



# Digital Social Science and Oral Narrative Research 2019

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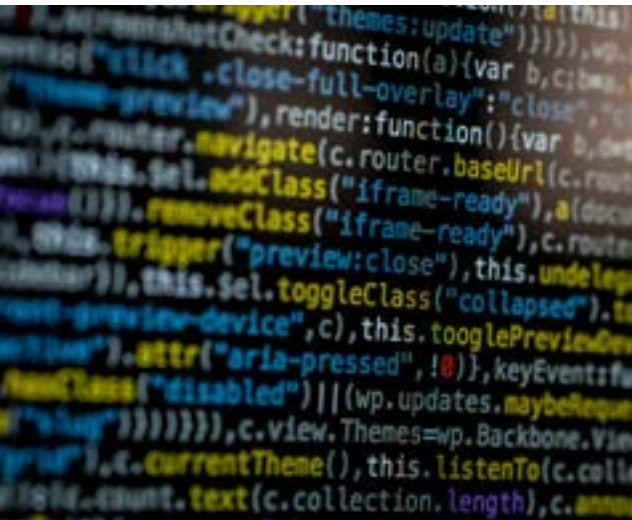
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## Background of Project

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.



## 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 2019

### 1. Data Collection

- a. From April-Sept 2019, we have collected more than 45 hours of digital oral narrative data. Between now and March 2020, we will collect another 40 hours. The narrators have mostly been African in 2018, but with the addition of a new member of our research team, a Syrian native, we have expanded to more narrators from the Middle East.
- b. All of the interviews will be transcribed in English, or translate into English (when they were in Arabic).
- c. The video and audio have been edited and rebalanced when necessary.

### 2. Website

- a. Our previous website has been further refined and optimized: <https://tohokukaranokoe.org/>
- b. We are developing our Refugee Voices Japan website, but it still is not open: <https://refugeevoicesjapan.com/>

### 3. Publications

- a. “リアルタイムでのデジタル・ヒューマニティーズと災害の記録: 東日本大震災と津波のオーラルナラティブ・アーカイブ.” 社会と調査, 23, 15-23, with Fulco, F. and O’Day, R. 2019.
- b. Voices from Tohoku: from a digital archive of oral narratives to scien-







tific application in disaster risk reduction in 「デジタルアーカイブ・ベーシックス 第2巻 災害記録を未来に活かす」勉誠出版、東京 (with Fulco F., O'Day R., 2019.

c. "Engaged Research; Video Oral Narrative" in Researching Methods in Japanese Studies Today, ed by Cornelia Reiher and Nora Kottmann, (with Fulco F., O'day, R and Albazerbashi, N.) In press.

d. "New Refugee Flows into Japan: Video oral narrative research," to be submitted to Japan Focus (with Fulco F., O'day, R and Albazerbashi, N.) In preparation.

e. Oral Narratives of Fukushima Evacuees (with O'day R.) In the editing stage of completed papers; to be submitted to a university press in 2019



#### 4. Presentations

a. By project participants: (All talks invited lectures at the expenses of host, unless otherwise noted)

i. "Legal Predicaments for Asylum Seekers in Tokyo," Oxford University, February 2020 (date not yet set)

ii. "Informal Economy and Illegal Work: Refugee labor in Japan," Oxford-Brookes, Oxford UK, February 2020 (date note yet set)

iii. "Refugees Studies and Shifting Patterns of Immigrant Flows," Princeton University, November 6, 2019

iv. "Seeking Asylum in Japan: An Oral Narrative Approach to Asylum Seekers' Experiences in Tokyo," Southern Methodist University, Dallas TX, Oct 10

v. "Refugee Flows into Japan," North Georgia University, Oct. 7, 2019

vi. New Refugee Flows into Japan: Oral Narratives Research and Community Support," Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge MA. September 27, 2019

vii. "Capturing Digital Voice: Oral Narrative Representation," Workshop on New Refugee Studies, Sophia University, July 4, 2019

viii. "Refugee Voices Japan," Sophia University for visiting program at University of Washington, June 8, 2019 (ICC)

ix. "Managing New Refugee Nations: Japan since 2010" SOAS Centre for Migration and Diaspora, Studies, London, March 20, 2019

x. "Asylum Seekers' Circuitous Path through a Historically Closed Nation," School of East Asian, Studies, Sheffield University, March 21, 2019

xi. "Refugee Flows into Japan," Daiwa Foundation, London, March 14, 2019

b. Invited Lectures at the ICC, paid for by our Research Unit funds

i. "Japan's Refugee Policy and Practice: How has Refugees' Agency Challenged Japan's Refugee Protection Structure?" by Naoko Hashimoto, July 26th, 2019





- ii. “Co-Ed Revolution: The Female Student in the Japanese New Left” by Chelsea Szendi Schieder, July 5th, 2019 (Fri)
- iii. “Refugee Lives inside a Camp: Ethnographic Work with Liberian Refugees in Ghana” by Naohiko Omata, 17th June, 2019
- iv. STUDENT WORKSHOP ON REFUGEES IN THE WORLD AND IN JAPAN: What happened in 2018? What is happening now? What can you do? 18th May, 2019
- v. ‘Welcome Refugees’: A Case Study on Community Mobilisation and Advocacy in the UK” by Carlos Gigoux, 18th April, 2019

**5. Outside funding:**

- a. Sophia Joint research grant: Refugee Oral Narrative Research
- b. Kaken C Grant: Supporting Organization for Refugees in Japan



Kids at refugee camp in Idlib Syria  
Image by Ahmed akacha via Pexels

Digital codes on screen  
Image by Markus Spiske via Pexels

Welcome refugees sticker  
Image by Markus Spiske via Pexels