

# Trauma and identity: A narrative study

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## INTRODUCTION:

### INTERPERSONAL CHRONIC TRAUMA AND ITS AFTERMATH

Complex Trauma → Classical concept of PTSD insufficient

Complex PTSD ← changes in self-perception

Refugees and survivors of torture

long-lasting and complex traumatic experiences

discrimination

multiple losses

persecution

organized violence

life in exile

cultural bereavement

severe effects on survivors'

fundamental trust

personal and collective identity

attachment

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

refugee trauma + torture trauma ⇒ unique and combined effect on the survivors' identity

How do the participants currently view/describe themselves?

What meanings do the participants attach to their experiences, how do they make sense of their narrative?

How does the torture survivor and refugee identity appear in the narratives?

What type of defenses do the participants employ to process their experiences, develop a narrative and build a new sense of self?

## METHODS:

Participants: refugees with a recognized legal status in Hungary

Data collection

Narrative Interviewing  
(Rosenthal, 2003;  
Schütze, 1983)

Focused interview approach  
(Mishler, 1986)

"story book"  
method

## METHODS:

Data analysis: phenomenological - hermeneutic - psychoanalytic

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis - IPA (Smith & Osborne, 2003)

- examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences and how they construct their selves in the light of these experiences
- emerging themes - clusters of themes - superordinate themes

Psychosocial research approach (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000)

- psychoanalytically informed method
- 'defended subject': unconscious defenses against anxiety
- role of intersubjectivity, transference, countertransference

Depth-hermeneutic method (Lorenzer, 1986)

- psychoanalytic and hermeneutic method
- scenic understanding - latent meaning of the text
- researcher's affective and embodied responses

Group interpretation method (Lorenzer, 1986; Rothe, 2012)

- countertransference of the whole group
- intersubjective validation of the results

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND CONCLUSION:

experiences in exile - refugee identity

torture experiences - torture survivor identity

• feelings of rage, desperation, and disillusionment  
• more explicit in narrative identity

• feelings of humiliation, shame and repression  
• latent effect on the self-concept of the survivor

complex and combined effect on identity

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