández Lansac, & Crespo, 2015) and in a focus on the self (D’Andrea et al.,

2012; Jaeger et al., 2014). One study showed opposite effects for evaluation and fragmentation in traumatic birth narratives (Ayers, Nakić Radoš, & Balouch, 2015). Because of the lack of evidence for fragmentation, this present study focuses on evaluation and immersion.

We test the hypotheses of a diminished narrative evaluation and increased narrative immersion in trauma narratives by analyzing sections of extensive life narratives of elderly Belgian Jews who were given up by their parents for survival during the German occupation of Belgium (1942 – 1945). This is a very special historical group of individuals who underwent the potentially very traumatic experience of separation from their parents in childhood and lived for years hidden with false identity and under the threat of being killed at any moment (cf. Vromen, 2016). In the narratives the most frequently mentioned event from the extensive and complex threatening childhood experiences, and the most relevant one for children who depend on parents for safety, was separation from the parents. We chose the narrative sections that deal with the individuals' separation from their biological parents and siblings, as well as with the separation from their foster parents after the liberation of Belgium, which took place to reunite them with a surviving parent, or to be placed with a family member or in a Jewish orphanage (Fohn & Heenen-Wolff, 2011; Keilson & Sarphatie, 1992). Some children saw a parent during the time of hiding, sometimes only once, sometimes infrequently in an unpredictable way; reunion after the war was sometimes delayed due to illness of the parents. Because all these reunions are too part of the very discontinuous and unpredictable attachment relationship to parenting persons, we also coded narrative sections concerning reunions with parents and foster parents. The first excerpt in Table 1 shows how inseparable separation and reunion were.

Psychological trauma has the two components of extremely threatening experiences and later symptoms. Rubin and colleagues (2008) proposed that no special encoding deficits at the time of the original events account for PTSD symptoms, but that the quality of memories suffices to explain them. Therefore we used both PTSD symptoms as well as the remembered emotional qualities of the event, dangerousness and scariness, as predictors of narrative characteristics in trauma narratives. Exclusive prediction by remembered qualities of the event would indicate that the narrative characteristics are typical for extremely scary memories, whereas exclusive prediction by PTSD symptoms would indicate that the narrative characteristics are typical only for PTSD.

Method

Participants

We selected all 26 participants who had taken part in both of two earlier studies. One study had collected life narratives (Fohn & Heenen-Wolff, 2011), the other had used questionnaires (Fohn, Grynberg, & Luminet, 2012). We included participants who had been beyond childhood amnesia, that is at least 3 years old, at the time of separation. Twelve women and 14 men (age $M = 73.9$, $SD = 2.8$, range 69 to 80 years) who had been hidden Jewish children during WWII were recruited via word of mouth and an announcement published in a Belgian newspaper to tell their stories. All of them had experienced persecution in Europe and had been separated from their parents after the German occupation of Belgium. They were born between 1929 and 1940 mostly in Belgium. The one participant born in 1940 was separated from their parents only in 1943. At the time of separation from their parents, they were on average 6.9 years old

($SD = 2.8$, range 3-13). Both parents of 9 participants had survived persecution, one parent each of 10 participants had been murdered, and both parents of 7 participants had been murdered.

Measures

Life narratives. Participants narrated their entire life in French with special focus on their experiences of persecution and survival during the war and later consequences. We asked participants: “Could you please tell me your life story from your birth until now, and more specifically in relation to your experience of the war as a hidden child? I assure you confidentiality. If you agree we will see each other two or three times and I will record your story. You are free to stop at any moment.” Interviews varied substantially in length. Most took place in the participants’ homes.

Extracting relevant narrative sections. The first author extracted from life narratives segments concerning separation from or reunion with biological and foster parents and siblings. In a second step, two coders together limited all extracts strictly to those that deal with separation or reunions; no more than four consecutive clauses with unrelated content bridging relevant sections were allowed.

Dividing text into propositions. Extracted texts were divided into propositions, corresponding to main or subordinate clauses. Agreement (94%) was calculated for 300 propositions independently divided by two coders. Each of the two coders divided half of the remaining texts into propositions.

Coding. Inter-rater reliabilities were calculated on the basis of 750 propositions coded independently by two coders. The remaining propositions were coded by one of the two coders. To control the further coding, a second reliability was calculated by having the second coder code 250 additional propositions without the knowledge of the first coder. Indicators and manuals were identical to those used by Römisch (et al., 2014) except for reported speech (cf. Habermas, Ott, Schubert, Schneider, & Pate, 2008; Habermas & Berger, 2011; cf. http://www.psychologie.uni-frankfurt.de/57321401/30_Coding-manuals), but some minor modifications were necessary to adapt the manual to French.

The three indicators of evaluation were relative frequencies of (1) global evaluations as good or bad or as normal or exceptional (“that was really bad”; “this was really exceptional”), (2) emotions (“I was totally horrified”; inter-rater reliability for global evaluations and emotions: initial $K = .85$, control $K = .96$), and (3) perceptual, cognitive, and volitional mental expressions and verbs (“then I saw him coming towards us,” “I couldn’t believe it,” “I had to decide between the two”; $K = .92, .93$).

Indicators of immersion were (1) the length of narratives (number of propositions), and (2) *dramatic speech*, which was the sum of relative frequencies of historical present tense used for past events ($K = .90, .84$), of shifts of the point of reference or origin of temporal and spatial deictic expressions from the narrator to the past protagonist (using *here* and *now* for *there* and *then*; $K = 1.00, 1.00$), and of direct speech or internal monologue ($K = .98, .93$). The other two indicators of immersion were constructed as difference scores between elements that indicate closeness versus distance from the past event. The indicators were (3) the difference between perceptual and cognitive mental expressions, because more immediacy and closeness is suggested when perceptions rather than thoughts are narrated, and (4) the difference between evaluations from the past and from present, future, or atemporal perspectives ($K = .89, .82$).

We subtracted cognitive mental verbs (of thinking and understanding) from perceptual mental verbs (e.g., *hear, see*), divided this difference by the sum of both, and multiplied it by 100. This resulted in an indicator that varied between 100 and -100. The extremes indicate an exclusive presence of one or the other kind of mental verb, a zero indicates the same frequency (or absence) of both kinds of evaluations. The indicator of past versus present temporal perspective was constructed in an analogous fashion.

Subjective sense of danger and fear. Remembered qualities of the event were assessed by two questions “How would you now rate your perception of danger during the war?” and “How would you now rate your sense of fear during the war?” Scales ranged from 0 (*no sense of danger/fear*) to 11 (*extreme sense of danger/fear*). We averaged the z-standardized scores of both answers.

French Impact of Event Scale-Revised. The scale (IES-R; Brunet, St-Hilaire, Jehel, & King, 2003) was derived from the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (Weiss & Marmar, 1997). It measures PTSD symptoms on three subscales: intrusions, avoidance, and arousal. The 22 items (values 0 *not at all* to 4 *extremely*) result in a total score between 0 and 88. The recommended cut-off point is 33 (Creamer, Bell, & Failla, 2003). To adapt the measure to the long time-span since the events, we asked for symptoms that occurred during the last month instead of last week. We asked for memories related to traumatic events during the war and related post-war events.

Results

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for all variables. We found no gender differences in any of the dependent variables. Thirteen participants, six men and seven women, had PTSD symptom values above the cut-off point.

For descriptive purposes we correlated IES-R and danger/fear-ratings with indicators of narrative evaluation and immersion in the past experience (Table 3). PTSD symptoms correlated neither with evaluation nor immersion. However, when correlating positive and negative emotions and global evaluations separately, the positive evaluations correlated negatively with PTSD symptoms. Remembered danger/fear correlated in the expected negative direction with global evaluations, and in the expected positive direction with length and dramatic speech.

To concurrently test the influence of PTSD symptoms and sense of danger and fear on evaluation and immersion, we ran two multivariate general linear models with IES-R and averaged danger and fear ratings as continuous predictors, following up significant results with univariate tests. Multivariate analysis for narrative evaluation showed no significant effects, neither of danger/fear, $F(3,20) = .60, p = .620, \eta^2 = .08$, nor of PTSD symptoms, $F(3,20) = .86, p = .479, \eta^2 = .11$, nor of their interaction, $F(3,20) = .33, p = .802, \eta^2 = .05$. For exploratory purposes, we ran the same multivariate analysis with positive and negative emotions and global evaluations as separate dependent variables, revealing a significant effect of PTSD symptoms, $F(5,18) = 2.92, p = .042, \eta^2 = .45$, but neither of danger/fear, $F(5,18) = .88, p = .516, \eta^2 = .20$, nor of their interaction, $F(5,18) = .84, p = .541, \eta^2 = .19$. Univariate analyses revealed a significant negative effect of PTSD symptoms only on positive emotions, $F(1,22) = 13.92, p = .001, \eta^2 = .41$.

A multivariate analysis for narrative immersion showed a significant effect of danger/fear, $F(4,19) = 8.36, p = .001, \eta^2 = .64$, but no effect of PTSD symptoms, $F(4, 19) = 2.47, p = .08, \eta^2 =$

.34, nor of the interaction between danger/fear and PTSD symptoms, $F(4, 19) = 2.65, p = .065, \eta^2 = .36$. Univariate analyses revealed positive effects of danger/fear on dramatic speech, $F(1,22) = 16.15, p = .001, \eta^2 = .421$, as well as on length, $F(1,22) = 5.00, p = .036, \eta^2 = .19$.

Discussion

Overall, narrative evaluation was related neither to PTSD symptoms nor danger/fear-ratings. Thus the general hypothesis of reduced evaluation in PTSD was not confirmed. We found, however, that positive emotions were negatively related to PTSD symptoms. This conforms with the DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which limits the symptom of psychic numbing to positive emotions.

Narrative immersion in the past experience was predicted by ratings of the dangerousness of narrated events and ratings of fear experienced at the time, but not by PTSD symptoms. More specifically, both an increased use of dramatic speech and increased length were predicted. An earlier study using the same manuals (Römisch et al., 2014) had found that the same two indicators of narrative immersion were elevated in trauma narratives. But in contrast to the present study, PTSD symptoms too had predicted narrative immersion. This may have been due to the differences in life experiences between sexually abused and control participants, whereas in the present study all participants had been exposed to prolonged extreme experiences. Thus, the present study suggests that when the nature of experiences is similar, it is remembered danger and fear, rather than the presence of symptoms which predict the immersive quality of narratives. PTSD symptoms nevertheless correlated with a lack of positive emotion terms. This lack thus appears to depend not on the intensity of emotions, but of a post-traumatic stress disorder.

Unexpectedly post-traumatic symptoms correlated negatively with immersion (length) when scariness/danger was controlled. Apparently once the variance in immersion related to the scariness of experiences is explained, the remaining variance is partially explained by the avoidance component of PTSD symptoms.

Under the (strong) assumption that all participants had equally experienced long lasting and extreme life threatening situations, our research suggests that the emotional valence of the memory of a threatening event is more important than the objective aspects of a situation (Rubin et al., 2008). Narrative immersion reflects a sense of reliving, and the remembered sense of danger and fear are probably influenced by how present they still are. As underlined by Rubin and colleagues, autobiographical memories change with time. What is special about our sample is that participants had not talked about their experiences for decades, as they reported in their life narratives (cf. Table 1, excerpt 2). This is a well-documented historical phenomenon in this specific group (Vromen, 2016) as well as in Holocaust survivors in other regions of the world (e.g., Stein, 2015). Also they reported to have rarely sought psychological help, trying to leave the past behind. Such a survival mechanism might have prevented them from processing their traumatic experiences (Brown, Kramer, Romano, & Hirst, 2012). Many hidden children perceived separation as abandonment by their parents. This fantasy persisted for many years and often prevented the reconstruction of an affective attachment with parents even after reunion. Only by sharing their experiences with others did they begin to appraise separation differently, for example as an act of love.

Early brutal separation induces major distress for young children, creating partial or complete emotional detachment (Bowlby, 1980). Reunion with parents after the war did not necessarily offer protection against symptoms by re-establishing a secure attachment. Security, attention, and love represented crucial elements in post-war environment for the reconstruction of attachment and a sense of affective security for the child (Freud & Burlingham, 1973; Keilson & Sarphatie, 1992).

The implications of our study are limited by the small sample size, the lack of a control group and control narratives. These limitations, however, are typical for this field. Temporal distance from the events and the absence of formal diagnosis might also be seen as limiting the implications. However, there is sound evidence that PTSD symptoms afflict Holocaust survivors for many decades after the events (Barel et al., 2010). Finally, although some personality traits such as neuroticism might account both for danger-ratings and narrative immersion, in the case of Holocaust survivors the consequences of traumatic experiences and personality can hardly be disentangled.

Results may be cautiously interpreted as pointing in four directions. First, narrative immersion was affected by the remembered frightening quality of experiences, but not by PTSD symptoms. Thus independently from a possible presence of trauma symptoms, survivors who remember experiences as extremely dangerous and scary tend to immerse themselves in the past when narrating these experiences. Psychotherapy can help them to feel less in danger and recover a sense of security; this may decrease narrative immersion even in those survivors who were only babies at the time, but still suffer from intrusive physical and perceptual sensations related to the war (Fohn & Englander, 2016). Therapists may help add outside perspectives onto a traumatic past (Beran & Unokan, 2004).

Second, the low correlations between evaluation and both symptoms and scariness were in the expected direction, confirming earlier results (Römisch et al., 2014). Importantly, the fact that specifically positive evaluations were negatively influenced by PTSD symptoms supports the notion that numbing concerns mainly positive emotions.

Third, it is necessary to disentangle the correlations of narrative qualities with remembered scariness from their correlations with post-traumatic symptoms. Present results underline the importance of the meaning retrospectively attributed to an extremely threatening experience (Römisch et al., 2014; Rubin et al., 2008), especially the emotional intensity of the memory, at least for narrative reliving. This finding casts a critical light on the recent exclusion of the criterion of the subjective meaning of the traumatic situation from the DSM-V diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Fourth, it has been assumed that when traumatic experiences are narrated, they show qualities of intrusive memories rather than of avoidance. However the suppressor effect of scariness on the relation between PTSD symptoms and length of narratives points to a possible effect of both aspects of PTSD, intrusion and avoidance, on narrative qualities. Disentangling these opposing influences on qualities of trauma narratives poses a challenge for future studies.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-V)*. Washington: American Psychiatric Publisher.
- Ayers, S., Radoš, S. N., & Balouch, S. (2015). Narratives of traumatic birth: Quality and changes over time. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 7, 234-242. Doi: 10.1037/a0039044
- Barel, E., Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Sagi-Schwartz, A., & Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J. (2010). Surviving the Holocaust: A meta-analysis of the long-term sequelae of a genocide. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 677-698. Doi: 10.1037/a0020339
- Beran, E., & Unoka, Z. (2004). Construction of self-narrative in psychotherapeutic setting: An analysis of the mutual determination of narrative perspective taken by patient and therapist. In T. Becker & U. M. Quasthoff (Eds.), *Narrative interaction* (pp. 151-169). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Volume III. Loss, sadness and depression*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brewin, C. R. (2001). A cognitive neuroscience account of posttraumatic stress disorder and its treatment. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 39, 373-393. Doi:10.1016/S0005-7967(00)00087-5
- Brown, A. D., Kramer, M. E., Romano, T. A., & Hirst, W. (2012). Forgetting trauma: Socially shared retrieval-induced forgetting and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 26, 24-34. Doi: 0.1002/acp.1791
- Brunet, A., St-Hilaire, A., Jehel, L., & King, S. (2003). Validation of a French version of the Impact of Event Scale-Revised. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 48, 56-61. Doi: 10.1177/070674370304800111
- Chafe, W. (1994). *Discourse, consciousness, and time: The flow and displacement of conscious experience in speaking and writing*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Creamer, M., Bell, R., & Failla, S. (2003). Psychometric properties of the impact of event scale - revised. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 41, 1489-1496. Doi: 10.1016/j.brat.2003.07.010
- Crespo, M., & Fernández-Lansac, V. (2015). Memory and narrative of traumatic events: A literature review. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 8, 149-156. Doi: 10.1037/tra0000041
- D'Andrea, W., Chiu, P. H., Casas, B. R., & Deldin, P. (2012). Linguistic predictors of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms following September 11 2011. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 26, 316-323. Doi:10.1002/acp.1830
- Fernández-Lansac, V., & Crespo, M. (2015). Narrative length and speech rate in battered women. *PloS one*, 10(11), e0142651. Doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0142651
- Filkuková, P., Jensen, T. K., Hafstad, G. S., Minde, H. T., & Dyb, G. (2016). The relationship between posttraumatic stress symptoms and narrative structure among adolescent terrorist-attack survivors. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 7, 29551. Doi: 10.3402/ejpt.v7.29551.
- Fohn, A. & Englander (2016). *Nous étions des bébés cachés. Récits à l'ombre de la Shoah. [We were hidden babies. Narratives from the shadow of the Holocaust]*. Éditions Fabert: Paris.
- Fohn, A., Grynberg, D., & Luminet, O. (2012). Posttraumatic symptoms and thought control strategies among aging hidden Jewish children. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 17, 38-55. Doi:10.1080/15325024.2011.583903
- Fohn, A., & Heenen-Wolff, S. (2011). The destiny of an unacknowledged trauma: The deferred retroactive effect of après-coup in the hidden Jewish children of wartime Belgium. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92(1), 5-20. Doi:10.1111/j.1745-8315.2010.00335.x
- Freud, A., & Burlingham, D. (1973). *Infants without families: Reports on the Hampstead nurseries (The writings of Anna Freud, Vol II)*. New York : International Universities Press.
- Habermas, T., & Berger, N. (2011). Retelling everyday emotional events: Condensation, distancing, and closure. *Cognition and Emotion*, 25, 206-219. Doi:10.1080/02699931003783568
- Habermas, T., Ott, L.-M., Schubert, M., Schneider, B., & Pate, A. (2008). Stuck in the past: negative bias, explanatory style, temporal order, and evaluative perspectives in life narratives of clinically depressed individuals. *Depression and Anxiety*, 25, E121-132. Doi:10.1002/da.20389
- Herman, J. L. (1992). Complex PTSD: A syndrome in survivors of prolonged and repeated trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 5, 377-391. Doi:10.1002/jts.2490050305
- Jaeger, J., Lindblom, K. M., Parker-Guilbert, K., & Zoellner, L. A. (2014). Trauma narratives: It's what you say, not how you say it. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 6, 473-481. Doi:10.1037/a0035239
- Janet, P. (1919). *Les médications psychologiques*. Paris: Alcan

- Keilson, H., & Sarphatie, H. R. (1992). *Sequential traumatization in children: A clinical and statistical follow-up study on the fate of the Jewish war orphans in the Netherlands*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.
- Krystal, H. (1968)(Ed.). *Massive psychic trauma*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In I. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts: Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society* (pp. 12–44). Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Laub, D., & Auerhahn, N. C. (1993). Knowing and not knowing massive psychic trauma: Forms of traumatic memory. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 74, 287–302.
- O’Kearney, R., & Perrott, K. (2006). Trauma narratives in posttraumatic stress disorder: A review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 19, 81–93. Doi:10.1002/jts.20099
- Römisch, S., Leban, E., Habermas, T., & Döll-Hentschker, S. (2014). Evaluation, involvement, and fragmentation in narratives of distressing, angering, and happy events by traumatized and non-traumatized women. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, 6, 465–472. Doi:10.1037/a0035169
- Rubin, D. C., Berntsen, D., & Bohni, M. K. (2008). A memory-based model of posttraumatic stress disorder: evaluating basic assumptions underlying the PTSD diagnosis. *Psychological Review*, 115, 985–1011. Doi:10.1037/a0013397
- Rubin, D. C., Deffler, S. A., Ogle, C. M., Dowell, N. M., Graesser, A. C., & Beckham, J. C. (2016). Participant, rater, and computer measures of coherence in posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 125, 11–25. Doi: 10.1037/abn0000126
- Stein, A. (2015). *Reluctant witnesses: Survivors, their children, and the rise of Holocaust consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- van der Kolk, B. A., & Fisler, R. (1995). Dissociation and the fragmentary nature of traumatic memories: Overview and exploratory study. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 8, 505–525. Doi:10.1002/jts.2490080402
- Vromen, S. (2016). Linking religion and family: Memories of children hidden in Belgian convents during the holocaust. In M. L. Seeberg, I. Levin, & C. Lenz (Eds.), *The Holocaust as active memory* (pp. 15–28). London: Routledge.
- Weiss, D. S., & Marmar, C. R. (1997). The impact of event scale – revised. In J. P. Wilson & T. M. Keane (Eds.), *Assessing psychological trauma and PTSD* (pp. 399–411). New York: Guilford Press.

Table 1

*Two Example Narrative Excerpts***Excerpt 1**

Man, six years old when separated from his parents, low IES-R score, mean danger and fear ratings. He shows a mixture of some evaluation, some immersion (internal monologue), but also a reflective distance from the past (mental verb from a present temporal perspective).

<u>Text</u>	<u>Codes</u>
1. Years just passed like that until September 1944,	
2. And in 1944, I found my parents	
3. you can say,	
4. that was the most difficult thing,	4. negative global evaluation - past
5. I was at the same time happy to find them,	5. positive emotion (happy) - past
6. But at the same time that meant	
7. I had to make a choice between my adoptive parents and my real parents	7. mental verb (choose) - past
8. I believe	8. mental verb (believe) - present
9. for my parents there is this emotional reasoning	9. historical present
10. "That's our son	10. internal monologue
11. We take back our son"	11. internal monologue
12. And they had continued paying throughout the war;	
13. I don't know,	13. mental verb (know) - present
14. And my father must have told himself that the debt -	
15. "I paid,	15. internal monologue
16. I paid for the pension"	16. internal monologue
17. For me, it was priceless,	
18. because it doesn't matter	
19. if they had paid the triple price.	
20. It was my life.	

(Table continued)

Excerpt 2

Woman, five years old when separated from her parents, very high IES-R score, especially on intrusions and arousal, high danger and fear ratings. She shows only past negative emotions and high immersion (direct speech, historical present), and despite the one mental verb used from a present temporal perspective she shows little reflection from a present point of view.

<u>Text</u>	<u>Codes</u>
1. And my sister, when she came home that night – 2. My mother - 3. I remember very well told me: 4. “Listen, it’s too dangerous 5. if all three of us stay here. 6. Tonight you go to sleep at the neighbour’s place. 7. Tomorrow I will come get you” 8. Well - for a child of six years, it’s carrying - 9. I carried for all these years a guilt 10. that it was my fault 11. that my sister and mother – [were killed] 12. Above all that – it has been only for the past 15 years 13. that one talks about it, 14. that the Association of Hidden Children was created. 15. But even after the war it was better to shut up, 16. because you were still treated as “the dirty Jews” – pffff.	3. mental verb (remember) - present - [continuation of line 2] 4. direct speech; perceptual mental verb (listen) - past 5. direct speech 6. direct speech 7. direct speech 8. historical present 9. negative emotion (guilty) - past

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of All Continuous Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<u>IES-R Sumscore</u>	29.7	20.8
Hyperarousal	6.5	7.0
Avoidance	9.2	6.9
Intrusions	14.0	9.4
Danger (rating 0-11)	6.5	3.6
Fear (rating 0-11)	6.2	4.0
<u>Evaluation</u>		
Global evaluations (% propositions)	5.1	3.7
Negative	2.4	2.5
Positive	1.5	1.0
Ordinary/extraordinary	1.2	2.1
Emotions (% propositions)	4.1	2.5
Negative emotions	2.7	2.3
Positive emotions	1.3	1.2
Mental verbs (% propositions)	15.3	4.2
<u>Immersion</u>		
Length (n propositions)	256.8	110.8
Dramatic speech (% propositions)	13.0	9.4
Perceptual minus cognitive verbs	17.4	39.9
Past minus present perspectives	44.8	32.7

Table 3

Correlations of Narrative Evaluation and Immersion with Trauma Symptoms and Danger/Fear ratings

	<u>Impact of Event Scale-Revised</u>	<u>Wartime Experiences</u>					
	Total	Hyper-arousal	Avoidance	Intrusion	dangerous+scary ¹	scary	dangerous
<u>Narrative indicators</u>							
<u>Evaluation</u>							
Global Evaluations (%)	-.23 -.10	-.29 -.12	-.18 -.19	-.15 -.01	-.40* -.35	-.36 -.30	-.38* -.34
Negative global evaluation	-.03 .03	-.09 .00	-.03 -.03	.02 .09	-.17 -.17	-.14 -.14	-.18 -.18
Positive global evaluations	-.31 -.24	-.32 -.22	-.22 -.23	-.28 -.20	-.27 -.19	-.20 -.09	-.31 -.25
Ordinary/extraord. glob. eval.	-.20 -.08	-.24 -.08	-.16 -.16	-.15 .00	-.36 -.33	-.37 -.33	-.31 -.27
Emotions (%)	-.31 -.28	-.26 -.21	-.39* -.39	-.20 -.16	-.15 -.05	-.08 -.04	-.19 -.13
Negative emotions	-.03 -.06	-.09 -.06	-.03 -.18	.02 .09	-.11 -.08	-.04 .00	-.16 -.15
Positive emotions	-.57** -.24	-.43* -.22	-.66*** -.23	-.46* -.20	-.10 .13	-.08 .18	-.11 .04
Mental verbs (%)	-.10 -.02	-.04 .07	.03 .03	-.20 -.13	-.22 -.20	-.16 -.13	-.25 -.23
<u>Immersion</u>							
Length (N propositions)	-.12 -.41*	-.02 -.35	-.36 -.45*	-.02 -.32	.56** .65***	.50** .60**	.54** .59**
Dramatic speech (%)	.05 -.13	.10 -.17	-.01 -.02	.05 -.16	.47* .48*	.38 .39	.49* .49*
Perceptual minus cogn. verbs	.04 -.01	.01 .07	-.01 -.01	.09 .03	.15 .04	.22 .22	-.04 .04
Past minus present perspective	-.22 -.27	-.21 -.28	-.22 -.22	-.18 -.24	.08 .18	.05 .15	.11 .17
<u>Ratings of wartime experiences</u>							
Dangerous/scary combined	.35	.48*	.02	.40*			
Scary	.39	.50**	.11	.40*	.69**		
Dangerous	.25	.38	-.09	.33*	.69**		

Note. Upper lines contain zero-order correlations, lower lines (Italics) contain correlations with IES-R or danger/fear-ratings partialled out respectively.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (N = 26).

1 – Average of the two z-standardized ratings.