

Oral history, constructions and deconstructions of narratives: Intersections of class, gender, locality, nation and religion in narratives from a Jewish woman in Sweden.

Enquire 2(1): 1-20
©The Author, 2009



Izabela Dahl, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany

Izabela.Dahl@rz.hu-berlin.de

Malin Thor, Malmö University College, Sweden Malin.

Thor@mah.se

Abstract

In this article we elaborate on the possibility to combine a social constructivist perspective and oral history within one methodological framework in order to explore how identities are narrated and negotiated in relation to different situations, contexts and interviewers. In oral history, the purpose is often to “give voice” to marginalized or forgotten individuals or groups, to listen to their stories and give them the possibility to speak from their perspectives. We agree with these emancipatory aims of oral history. Simultaneously we deconstruct and analyze interviews in order to investigate identity constructions. We work with the concepts of intersectionality and narrated identity, which allow us to investigate how groups and individuals that are marginalized and discriminated negotiate their own and other identities. At the same time it is unclear if our interviewees understand these kinds of analysis of their narratives. In order to combine a social constructivist perspective and oral history in a fruitful way, we must be aware of this relation of power and explain to the interviewees what we are doing and why we are doing it. In a broader research perspective this deconstructive approach illustrates interesting assumptions about multidimensional identity constructions.

Introduction

In this article we will explore how the relation between the interviewee and the interviewer impact when identities are narrated and negotiated. We will analyze two different interviews with the same woman in order to ask how the construction of an oral autobiographical narration is dependant on different situations, contexts and interviewers. The interviewee, Anna, was

born in Łódź in Poland. She came to Sweden through the Swedish Red Cross in April 1945. We – the interviewers - Izabela Dahl and Malin Thor, work on two different research projects within cultural and historical studies which both combine oral history and social constructivist perspectives within one methodological frame. Izabela Dahl is writing her PhD project at the Humboldt University in Berlin about Polish Jewish migration to Sweden after the Second World War and the self-positioning of female migrants, focusing on the tensions between their national and religious identities. Malin Thor is working at Malmö University College in Sweden on a project founded by the Swedish Research Council: “Swedish-Jewish refugee receptions: Narratives and negotiations of ‘Jewish’ identities and communities in Sweden 1945–2005”. The project’s overriding aim is – with different Jewish refugee receptions as a starting point – to examine how different relations and hierarchies of powers interact when individual and collective identities are constructed in different contexts and times.

Four years ago, in 2005 we met at the department for history – headed by Professor Lars Olsson – at Växjö University in Sweden for the first time. We discovered that we worked on projects with similar aims and research perspectives. Together with Antje Hornscheidt, professor in linguistics and gender studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin, we later wrote a grant application for a larger project with the purpose to unite and develop our separate projects. While grant application was not granted, Thor’s project alone later got funded by the Swedish research council and we later decided to continue working together without any funding on our common project. In both our individual and collaborative projects we work with narratives about and from “Jews” in Sweden.

We have interviewed Anna at two different times during our different projects. Izabela Dahl met Anna in September 2007 and Malin Thor interviewed her in February 2008. Dahl interviewed Anna from the perspective of her being a refugee of the 1945 and Thor from the starting point of that she was a “Swedish Jew” helping Jewish refugees in 1968–1972. Both interviews took place in the interviewee’s home in Sweden and were conducted in Swedish. Dahl offered Anna the option of speaking in either Polish or Swedish; Anna chose Swedish. Dahl lives today in Germany, but is originally from Poland and speaks both Polish and Swedish (as well as German). Thor was born and lives in Sweden. Neither of us is Jewish, but it is unclear if Anna knows that we are not Jewish. Our nationalities (or Anna’s presuppositions about our nationalities) impacted the way Anna narrated her identity to us, which will be discussed below.

The interviewee’s name (Anna) and her husband name (Aaron) are

pseudonyms. Although both Anna and Aaron have agreed to the interviews and publications from the interviews – we have chosen not to publish their real names due to ethical considerations. Anna's expectations of the interviews and meetings with us as interviewers were probably primarily to bear witness; we assume this considering her previous experiences from membership in the local organization, *Förintelsens ögonvittnen* (Witnesses to the Holocaust) in Malmö. Members of this organization are contemporary witnesses who voluntarily visit schools and meet students with the aim to talk and witness about their Holocaust experiences. They have also published a book publishing some personal memories of the Second World War (Cavling & Rubinstein, 2005).

We do of course respect Anna as a witness to the Holocaust, but we are not only listening to what she says but also how she says it. In this regard we are deconstructing her narratives – looking for intersections of categories like class, nation, religion, locality and gender. In a broader research perspective this deconstruction illuminates some interesting assumptions that are often made about multidimensional identity constructions. The diversity and complexity of socially structured categories and their interplay within Anna's identity construction processes can be read against the existing research models of identity constructions. Her narratives include elements of identifying as Swedish, Polish and Jewish. The national identity constructions have their roots in 19th century and preposition the category of "nation" as the constitutive one. Her constructions and negotiations of her own and others identities are therefore best described as a complex dynamic and never closed process. They may shift depending on who she is speaking to - but her narrative never fundamentally changes.

Our analysis thus has two levels. First we will analyze issues of power in the relationship between researchers and interviewees, investigating how this participant constructs, narrates and negotiates her own and other people's identities in relation to different situations, contexts and interviewers. How does Anna narrate her identity in relation to a Swedish/Polish interviewer living in Germany? How does Anna construct and narrate her identity in relation to other groups and individuals in the Swedish society she tells about? Second we deconstruct the interviews in order to investigate which categories the interviewee uses when constructing her own and others' identities, focusing on how social categories are interwoven and dependent on each other in her stories.

Constructing and deconstructing narratives about Jewish identities

In this article we discuss some methodological problems that developed as a result of our theoretical frame: the question of how the social constructivist concepts of intersectionality and narrated identity can (possibly) combine with the emancipatorical aims of oral history. In oral history, the purpose is often to “give voice” to marginalized or forgotten individuals or groups, to listen to their stories and give them the possibility to speak from their perspectives (Thompson, 2000).

We conduct our interviews with Anna individually, without the other researcher present. Malin Thor works with open structured interviews and begins her interviews by telling a little about herself and about the project. Before the interview Thor also sends the interviewee a short presentation about the project and a contract that outlines what and under which circumstances the interviewee agrees to participate in the project. At the meeting the contract is signed both by the interviewer and the interviewee. After this procedure the interview starts. Thor lets the interviewee begin his or her story in a way they choose. If they don't know where to start, Thor prompts them, saying: ‘tell me about when you came to Sweden’ or ‘tell me about when you started to work with refugees’ – depending on who is being interviewed.

Izabela Dahl interviews Polish Jewish women who came to Sweden 1945 - 1946. Her contact with Anna was established through a snow ball effect - previous interviewees. By setting an interview appointment an oral agreement is reached between the interviewee and the interviewer about the usage of the collected oral material. After a brief introduction into the project, which essentially lays out the project's working title, the meeting is followed by an in-depth interview. The interview starts with questions that will facilitate a chronological telling of the life story. Dahl begins by asking the participants: – ‘tell me how you got to Sweden’.

A number of documentary works have focused on collecting oral material from Jewish Holocaust survivors in Sweden, and minor examples have been published (Johansson, 2000; Szulc, 2005; Tegen, 1945), but only one study has focused on how to analyze this collected material and what kind of new knowledge we can gain from the analysis of oral material referring to Swedish history (Dahl, 2007).

The research field of oral history is transdisciplinary (Thor, 2006). Our main interest is directed at the narrative approach based on different disciplinary traditions: sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, ethnology, cultural

and historical studies, which we discuss in more detail below (Thornborrow and Coates, 2005).

Keeping this multidisciplinary background of existing theoretical approaches in mind we try to develop and combine oral history, narrative analysis, and social constructivist perspectives within cultural and historical studies. In order to do this we explore the connection between narrative and identity which was introduced by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur with the term “narrative identity” (Ricoeur, 1984, 1985, 1988). Ricoeur’s concept of narrative identity has been picked up, developed and established as an empirical construction by different disciplines. (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Gubrium, 2003)

Referring to current research on analysis of ‘narrative identities’ by Lucius- Hoene and Deppermann (2002), a psychologist and pragmatic linguist respectively, we find their definition of ‘narrative identity’ helpful: ‘[narrative identity is] ‘the way how a person constructs her/his identity in concrete interactions as a narrative act and a construction of relevant aspects of his/her identity according to the situation’ (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann, 2002, 55) (2002, p. 55). Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann ascertain that these aspects of identity can be extinguished when negotiated and self-presented in the autobiographical narration. We also agree with Alexa Robertson (2005) when she argues that identities are not static, but rather under constant negotiations through narrative acts. We would like to underline that this statement not only correlates to the interviewee but also to the interviewer. We perceive the interview as a situation when the interviewee constructs a narrative and a narrative identity created through the dialogue with the interviewer. To study narratives is also about studying the relation between the researcher and the academic world (Robertson, 2005, p. 226). We argue that the study of oral narratives (interviews) also includes the relation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Thor, 2001). A narrative is a causal sequence performed by a narrator (Ricoer, 1990), and according to Tone Kvernbekk, who discusses the placement of the concept of narration within the argumentation theory, narratives are products configured in hindsight (Kvernbekk 2003, p. 6). A narrator is the one who tells the story; a narrator traces the connections and judges which actions led to which result. But as Kvernbekk considers: ‘the relation between premises and conclusions may also be construed in different ways’ (Kvernbekk, 2003, p. 1). Additionally we argue that narratives can also be analyzed in very different ways. We see the interviews as micronarratives that challenge, negotiate and/or maintain the old hegemonic metanarratives. Our analyses of the interviews (oral narratives) that we have constructed together with our interviewees are thus best explained as deconstructions.

We take as starting points for our deconstruction of the interviews the constructivist research concept of intersectionality, which has its origin in gender studies (de los Reyes, 2005; Lykke, 2005, p. 7-17) and we interpret the intersectionality of social divisions as a constitutive process of both selfpositioning and the positioning of others. Intersectionality as a research perspective investigates how categories are constructed, how they condition, exclude or include each other. We argue that it is a very fruitful tool for the analysis of oral material since it 'is [a] conflation or separation of the different analytic levels in which intersectionality is located, rather than just a debate on the relationship of the divisions themselves' (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 195). Our research is therefore concentrated on situated and context-sensitive analyses (Sandell and Mulinari, 2006). We start our intersectional analysis focusing on two individual interviews we have conducted with Anna, looking at different categories including: class, locality, gender, nation and religion.

Intersections of gender, locality, nation and religion in narratives from a Jewish woman in Sweden

In the following section we will discuss Anna's narrative(s) about how she came to Sweden as a refugee in 1945 and later worked with the Jewish refugees from Poland during the years 1968–1972.

In the meeting with the Swedish interviewer Malin Thor, Anna begins her narrative by telling how she moved with her husband Aaron from the Swedish refugee camp in southern Sweden to a small city in northern Sweden. There they searched for jobs and got the advice to go to a Jewish doctor as he had previously helped other Jewish refugees finding jobs. The doctor arranged for Aaron and Aaron's father to work for some of his relatives in the town of Borås. In Anna's narrative the explanation for why she moved to Borås is thus that her husband and his father got jobs there and she was, as she puts it, 'a part of the bargain'. She is not the active subject in the story, but rather her husband is. This way of narrating, telling what her husband did or did not do, is a reoccurring theme in Anna's way of narrating her life and identity when interviewed by Thor.

According to the ethical principles for research in Sweden, Thor presented her project to Anna before the interview. Anna starts her narrative by talking about her and her husband's meeting with the Jewish doctor- and this might be explained that by the fact that Anna was aware of Thor's interest in the different Jewish communities and congregations' refugee work and the "Swedish Jews" attitudes towards different Jewish refugee groups. Therefore Anna's relation to and identification with the "Swedish Jews" and her perspective on congregations is a recurring theme in her narratives when

interviewed by Thor (but not by Izabela Dahl).

In the introductory part of the meeting with Izabela Dahl, Dahl presented a brief overview of her PhD project about Polish Jewish migration to Sweden after the World War II and her research focusing on interviews and questions about self-positioning of migrants in the new society. Anna started her narration talking about her social engagement in taking-in Polish Jewish refugees who came to Sweden 1968–1972. Anna described how she worked voluntarily for the Jewish congregation's social committee [socialnämnd] in Malmö. The social committee was a social institution in the congregation that cared for old and poor people as well as refugees who belonged to or came to the congregation's area.

In this narrative - the position Anna takes - talking about the new refugee group- is affected by the idea of her obligations as mother and wife (and thus implicitly affected by gender), which she takes for granted. She starts her selfpositioning at the point in her life when she has recently undertaken language training, and her child is already about 16 years old. Her family's economical situation has already been secured.

I have not only been a housewife. Not the whole time. I told you that we have a child. And then I studied different courses. And after that I worked for a couple of years when the Polish Jews came in 1968-71. When we moved to Malmö into the congregation and when we had learned that you should come, the congregation needed somebody to take care of you and help you with your place to live and work. And I was the only one in the social committee who spoke Polish, Yiddish and German if needed, and Swedish of course.

(Interview with Anna 2007-09-05. Interviewer: Izabela Dahl)

Anna is positioning herself as a bridge between the refugees of 1945 and the refugees that came to Sweden 1968–1972, while belonging to the first group – she worked as social worker for the second group. She doesn't position herself as a "Swedish Jew" while she is talking about that "the congregation needed somebody", but on the other hand she is underlining that she spoke Swedish. Anna is thereby positioning herself as someone who unites all the groups involved in this specific situation, by her ability to communicate in all the languages spoken by the groups concerned.

Anna is including Dahl as interviewer, into her narration about the Polish Jewish refugees. She is counting Dahl into the refugees' group of 1968 by referring to the group with the word "you" and is thus positioning Dahl as

belonging to this group. This is a good example of how Anna's presuppositions about her interviewer's nationality and/or identity did impact the way she narrated her identity during the interviews.

Locality, nation and religion – the constructions of a Jewish refugee identity

Previous research within the historical studies regarding to Swedish Jews has mainly focused on the congregation in Stockholm, “the founding fathers”, and the first generations in other congregations, or else on the public discourse of Jewish immigrants. The differences in power relations in and between local Jewish congregations and gendered identities have sometimes been ignored (Hansson, 2004; Valentin, 2004). We want to stress that it is important to investigate how marginalized identities like ‘Jewish’ in a Swedish context are also internally gendered and set within hierarchical orders that exist in and between the national, local and individual level. Investigation of the category “locality” is on the one hand a result of our intersectional analyses of identity construction, and on the other hand a new approach that will highlight how marginalized identities are hierarchically ordered. At the same time ‘locality’ seems to be a useful category for further developing the theoretical use of the intersectional research approach in the context of our oral material. Anna and her husband lived in Borås and Gothenburg during their first 15 years in Sweden. They moved to Malmö in the beginning of 1960s, where they live today. In her narratives about the first years in Sweden, living in Borås and then in Gothenburg and then later in Borås again, Anna's identity as a Jewish refugee emerges. She positions herself and the other refugees in Borås against different Swedish-Jewish persons and congregations when negotiating her own and other persons' identities. In the following Anna talks about her first move to Borås with her husband:

And then a Jewish life started in Borås. [...] the closest Jewish congregation was in Gothenburg. But anyhow we started to organize ourselves. A Jewish congregation in Borås was founded and we still didn't have any contact with Gothenburg. We were on our own. [...] My husband can tell you much more. Because I was not so...well, I was engaged in WIZO [Women's International Zionist Organisation], but I was already a housewife. When my husband started to study in Gothenburg, we moved there. Or he moved.

(Interview with Anna 2008-02-06. Interviewer: Malin Thor)

Anna doesn't elaborate what she means with when she talks about the "Jewish life" that started in Borås. Perhaps she is thinking about their first months in Sweden, when she didn't have any contact with other Jews except for her husband, his father, sister and her boyfriend, who were neither refugees nor Swedish Jews. About 80 Jewish refugee families lived in Borås, but only one Swedish-Jewish family. This family were the first 'Swedish Jews' (as she calls them when interviewed by Thor) that Anna met, and she felt very welcomed by them. She describes her feelings when she came to Borås and was invited into "Jewish homes". These were the first undestroyed "Jewish homes" she had seen since the war. Anna uses expressions like "Jewish life" and "Jewish homes" without explaining or reflecting what a "Jewish life" and "Jewish home" is or how "Jewish homes" differ from other homes. She describes one of the homes as not only "Jewish", but also "typical German". She explains that the German Jew living there came to Sweden with his mother in the beginning of the 1930s and that that was why they were able to bring all their furniture and china and thus possessed an "undestroyed Jewish home". One starting point for our intersectional analysis of the interviews was the combination of two categories of religion and nation, which are profoundly interwoven with each other. The distinctions between "religiousness" and "nationality" are ambiguous in Anna's description of the "Jewish homes". She draws a distinction between "Jewish homes" and "other homes". On the other hand she makes a point that one of the homes is not only "Jewish", but also "typical German", indicating that "Jewishness" might be something varied, depending on the nationality of the "Jew" and/or the "Jewish home".

She also talks about how the refugees in Borås started to organize a congregation or association in Borås, but notes that they didn't have any contact with the congregation in Gothenburg. The "Jewish life" she refers to in Borås is thus a "Polish-Jewish" life or a Jewish-refugee life, even if this is not outspoken.

Class, gender and locality – the husband and the congregations as structural principles in the narratives

We use the concept of *undoing gender* (Butler, 2004) to refer to social and cultural constructions of men's and women's roles and positions in societies. Research on Jewish history often lacks a gendered perspective, both in an international and a Swedish perspective. In a Swedish context, very little research has been conducted on the Jewish population from a gender perspective. Internationally, Paula E. Hyman (1995) was among the first who introduced gender as a category in Jewish history/historiography, as

the international research field on the Holocaust missed a gender perspective until the 1990s. Dalia Ofer and Leonore J. Weitzman (1998) explain this research gap could be the result of a concern that any differentiation of the victims of the Holocaust by gender could distract from the fact that the Nazis defined their targets as Jews, not as men, women or children, and systematically planned to murder them all (1998, p. 13).

When Anna talks about the congregation in Borås she constantly suggests that her husband knows much more about this subject because he was the elected head of the community for many years, but also because she had already become a housewife at the time. She mentions that she was a member of WIZO, but still suggests her husband was much more active in the Jewish public life than herself. From a gender perspective Anna makes a clear distinction between public and private spheres in her narrative, where the male belongs in the public sphere and the female in the private. This is very much a mirror of how hegemonic normalized images of traditional Jewish societies often are illustrated: the man works, goes to the synagogue and the wife stay at home, cooks, take care of the children etc. On the other hand historians tend to call the 1950s “the epoch of Housewives” in Swedish history, because a majority of Swedish women are described as “Housewives” at this time. Anna thus combines and reflects both the hegemonic narrative of “a traditional Jewish” society and hegemonic narrative on gender roles in the Swedish society at the time in her narrative about her and her husband’s social lives in Borås in the 1950s.

The ‘husband’ is the structural principle in Anna’s narrations, both in the interview with Dahl and during the interview with Thor. In the interview with Thor, Anna notes that when Aaron gets a job- she follows. For example when Aaron begins to study in Gothenburg, they move there from Borås. But first only Aaron is allowed to move to Gothenburg, due to legislation concerning refugee rights in Sweden. After a while Anna also got permission to move from Borås to Gothenburg:

But still we didn't have any contact worth mentioning with the congregation [in Gothenburg]. This was because we didn't have the time to go to any events or so. On the other hand we stayed in contact with the congregation in Borås all the time, with all our friends in the same positions as us. All of us were poor as church rats and were building our first lives in Sweden. We worked in different factories. [...] Everyone spoke Yiddish or Polish.

(Interview with Anna 2008-02-06. Interviewer: Malin Thor)

The couple moved to Gothenburg, but they didn't have any contact with the Jewish congregation in the city. Anna explains this by stating that they didn't have any time for social events. Aaron was studying and she was working. She never refers outspokenly on how the "Swedish Jews" in Gothenburg differed from her, but Anna positions herself and other refugees as "poor", "Polish" and "workers", implicitly ascribing the "Jews" in Gothenburg wealth and non-worker positions. She constructs the "Swedish-Jews" as middle-class or upper-class, while the refugees are ascribed working-class positions. Class/social position are crucial categories for Anna's understanding of her own and others' identities and positions in the (Swedish-)Jewish society. From a class perspective Anna's narrative might be interpreted as a "success story". She and her husband start from zero as "poor foreign workers" or as "poor church rats" (Anna here uses a typically Swedish expression for describing people in deprived positions), but eventually they identify with the Swedish-Jewish middle-class after her husband had finished his studies and the couple moved to Malmö. But right after Aaron had finished his studies, the couple moved back to Borås from Gothenburg. When asked how she would describe the community in Borås, she says it was a community based on religion. She exemplifies this by telling about a house that was bought for religious ceremonies and a school of religion that was founded for the children. Another example of her understanding of the community in Borås as a religious community is that she constantly refers to it as a congregation, although it was a Jewish association founded by Jewish survivors in Borås. Thereby she ascribes the community and its members a religious identity that does not necessarily correspond with how other persons might describe the community in Borås.

In relation to the congregation in Gothenburg or other Jewish congregations, Anna time after time emphasizes that the community in Borås was independent: *But we were still totally independent.*

We didn't get any help. We didn't want any help and we didn't need any help from any larger congregation. We did it by our own power so to say.

(Interview with Anna 2008-02-06. Interviewer: Malin Thor)

When Aaron got a new job in 1961 the couple moved from Borås to Malmö. They entered into the Jewish congregation in Malmö and as Anna describes it: "Then our lives in the congregation here in Malmö started". (Interview with Anna 2008- 02-06. Interviewer: Malin Thor) This is the first time in the interview that she includes herself in a Swedish-Jewish congregation during her narrative. In Anna's narrative about the first fifteen years in Sweden, she never mentions anything negative about the

congregation in Gothenburg or other Jewish congregations in Sweden, but she never positions herself as a member of them either. She notes that her family got help from “Swedish Jews” finding jobs, but she emphasizes that she and her husband built a “Jewish life” and a congregation together with other refugees in Borås. It is important for Anna not to say anything negative about the Swedish Jews, but at the same time it is very important for her to distinguish herself and those she calls “persons in the same position” from the Swedish Jews - this is especially true when Anna is interviewed by Thor. Time and again she emphasizes that they, both they as a couple and the members of the community in Borås, did not need any help from any Swedish-Jewish congregation and that they managed to build a Jewish life and community without any help from outside. By this Anna not only positions herself against the Swedish-Jews from a class perspective, she also implicitly positions herself and “those in the same position” against another group of refugees, those of 1968–1972. Even though this group is not mentioned in her narrative about the first years in Sweden, they would later play an important role in Anna’s life and for her self-understanding and narrative identity as we have discussed previously in this article.

Anna very seldom speaks about “Sweden” or “the Swedish society” during any of the interviews, rather she talks about different cities and/or Jewish congregations. In her narratives the feeling of becoming more and more part of the Swedish society is strongly connected to her locality in Malmö, where she speaks about how she successively develops her social activities and gains acknowledgment in institutional and social interrelations. When asked whether she feels integrated in Sweden, she answers: “Yes, I can say that if I have any rights somewhere then they are in Malmö”. (Interview with Anna 2007-09-05, Interviewer: Izabela Dahl). Anna’s answer suggests she feels she has rights in Malmö, but perhaps not in Sweden. Her answers also illustrate how we as researchers sometimes ask the wrong questions. What does it imply to be integrated in Sweden? Can you really be integrated into a country or a nation? Anna’s answer is very down to earth and from a personal point of view. She speaks from a local and a Jewish position. The rights she ascribes herself are the rights of a “Jew” in different local Jewish communities and associations. Through her position as representative of the Jewish congregation in Malmö, as a social worker and as a member of a local association of Holocaust survivors Anna stabilizes her position in her narratives about becoming integrated in Swedish society.

Nation and religion

There is neither any general binding definition of what a “nation” is nor

any consensus about how we might talk about the existence of “nation” from a historical point of view (Wodak, 1998). Nonetheless there are two main research concepts of ‘nation’: nation defined by politics and nation defined by culture (Brubaker, 1992). While the first concept refers to the political unit and intention as constitutive moments of ‘nation’, the concept of cultural nation refers to so called ‘objective’ criteria: language, culture, tradition and religion. In our article we refer to the concept of nation defined by culture according to Eric J Hobsbawm (1991) and Stuart Hall (1999, p. 393-441) but simultaneously oppose the model of “nation” defined by culture- we see “objective” criteria as a non-hierarchical system of identity building categories. We argue that in the context of a Jewish minority in Sweden the categories of “religion” and “nation” are deeply interwoven with each other and are often not clearly detachable. In the Swedish historical context, Swedish historian and scholar Hugo Valentin (1924) uses the term “Jewish nation” (1924, p. 187) to refer to the regulation of the law for Jews who came to Sweden and settled down after 1782. He points out the change of the meaning of this term during the time of emancipation to the time of the establishment of the national states. Analyzing the national and religious identification of Jews in Sweden we understand the categories of “nation” and “religion” as constitutive moments within processes of social affiliation resulting in imagined communities in terms of Benedict Anderson (2006).

For Anna being a Jew is in some narratives defined by a type of religiousness even if she doesn’t position herself as ‘religious’. When interviewed by Dahl, her narratives and argumentation clearly circle around religiousness and Anna negotiates both categories of nation and religion in a constant connection to each other positioning herself dynamically - one time on the Polish side another time on the Swedish side - but still refers to an internalized and normalized image of her Jewishness in terms of a religious category.

Anna defines herself with the words: ‘A Swedish but not religious Jew’, but she is also conscious of that there might be Swedes who might recognize her as a ‘stranger’ (Interview with Anna 2007-09-05, Interviewer: Izabela Dahl). Her selfperception of being Swedish in terms of nationality becomes unclear in her negotiation of religion. Talking about “religiousness” as a starting point of narration, Anna draws a distinction between Swedish-Jews and “other” Jews. These “other” are implicitly “Polish Jews” who are her reference in making the distinction.

When asked how she would describe her religiousness and what it means to her, she answers:

It doesn't mean that much to me anymore. What's very

important to me is tradition, the Jewish traditions. And I know that with us comes the end because it is true that our daughter is married to a Jew. But this is a Jew whose parents were almost born here in Sweden, you know, and he is definitely not a believer. (...)he almost never goes to the synagogue on his own. Only when it is something [special] a bar mitzva or wedding to which he is invited.

(Interview with Anna 2007-09-05. Interviewer: Izabela Dahl)

The quote above illustrates that Polish-Jews seem not only to be a reference because of Anna's original nationality but also because she implicitly recognizes them as a collective and ascribes to them a kind of 'true' religiousness; on the other hand she perceives Swedish-Jews as not religious and thereby hardly "Jewish". The Polish-Jews who Anna thinks she represents are older people like herself and her husband. They are, according to Anna, the last generation and they already stand at the end of their lives. But the spectrum of lacking religiousness within the group of Swedish-Jews is widely differentiated and hierarchically classified. While Anna depicts her own generation as "almost born in Sweden", she considers the second generation to be not religious at all. She thus constructs Sweden as a secular nation/country and describes a gradual process in which the Swedish secular nationality overlays the Jewish religiousness. This acculturation leads to a loss of religiousness. Her narrative suggests a gradual changing process where the 'Swedishness' will take over the 'Jewishness' over the time.

Going further in the analysis of how of categories like "nation" and "religion" are interwoven, there appears even to be a certain time-focused dimension of "Polish Jewishness" which Anna refers to in her narrative. This becomes apparent while she is talking about a Polish family, who came to Sweden because of the politically exploited Polish anti-Semitic campaign that saw its height in March 1968 (Dahl and Lorenz, 2005, pp. 559-579).

A family came here [...] – a man, his wife who wasn't Jewish and he wasn't much of a Jew either before that, but his father attended the first congress, the [first] Zionist congress in Switzerland and his mother too

(Interview with Anna 2007-09-05. Interviewer: Izabela Dahl.)

Anna's reference is targeted towards the hegemonic meta-narrative about the Polish-Jewish community in the middle war period in Poland, which she internalized in her childhood and uses in her narration today as a kind of consistent category in the boundary to the after-war-generation of Polish-Jews. In this case Poland as a secularized country seems not to offer the

same possibilities to care for and develop Jewish religiosity like Sweden. On the contrary, Anna doesn't talk about why Jews lose their 'Jewishness' in the afterwar- Poland. From other fragments of the interview one can understand that she thinks that one of the reasons for this is Polish anti-Semitism.

Anna describes the husband of the Polish refugee family with the words "he wasn't much a Jew either before that" which suggests that he became "more a Jew" while in Sweden. When comparing how Anna is narrating secular Poland and secular Sweden it is obvious that she thinks that there are more space in Sweden after 1968 to develop one's Jewish religiosity than in secular after-war- Poland.

In another part of the interview with Dahl, Anna focuses on a meeting with a Catholic wife of a Jewish refugee. A Catholic represents here a normalized image of a Polish citizen in the hegemonic public discourse in Poland which joins the categories of nationality (as Polish) and religion (as Catholic) in a certain way. A normalized image or hegemonic narrative Anna takes for granted that Dahl will also agree with or at least recognize, considering that Dahl is from Poland.

He had a good profession, he was civil engineer, he did get a very good job at Alfalavall. What she did, I don't remember but the first thing she told me was that she wanted to get in contact with the Catholic church. She is sitting with me, in a Jewish congregation, and I said that this is not a problem. I'll call the monsignor and I will have to tell who I am and I will have to tell who you are and you will go there. And that's what we did. She never ever forgot this. Never. She never forgot this. [...] But I said: "here come these women with their Jewish men. We have to take care of them, the same way we care for their men".

(Interview with Anna 2007-09-05. Interviewer: Izabela Dahl)

Anna recognizes that making a distinction between refugees with different religious orientations, which she has already strongly internalized, doesn't fit in the hegemonic Swedish public discourse about social help for refugees. Within this new plot line of the social context Anna was involved, she internalizes this position and it comes to overlay her original distinctive plot. This mechanism we read as an adoption of the stereotypical Swedish institutional position and a reproduction of its image as "liberal". Internalizing this plot line and connecting it to the image of Sweden, Anna positions herself on the "Swedish" side in terms of nationality in this narrative. Anna's stories about the refugees of 1968-1972 might also be interpreted from her position

as a refugee from the group of 1945. When she talks about ‘her own refugee group’ – she is always underlining that they managed on their own without any help from the “Swedish Jews” although they came to Sweden with absolutely nothing.

Conclusion

In this article we presented some suggestions about a methodological framework of social constructivism and oral history. Our intersectional analysis shows how Anna constantly negotiates her identity over time and in relation to other groups and individuals in different contexts. She does this both within her narratives, but also and specially in relation to her interviewer.

During both interviews Anna uses her husband as the structuring principle in her narratives. Her story is often told in relation to and sometimes in the shadow of his life and activities. She is not always the subject in her own narrative, rather she is always positioned in relation to what he did or did not do. Anna’s narratives differ slightly when interviewed by different persons. Our different backgrounds, nationalities and research focus cause Anna to construct her story in different ways. But still, it is still the same story. She is starting her narrative from different times and points of views, but at the end she tells the same story or at least very similar narratives during both interviews. Her narrative is a story of her life as a Jewish-Polish girl, a Jewish KZ-internee, a refugee and a Swedish-Jewish social worker – although the chronologies differ in the two interviews – depending on our research interest and her assumptions on what she thinks we wish to hear from these interests. Anna positions herself in relation to different groups in the societies she describes- depending on the interviewer – but this is only a marginal phenomenon, best illustrated though when she includes Dahl into her story as belonging to the group of refugees from Poland 1968–1972. It is also evident that Anna uses normalized images or hegemonic narratives from both the Swedish and Polish societies. She takes for granted that Dahl also agrees with or at least recognizes narratives around Poland, and that Thor will be acquainted with narratives around Sweden.

The question of how the social constructivist concepts of intersectionality and narrated identity are possible to combine with the emancipatorical aims of oral history is problematic. In oral history, the purpose is often to “give voice” to marginalized or forgotten individuals or groups, to listen to their stories and give them the possibility to speak from their perspectives. To some extent we are doing this in the interviews with Anna; but we also analyze how she is marginalizing and ascribing other individuals/groups different identities. Intersectional analysis of oral material makes visible the multiple positioning

that constitutes every day life and the power of relations that are central to it. The combination of social constructivism and oral history is thus very fruitful from the researchers' point of view as it allows us to elaborate on how the empirical construction of narrated identities can be generative for historical studies, and how we can use the praxis of common verbal communication- which we gather from an interview- for conclusions. Furthermore it allows us to investigate how groups and individuals that are marginalized and discriminated against negotiate their own and other identities, which leads to a much deeper understanding of different processes of othering, inclusion and exclusion.

On the other hand it is unclear if our interviewees understand our analysis of their narratives or why we interpret them the way we do. They might be expecting publications about their experiences as refugees which "tell it like it was". In order to combine and reflect social constructivism, narrative analysis and oral history in a fruitful way, we must be aware of this relation of power and explain to them what we are doing and why we are doing it. It is therefore very important to point out that an intersectional analysis always starts from a category chosen by the researcher, not by the interviewee.

Bibliography

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso

Andersson, L. M. (2000). *En jude är en jude är en jude: Representationer av 'juden' i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900-1930*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press

Blomqvist, H. (2006). *Nation, ras och civilisation i svensk arbetarrörelse före nazismen*. Stockholm: Carlsson

Brubaker, R. (1992). *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge: Havard Univ Press

Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing gender*. New York, NY: Routledge

Cavling, U.-L. and Rubinstein, H. (2005). *Förintelsens ögonvittnen. Minnesskrift med bidrag från Förintelsens Ögonvittnen*, Malmö. Malmö: Förintelsens ögonvittnen

Dahl, I. and Lorenz, E. (2009). *Jøderne i Polen*. Oslo: HL-senteret

Dahl, I. (2007). '... this is material arousing interest in common history; ...' Zygmunt Łakociński and Polish Survivors' Protocols. *Jewish History*

Quarterly, 233(3), pp. 319-339

Dahl, I. and Lorenz, E. (2006). Øst-Europa etter 1945. In T. B. Eriksen, E. Lorenz and H. Harket (Eds.). *Jødehat. Antisemittismens historie fra antikken til i dag*. Oslo:Damm

Gubrium, J (Eds.) (2003) *Postmodern interviewing* Thousand Oaks: Sage

Hall, S. (1999). *Kulturelle Identität und Globalisierung*. In K. H. Hörning and R. Winter (Eds.). *Widerspenstige Kulturen. Cultural Studies als Herausforderung*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag

Hansson, L. and Thor, M. (Eds.) (2006). *Muntlig historia*. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Hansson, S. (2004). *Flykt och överlevnad. Flyktingverksamhet i Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm 1933-1950*. Stockholm: Hilelförlag

Hobsbawm, E. J. (1992). *Nations and nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (1995). *The active interview*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Hyman, P. E. (1995). *Gender and assimilation in modern Jewish history: The roles and representation of women*. Seattle: University of Washington Press

Johansson, B. (2000). *Judiska minnen. Berättelser från Förintelsen*. Stockholm: Nordiska museet

Keupp, H. and Ahbe, T. (1999). *Identitätskonstruktionen. Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne*. Reinbek:Rowohlt

Kvernbekk, T. (2003). *Narratives as Informal Arguments*. URL: http://web2.uwindsor.ca/faculty/arts/philosophy/ILat25/edited_Kvernbekk.doc. Last call: 2009.03.13

Lucius-Hoene, G. and Deppermann, A. (2002). *Rekonstruktion narrativer Identität. Ein Arbeitsbuch zur Analyse narrativer Interviews*. Opladen: Leske & Budrich

Lykke, N., (2005) "Nya perspektiv på interseksjonalitet. Problem och möjligheter." *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* 2-3, 7-18

McAdams, D. (1993). *The stories we live by. Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: W. Morrow

Meuter, N. (2004). *Geschichten erzählen, Geschichten analysieren. Das narrativistische Paradigma in den Kulturwissenschaften* . In F. Jaeger and J. Straub (Eds.), *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften. Paradigmen und*

Disziplinen. Stuttgart: Metzler

Ofer, D. and Weitzman, L. J. (1998). Women in the Holocaust. New Haven: Yale University Press

de los Reyes, P. and Martinsson, L. (Eds.) (2005). Olikhetens paradigm. Intersektionella perspektiv på o(jäm)likhetensskapande, Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Ricoeur, P. (1984). Time and narrative. Vol 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Ricoeur, P. (1985) Time and narrative. Vol. 2 Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Ricoeur, P. (1988) Time and narrative. Vol. 3 Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Ricoeur, P. (1990). Narrative Identity. In D. Wood (Ed.), On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and interpretation. London: Routledge

Ricoeur, P. (1992). Oneself as another, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Robertson, A., (2005) „Narrativanalys“. In G. Bergström & K. Boréus (Eds), Textens mening och makt. Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys, Lund: Studentlitteratur

Sandell, K. and Mulinari, D. (2006). Feministiska interventioner. Berättelser om och från en annan värld. Stockholm: Atlas Akademi

Sarbin, T. (1989). Emotion as narrative emplotments. In M. J. Packer and R. B. Addison (Eds.), Entering the circle. Hermeneutic investigations in psychology. Albany: State Univ of New York Press

Somers, M. R. (1994). The narrative construction of identity: a relational and network approach. Theory & Society, 23, 605-649

Szulc, A. (2005). Röster som aldrig tystnar. Stockholm: Prisma

Tegen, G. and E. (1945). De dödsdömda vittna. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand

Thompson, Paul (2000). The Voice of the Past. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Thor, M. (2006). Inledning. In L. Hansson & M. Thor (Eds.). Muntlig historia. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Thor, M. (2001). Oral history - mer än en metod. Historisk Tidskrift, 3.

Thornborrow, J. and Coates, J. (Eds.). (2005). The sociolinguistics of

narrative. Amsterdam: Benjamin

Valentin, H. (1924). *Judarnas historia i Sverige*. Stockholm: Bonnier
Valentin, H. (2004). *Judarna i Sverige. Från 1774 till 1950-talet*. Stockholm: Judiska museet

Wodak, R. (1998). *Zur diskursiven Konstruktion nationaler Identität*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp

Yuval-Davis, N (2006). Intersectionality and Feminist Politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 193-209

Interview with Anna 2008-02-06. Interviewer: Malin Thor

Interview with Anna 2007-09-05. Interviewer: Izabela Dahl