THE CYPRUS ORAL HISTORY AND LIVING MEMORY PROJECT

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Report on the methodology of the study
(Deliverable #13)

Research Methodology

First-person accounts have been used in documenting systematically events as having lived by people rather than having a single story and interpretation of events. This is particularly useful as oftentimes a single account and interpretation is controversial since it is inevitably driven by ideological assumptions, hidden messages and interests. Single accounts and interpretations is mainly the method that has been used so far in Cyprus, and also elsewhere, in written history.

A similar project hasn't been undertaken in the Republic of Cyprus. No other similar big-scale and systematic effort has been conducted to document the narratives of people about 1960-1974 becoming the platform for peace education truth and reconciliation. Work conducted by others thus far that has been developed based on the contribution of particular players and participants in the events, rather than wider participation of people, was an additional resource that informed our work.

Having funding from the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation (grant ΠΡΟΣΕΛΚΥΣΗ/ΕΜΠΕΙΡΟΣ/0609/08), an organization supported by the Republic of Cyprus, we approached people and analyzed their personal stories from the perspective of education and curriculum studies, hoping to give an all-inclusive dimension to the issue. Curriculum studies is a field which is concerned with issues of narration, inclusiveness, biography, autobiography, the lived experiences of people, and examination of *currere*, which is the connection of the past, present and future experiences of people and the way they affect and create or hinder educative opportunities and learning experiences.

The project sought to record first-hand or vicarious experiences of Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins. We sought a wide range of people of different capacities who experienced the events from varying perspectives: inhabitants, soldiers, refugees, students, relatives, friends who experienced the events vicariously, adults—women and men—and youngsters—girls and boys back in the 1960's—as well as people from the younger generation who experienced the events and their aftermath through the memories and stories of others. Table 1 gives an overview of the participants in the Cyprus Oral History and Living Memory Project.

Table 1 Statistics and profile of the participants

Decade Born	Male					Female					TOTALS
	Gr. Cy.	Turk. Cy.	Mar.	Other	Sub-total	Gr. Cy.	Turk. Cy.	Mar.	Other	Sub-total	
1910's	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
1920's	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	3
1930's	1	1	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	4
1940's	6	1	1	0	8	5	1	2	0	8	16
1950's	4	2	0	0	6	2	1	0	0	3	9
1960's	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	4

1970's	3	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
1980's	1	2	0	0	3	1	1	0	1	3	6
1990's	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
TOTALS	20	7	1	1	29	14	3	2	1	20	49

This project consisted of more than forty recorded interviews (the goal was forty) conducted in a single year, each lasting for one to one-and-a-half hours in duration, each transcribed and minimally edited using the Q and A model, each posted on our website. The goal of each interview was to create an open-ended conversation, and to follow the lead of the interviewee in describing and discussing events. The opening statement was this: "Tell me your experience and memories of the events of 1960-1974." Follow up questions were of this nature: What else do you remember? Can you tell me more? What other stories have you heard about these events? Is there someone else I should talk to? Depending on the direction of the conversation, other questions that encouraged making conversation included: How did you get your name? What were the circumstances of your birth? Were you ever falsely accused? What do you hope your friends will always remember about you? How does your family describe you? If you could take back one choice you made in your life, what would that be? If you could do one thing differently, what would it be? Do your children (parents) know these stories? What do you call home? Have you ever lost something irreplaceable?

An important participation criterion was to include people who felt that they have something important to narrate relative to the events. Participants in this oral history research were fully informed about the method used, which involves the use of the real names rather than pseudonyms. It is noted that the use of real names could lead to silencing or to avoid disclosing information and events, due to the sensitive issue of publicizing personal data, which is a drawback; yet, on the other hand, the use of real names is the strength of this type of research, as it provides a certain kind of validity and authenticity to the account, as it is connected to a known, real person and his/her story. Also in this case participants were liable to give a more accurate and personalized account. Therefore, one participation criterion was individuals' willingness to disclose their names and sign the consent form.

The Cyprus National Bioethics Committee held that this particular research did not need to be reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee, as it did not have to do with health issues or weak-will groups of people. Research ethics involved in oral history research were acknowledged and the project was attuned with the European and local Cypriot legislation, human rights documents and professional codes. Research participants signed consent forms. Also, as the project had to do with personal data, the Office of the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection was notified for constitution and operation of archive, which includes the creation and process of archived data.

The Cyprus Oral History Archive

The interviews are published in the Cyprus Oral History Archive at http://www.frederick.ac.cy/research/oralhistory/. There are many individuals of diverse age, gender, experience, ethnical community, and capacities, refugees and non-refugees, people captured and imprisoned, individuals with missing persons and

individuals who were enclave. The stories were slightly edited, in order to read in print the way they were orally narrated. The aim was not to change the tone of the narration or anything said, but to make them readable from oral word to written word, from stories to be heard by an audience to stories to be read by readers. We followed two general rules of thumb: we did not put into people's mouths words they did not actually say, and we used proper punctuation to structure the sentences and suggest the rhythm of speech.

Analysis of the Personal Stories

The stories were analyzed from various perspectives. Following is a brief overview of the various ways and analytic lenses used to analyze the stories.

First, it was the stories themselves illustrating decisive moments, powerful stories. The narrations vividly portrayed decisive moments in the lives of people, the way they thought about the moments unfold in front of them and the way they acted, as well as the moments happening with, and stirring their own participation. These moments make up significant episodes of the contemporary history of Cyprus. They are powerful stories that represent the important chapters of the Cyprus history and have features and episodes that the next generation has grown up with, hearing them and living their aftermath, and these are the episodes that will keep echoing in the ears and minds of all subsequent generations in Cyprus. We deem important to pay attention to, to focus on and to discuss these decisive moments, which compile powerful stories. We also deem important to throw light on all these little instances lived, experienced and remembered by people and all that they had to go through including actions, reflections, and emotional and psychological reactions. It is a three dimensional representation of the happenings during 1960-1974 in Cyprus.

Second, there were reflections based on initial readings of the stories. The reflections of the project researchers and those of the participants at the seminar series, graduate students, high school students, other researchers, and other individuals.

Third, we looked for common themes: (a) Reference to the main chapters of the Cyprus problem (refugees, to displaced individuals in their own country or elsewhere, missing persons, killed people, enclaved persons, captured persons, the invasion and the military coup). (b) Emotions portrayed through each narration (the drama, the pain, the sadness, the agony, the happiness). (c) Identification of various aspects and dimensions (cognitive, affective, psychological, emotional, social, political, humanitarian). (d) Big issues (discrimination, perceptions of right-wingers and left-wingers about each other, perceptions of Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots about each other, the beginning of a new reality (what reality was that for each one?), common realizations, memory).

Fourth, it was the researchers' notes.

Fifth, it was important to pay attention to: (a) What do they say? What are the main statements that emerge as people tell their stories?— Listen for moral language, metastatements, the logic of the narrative (Anderson & Jack, 1991). (b) The talking: how do they say their story? The way in which a participant tells their story, the narrative style, is itself recognized as an important knowledge source by oral historians—unified, segmented, conversational (Etter-Lewis, 1991) or episodic storytelling (Kohler-Reissman, 1987)?