

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INTERPRETIVE METHOD AS A TOOL TO REACH DIFFICULT INTERVIEWEE'S AFFECTIVE CONTENT AND MEMORIES**

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The Biographical-narrative-interpretative method (BNIM) is based on the narrative theory and was first developed by German sociologists to produce accounts of the lives of Holocaust survivors and Nazi soldiers (Rosenthal 1991, Rosenthal and Bar-On 1992, Schutze 1992). However, given an understanding of the way that unconscious defences affect both the information produced within the research relationship and the way in which it is interpreted, Hollway and Jefferson (2001) incorporated in their use of the narrative method the idea of the defended subject. The main principle of the biographical interpretative method (BNIM) as practised by Wengraf (2001) and Jones (2004) is not based only on Hollway and Jefferson's theory (2001), but on the idea of a 'gestalt' – (a whole which is more than the sum of its parts or the individual's own connections that form the process of meaning making and its ordering steps) – that one can make out of her experience and which informs each person's life story. To elicit intact this sum of each individual's system of meanings about the lived events and their experiences is the main task of BNIM interviewers or biographers, as BNIM researchers like to call themselves. They have to follow strictly interviewee's own narrative ordering of her or his ways of making sense of their own experiences and not to interrupt or destroy it through following by external to the interviewee's meaning structure questions that emerge actually from the interviewer's only own concerns (Rosenthal 1991). International Colloquium of Anthropology 4th edition - Moldova State University The Cultural Pluralism: Public Sphere, Religion, Social Ethics 16-17 February 2023. The aim of the method is that the interviewee does not answer at the level of explanation, generalisation or opinion, but in terms of some (series of) event(s) that s/he has actually fully experienced. The closer the account stays to events and interviewee's direct experiences of them, the more the interview can elicit emotional meanings (rather than an exclusively cognitive, rationalised account). This approach may underline strong emotional charges, silenced memories or almost forgotten experiences. Fieldwork examples will illustrate the method.

**Keywords:** life-story methodology, Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), narratively elicited interview, oral history, qualitative research methods.