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Empowering Shared Identities and Social Solidarities through Narratives: The Case of Parents of Disabled Children in Bulgaria

The paper is primarily focused on the new cultural meanings and uses of oral history in specific social groups and milieus. It is based on 30 biographical interviews with parents of disabled children of different ages from Bulgaria, conducted in 2017 under the framework of the "Generational Patterns of Coping with Life Crisis: Biographical, Social and Institutional Discourses", funded by National research Council.

The observation on the accumulated data shows that the interviewees highly appreciated the opportunity to tell their "different" and "hard to listen to" life stories of personal crisis, triggered by the care for a disabled child. Similar to biographical interviews, in the process of interviewing they remembered "situations/moments" of sharing of past experiences with other parents or experts in the care for disabled children, which encouraged them to become members of formal and informal associations, to take part in protest actions and even to seek and find job together. In this way more or less consciously they acknowledged the great therapeutic, social and public value of narration and narratives. Hence the paper discusses the narration (assisted by oral history research) as empowerment and agency, tracing back the involvement of the interviewees in particular policies of identity. The paper, however, goes much beyond the primary mission of oral history to give voice to the ordinary, the underprivileged, marginalized people and communities. It is about oral history and oral historians as part of a complex process of empowering of shared identities and social solidarities of parents, social workers, educators, policy makers and academic researchers, based on the circulation and exchange of memories in various contexts (spaces and times, Moments) and domains of suffering and compassion.

Last but not least the paper outlines the leading role of oral history in creating of engaging and self-reflexive individuals and societies.

Ritva Larva-Salonen

University of Turku / Cultural History, Finland

The little Helsinki Mother and her Japanese sons

On my thesis I study the Finnish – Japanese relations development just after the WWII through a biographical aspect. Marta Keravuori (1888-1976) was a self-taught Japanologist who promoted Japanese culture in Finland from the 1940's until the end of her life.

I am interested in a motherhood narration which is closely attached to Keravuori's relationships with Mr. Shigenori Baba, an Officer at the Ministry of Education (later a professor at National Junior College of Library studies), Professor Tsutomu Kuwaki, Director of Japanese Institute in Helsinki University (later a professor at Chuo University), and Mr. Yoshiro Kaname, a 17-year-old boy who was the awakener of Keravuori's interest in the Japanese culture in the Autumn of 1940. She was often called "herusinki no obasan", the little mother of Helsinki, by the Japanese. However, most of the available material is written by Mrs. Keravuori and only the letter correspondence between Mrs. Keravuori and Mr. Baba is fully preserved. From Professor Kuwaki and Mr. Kaname just few postcards are found.

According to Keravuori's diaries, letters and newspaper causeries the relationships were warm. A human being is continuously in contact with the society around him/her and structuring an image of the self in a sort of dialogue with it. In my presentation I would like to discuss the question of how much Keravuori built the motherly picture of her Japan relation by herself. And to which extend the narration was supported by the "Japanese sons" or the surrounding communities?

Presentation language: English.

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Echoes of Protest

This paper looks at the research methodology and findings of the collaborative project 'Echoes of Protest' by Sheffield Hallam University academics, Esther Johnson, Professor of Film and Media Arts, and Debbie Ballin, Senior Lecturer in Film and Media.

'Echoes of Protest' aims to understand the role protest can play in the politicisation of children and the long-term impact of its aftermath on their lives. The initial phase of this research draws on oral testimony and photography to highlight a seldom-explored perspective of the 1984-1985 UK Miners' Strike. The stories collected are from adults remembering what it was like to grow up during the strike.

The paper will discuss the following:

- ☒ the collection and retrieval of stories that may otherwise be lost
- ☒ the understanding of how formative experiences of being involved in protest movements can shape, define and affect political views in adulthood;
- ☒ the way in which oral testimonies can tell nuanced stories from the perspective of an adult looking back on their experiences as a child
- ☒ the testing of creative methodologies and approaches to create an extended understanding of the emotional experience of history;
- ☒ how exhibiting archive materials alongside new audio-visual work prompts fresh and extended readings of 'official accounts' within historical discourse.

Our research findings have been presented in two UK exhibitions to date: People's History Museum, Manchester (2015), and National Coal Mining Museum for England, Wakefield, (2016-17). Publications include, a journal article in the Spring 2017 issue of Oral History (UK), and a chapter in Justice Denied, Friends, Foes and the Miners' Strike (Merlin Press, 2017). Johnson and Ballin are currently expanding this research to look at children's experiences of other protest movements.

Irina Trubetskova

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My Family in 20th Century and Now: a Multidimensional Approach to Oral History

This interactive and engaging presentation covers my family oral history for four generations in the context of Russia's and Soviet Union's dramatic history over the last 100 plus years. This presentation includes original documents and photos, memories and oral narratives of family members, along with my personal reflections on experiences of growing up, getting education and starting my own family in the former USSR, living through the Chernobyl disaster and its consequences, experiencing the collapse of the Soviet Union and facing ethnic tensions in one of the post-Soviet states, and struggling for my family's survival and finding our place in the world in the following years. This is a multidimensional oral history research at the intersection of family history and women's studies, trans- and inter-generational memories, values and traumas, cross-cultural aspects and aging, politics and globalization.

Kelly N. Drukker

Concordia University, Canada

The Maynard Family in Point St. Charles: Tracing One Family's Story

In 2015 I participated in Working Class Public History, a course that examined the ways in which Point St. Charles, a traditionally working-class neighbourhood in Montreal, has adapted and transformed since deindustrialization. Having roots in the neighbourhood that go back three generations, I embarked upon a family oral history project. My work chronicles the story of the Maynards, my mother's paternal side of the family, from my great-grandparents' arrival in "The Point" from Portsmouth, England, in 1908, to my grandmother's departure with her three children in 1963. By means of a series of interviews with my mother and uncle, my project reconstructs some of the domestic, social, economic, and environmental realities experienced by a large family in Point St. Charles in the first half of the 20th century.

This paper will examine the ways in which my great-grandparents and their nine children learned to survive in a new place, and recount the effects of the Second World War on the siblings who enlisted. At the heart of my study is a walking interview wherein I recorded my mother and uncle's memories of their childhood in "The Point" in the mid-1950s to early 1960s. Beginning at their first residence in the neighbourhood, I will narrate the trajectory of the walking interview through Point St. Charles as my mother and uncle describe their childhood impressions of moving day, cold-water flats, junkyards, laneways, places to play, and family dynamics in a series of on-site recollections. This paper will reflect upon the different temporal realities of the neighbourhood that are conjured by means of the walking interview, and chart my growing awareness of oral history as an invaluable means of recreating the fabric of a family's daily life in a now-rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood.

My presentation will include reading aloud, audio clips, and Powerpoint slides.