

**DEMO – Developing Modernized Curricula on Immigrants' Lives in Israel**  
585583-EPP-1-2017-1-IL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

### **Video Interviews with immigrants**

It is increasingly acknowledged in social studies that the best channel for understanding human experiences is through life stories - the subjective manner in which people present their lives and interpret circumstances, events, and relationships (Alasuutari, 1997; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006). Life stories not only represent experiences, but also construct it; through the telling of life stories, narrators construct continuity and coherency in their self-perception and endow their experiences with meaning (Mishler, 2004).

The narrative paradigm has been embraced in immigration research. Through narrative, immigrants can voice their subjective experiences and their personal as well as sociocultural identities (Polkinghorne, 2005). More and more studies and projects worldwide interview immigrants and displaced persons in order to gain insight into their experiences, difficulties, needs and hopes (Benmayor, 2002; Brotman et al., 2019; Kim & Chang, 2016; Parra-Cardona et al., 2016; Sinding & Zhou, 2017). Similarly, in Israel there is a growing body of narrative studies of immigrants (Roer-Strier & Kurman et al., 2009; Sternfeld & Mirsky, 2014; Knaifel & Mirsky, 2015).

In our courses, we applied a two-phase narrative interview (Rosenthal, 1993). The first part of the interview was an open life-story interview with minimal interviewer involvement, beginning with the request, "Please tell me your migration story." The second phase consists of open-ended questions about specific aspects of migration such as the decision to emigrate, life circumstances in homeland, relationships with native-born Israelis etc.

We were flexible about the interview procedure, as it was not a central aspect of our work in DEMO. Students were encouraged not to ask questions in the first part of the interview, but in some cases, an interaction took place between them and their interviewees. It should be noted that such deviations from the formal technique did not impair the authentic experience in the encounter.

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In the beginning of the interview, the aims of the project as well as ethical considerations were explained. A written consent was obtained from the interviewees for the use of the video recording. (see "Ethical considerations").

The interviews were conducted in the language chosen by the interviewees – most often Hebrew, but in some cases, their native tongue. The interviewees chose where to hold the interviews: mostly they chose their homes or in public places, such a coffee shops or on the university\college campus. During the covid pandemic, some interviews were conducted via the zoom platform. The duration of the interviews varied greatly, from 6-7 minutes, to one hour. The interviews were videotaped, typically with a smartphone. Selected interviews were presented and discussed in class.

### **Further readings**

Alasuutari, P. (1997). Construction of personality. *The narrative study of lives*, p.1-16.

Benmayor, R. (2002). Narrating Cultural Citizenship: Oral Histories of First-Generation College Students of Mexican Origin. *Social Justice*, 29(4), 96-121.

Brotman, S., Ferrer, I. & Koehn, S. (2019). Situating the life story narratives of aging immigrants within a structural context: the intersectional life course perspective as research praxis. *Qualitative Research*, 20(4), 465-484.

Kim, K. & Chang, SH. (2016). A Narrative Inquiry on Female Marriage Immigrants' Experiences of Language Selection for Their Children. *Journal of Narrative and Educational Research*, 2016 (3-4), 5-25.

Knaifel, E. & Mirsky, J. (2015). Interplay of identities: A narrative study of self-perceptions among mentally ill immigrants from the former Soviet Union. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 52(1) 74–95.

McAdams, D. P., Josselson, R., & Lieblich, A. (Eds.). (2006). *Identity and story: Creative self in narrative*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Mishler, E. (2004). *Storytelling*. Harvard University Press, Boston.

Parra-Cardona, JR, Bullock, LA., Imig, R., Villarruel, FA. & Gold, S. (2016), 'Trabajando Duro Todos Los Dí'as': Learning From the Life Experiences of Mexican-Origin Migrant Families. *Family Relations*, 55, 361–375.

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Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 137–145.

Roer-Strier, D., & Kurman, J. (2009). Combining qualitative and quantitative methods to study perceptions of immigrant youth. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40*, 988–995.

Rosenthal, G. (1993). Reconstruction of life-stories: Principle of selection in generating stories for narrative interviews. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *The narrative study of lives* (pp. 59-91). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sinding, C. & Zhou, YR. (2017). Intimacy, identity and relationship in the accounts of Chinese immigrants to Canada: the contribution of narrative analysis. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 19*(6), 653-666.

Sternfeld, S. & Mirsky, J. (2014). Psychological perspectives on return migration. *International Journal of Intercultural Relationships, 42*, 53-64.

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