



Digital Social Science and Oral Narrative Research 2020

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Background of Project:

The Research Unit builds upon the success and accomplishments of the previous projects, “3.11 as Crisis and Opportunity” and “Political Activism in Japan.” For these two projects we have accumulated more than 600 hours of digital oral narrative surrounding the triple disasters of 2011. While we are securing other funds to continue the data collection phase (see below), the ICC Research Unit funding has been vital to further the methodological understanding of this innovative approach into other fields of social sciences.

Goals and Purpose of the Research Unit:

The goal of this research unit is to explore the scholarly and political potential in the method of oral narrative research as captured on digital video. The assumption behind this project, illustrated by previous work since 2011, is that human voice when captured on digital video represents a hugely valuable scholarly data source that can be analyzed on the micro-level (discourse analysis and proxemics research) or macro-level (with scalable data that can be shared and integrated into multiple forms of presentation and display).





Approach and Goals

1. By focusing on the nature of the medium itself through different thematic and cultural contexts, we hope to illustrate the utility of this approach. Oral narrative is a relative older field, developed in folklore, history and community studies. Yet, this this focus on the use of these methods to apply to contemporary ethnographic context is still very underdeveloped in any principled theoretical way.
2. We seek to also integrate a strain of research commonly referred to as “digital humanities,” attempting to share the insights from these projects as we develop more ethnographic trajectories. While “digital humanities” is well-known, digital social science is still a new and developing field. This focus here is both on the digital-enabled collection of data, but also on the ways that digitality has transformed the way we share, curate and represent our data in electronic means.
3. The range of projects of different types and different foci in the post 3.11 period, from disaster and recovery, political activism, homelessness and now refugee and asylum seekers in Japan, points to the diversity of applications of this methodology.



Research Unit Achievements in 2020

Overall we have had a productive year.



Publications:

1. Slater, D.H. [*Vulnerable Populations in Japan under Covid-19: A lull in the storm*](#), Japan Focus, September 15, 2020, Volume 18 | Issue 18 | Number 2 (Editor, Special Edition)
2. Slater, D.H. and Rosa Barbaran, [*The Whole Block Goes Down: Refugees in Japan’s detention centers during the pandemic*](#), Japan Focus, September 15, 2020, Volume 18 | Issue 18 | Number 2
3. Slater, D. H. and Sara Ikebe - [*Social Distancing from the Problem of Japanese Homelessness under Covid-19*](#), Japan Focus, September 15, 2020, Volume 18 | Issue 18 | Number 2
4. Slater, D. H., O’Day, R., Fulco, F., & Albazerbashi, N. (2020, November). [*Digital oral narrative research in Japan: An engaged approach, in Studying Japan*](#) (pp. 446-449). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG. Dissemination of Methodological Innovation.





Presentations at ICC

Lecture Series “Vulnerable Populations in Japan Under Covid-19,” Institute of Comparative Culture, Hosted by David Slater. Details of the articles and lectures were documented in the comprehensive booklet of the series available at https://7b912aaa-2400-46c3-9847-666028c2ab29.filesusr.com/ugd/2edff9_38d9787f642542159a62e2100c1d6476.pdf



Presentations outside of ICC

The preliminary results of these efforts resulted in the invitation of a keynote address for Research at a Distance: Japan Studies in an age of Covid-19, Jan 21-22, 2020, hosted by the Japan Foundation, Sydney and held at the University of Melbourne. A two-day online Research Training Workshop to support scholars in adapting their research to an age of Covid-19.



Dissemination; digital

Website: While this is still “in-progress,” the preliminary website of Refugee Voices Japan is up. There are more than 100,000 words, some still in editing, but already the largest project of its kind. We have most of it translated into Japanese and are now have it checked, but it should be up later in the year. You can see it here: <https://refugeevoicesjapanet.wordpress.com/>



Films of edited video:

As we have moved to more fully exploit our visual and in particular digital medium, we have been working to develop. Please check out the videos we have been working on below.



1. [Covid in Immigration Detention Center](#)



3. [Ugandan Women](#)



4. [Gabriel: Religious Persecution](#)



5. [James: Christian on the Move](#)



A green motherboard by [Miguel Á. Padriñán](#) via pexels

Speech bubbles by [Miguel Á. Padriñán](#) via pexels

Fluorescent lights by [Nicolas](#) via pexels