

Title: Acculturation through family stories – Therapeutic discourse, emotion identity work and generational life trajectories

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ABSTRACT

The question of emotional changes in individuals' lives in modern societies, and the ways they are shaped by – and facilitate – broader political, economic and social processes, attracts growing attention in various fields of the human sciences. The present study deals with this question from a micro-cultural perspective (Lizardo 2017; Sheffy 1997; Swidler 2001; Wetherell 2012), with the aim to explain how broad cultural processes are manifested and shaped by everyday identity practices of meaning-making within social groups over generations. From this perspective, this study traces changes in discursive emotional patterns of family-related talk as part of acculturation processes and identity change within an immigration group. It examines stories about the family told by three generations of families of Jewish immigrants who came to Israel from Eastern and Central Europe ('Ashkenazim') after the Second World War. These families have been rapidly acculturated into Israeli society and underwent significant emotional changes in different aspects of life within just two generations. The bulk of research about this group tends to overlook the fact that it was an *immigrant group*, either due to the focus on these families' Holocaust trauma, or because of the misleading view that this was an elite group that automatically integrated into local society. In contrast, the present study seeks to shed light on the acculturation process of this group, as an immigration group, and discuss it as a process of mainstreamization (Alba & Nee 2003), through which these families have gained the status of 'typical Israeli families'. In analysing this process I look at the change of emotional patterns reflected by the family stories at hand as indicative of, and resonating with, broader cultural processes that shaped the Israeli mainstream during the second half of the 20th century: the expansion of the middle class, individualization and globalization.

While explanations of these changes in the Israeli society (Almog 2004; Ram 2005) and in Western societies in general (Bauman 2000; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1992) tend to focus on broad (linear) political and economic processes relating to the transition of 'traditional' societies into individualistic-oriented and global ones, we know little about the way these changes are reflected – and shaped – by the emotional lives of families across generations. This study aims to tackle this issue by a micro-analysis of cultural processes. It traces the shift in emotional styles of family-talk over generations and the changing role of these emotional styles in identity construction. The analysis is based on in-depth interviews with three generations in families that belong to the examined immigration group, comparing different emotional aspects of family stories in each generation. While existing research on family stories focuses primarily on how family interactions reflect and respond to cultural values, this study argues that they also play a significant role in the dynamic construction of social reality. It is therefore proposed that family stories operate as meaningful agents of cultural change over time. The study proceeds from the dramaturgical-emotional approach (Goffman 1956; Vaccaro, Schrock & McCabe 2011; Sela-Sheffy & Leshem 2016) with the view to revealing how family stories function as a site for emotion management through which speakers shape their identities in ways that justify and validate their life-trajectories. Understanding family stories in this way sheds light on the emotion identity processes that have taken place over generations and shaped cultural change within specific groups. Therefore, the present study sets out to demonstrate how family stories do not only construct emotions and identities, but also help navigate life-trajectories, and in so doing participate in shaping cultural processes in social groups and social settings over time.

This study draws on an interdisciplinary approach to culture, emotion and interaction, integrating different areas of research: conversation analysis and discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter 1992; Potter 1996), sociological research on identity work and emotions (Hochschild 1983; Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock 1996) and culture research on emotional patterns (Illouz 2008; Pugh 2013; Swidler 2001). In this context, the study offers a new way of understanding the links between emotion, family stories, identities and generational life-trajectories. Within the theoretical framework of this study, the concept *emotion identity work* is developed and elaborated in two key respects: on the one hand, it is proposed here that the discursive

construction of subjective realities in the stories in question operates as an emotion management mechanism that stimulates identity dilemmas, thus signaling the speaker's affinities to desirable\undesirable identities. On the other hand, the study puts forward the notion that the emotion identity work carried out in family stories has implications for action patterns and life-trajectories. The core chapters of the dissertation demonstrate, by way of analysis, how culture plays a key part in speakers' emotion identity work in three primary ways: via *cultural resources*, *affect and institutions*. In this respect the core chapters illustrate how stories not only reflect broad cultural processes, but also respond to, shape, and change them. In order to reach a bird's eye view of the emotional changes in the families in question, the stories are understood as *generational readings of a family map*, that is, symbolic depictions of the reality of family life through which speakers navigate social spaces towards sought-after identity goals (that is, how individuals position themselves in relation to the family, and how they situate their family in relation to society at large). The analysis further determines the key *coordinates* that organize the speakers' flow in social spaces through time: intergenerational relations, ethnicity and gender.

The corpus consists of 53 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted between 2013-2017 on the general topic of 'family relationships', mostly with representatives of two or three generations in each family. The first-generation settled in small and medium-sized towns (most interviews were conducted with residents of Hadera, Rehovot and Petah Tikva and their offspring) where many Jewish immigrants from Europe, Asia and Africa settled during the 'Great Aliyah' of the early 1950s. Contact was established with interviewees via informal visits to nursing homes and clubs for the elderly, using the 'Snowball method', and by issuing notices in local newspapers. All interviews were conducted by the present author. They lasted between 1-3 hours, and were carefully transcribed in keeping with the interactional protocols of Conversation Analysis. Data were analyzed by drawing on a range of studies on discourse and conversation, focusing on different features of the stories recounted: linguistic (semantics and rhetoric), para-linguistic (intonations, volume, rapidity of speech, etc.) and conversational (turn-taking, categorization, list construction, and more). Interviews were processed using an abductive method (Timmermans & Tavory 2012), in which materials were repeatedly tested against existing theories, until the

theoretical integration presented above and the concept of a family map were devised and consolidated.

Findings are presented in four chapters, each of which illustrates a particular aspect of the main argument and develops a sub-argument that substantiates it. The first chapter describes how a cultural resource (therapeutic discourse) that entered the public sphere in Israel from the 1970s is received, implemented and adapted in the stories of the younger generations, and how this resource shapes the interviewees' emotion identity work, as well as the ways they navigate their life-paths into the Israeli middle-class. The first chapter thus provides an introduction to the analytical chapters, since it paves the way to understanding the identity dilemmas unique to each generation, suggesting how these dilemmas shape the acculturation of the families in question. This chapter further specifies a shift in the generational readings of the family map through the central coordinate – that of intergenerational relations. Findings show that first-generation stories reveal a tension between a persecuted Jewish identity, represented through experiences of war and the Holocaust, and a new Israeli identity, conveyed through narratives about immigration and the establishment of family-units in Israel. Moreover, negative emotions communicated about the persecution of Jews during the war are projected onto descriptions of experiences that actually took place in Israel. In other words, interviewees use collective scripts invoking protection of the self and the family from external threats not only to narrate wartime adversities, but also to describe experiences relating to their integration into Israeli society.

In contrast, second-generation stories reveal a tension between two generational identities: the diasporic identity of the parents versus the native-Israeli identity of the speakers. In this context, the interviewees convey a sense of detachment from their parents' lifestyle, going so far as to criticize them. A primary cultural resource that provides second-generation speakers with tools for their emotion identity work is *therapeutic discourse*. This discourse provides interviewees with the verbal tools to articulate problems in their own families, in which they grew up. However, at the same time, these speakers moderate their criticism of their parents in various ways, making an effort to protect their parents' image and empathize with them. Third-generation stories establish how therapeutic discourse has already been embedded in

the speakers' modes of storytelling, and plays a leading role in regulating their emotion identity work from the ground up. Compared to the identity dilemmas experienced by previous generations, which aroused tension between two collective identities, stories told by third generation speakers present personal-therapeutic predicaments. These stem from an apparent discord between disconcerting self-attributes related to past parental relationships and self-attributes informed and inspired by global culture, signaling a desire for change and differentiation. The identity work of this third generation constructs the self as a rather miserable psychological entity in pursuit of self-recognition and self-improvement. This identity work is carried out by deploying various emotion categories and psychological scripts. However, analysis reveals that even speakers belonging to this third generation find it difficult to criticize their parents, implying that they wish to find ways to adapt and reconcile with their families.

The first chapter thus demonstrates how therapeutic discourse actually intervenes in the emotion identity work of the younger generations, shaping their acculturation by distancing them from their parents' diasporic lifestyle(s). Second-generation interviewees steer their life-paths towards establishing middle-class families endowed with individualistic cultural norms. In the third-generation, this shift is even more obvious, so that the reality of family life is presented from the point of view of the individual's needs and feelings. That is to say, speakers regard family relationships as a platform for self-understanding, and as a channel through which they might find their own distinctive ways in the world. However, findings also show that despite the infusion of therapeutic discourse and its substantial presence on the explicit level of the stories, tacitly, the speakers' emotion identity work continues to maintain a strong commitment to family (whose origins are already identified in the first-generation's stories). Thus, although younger generations have acquired and adopted a more individualistic therapeutic discourse, this is still embedded in collective-family emotional patterns that continue to be effective. This chapter further argues that the tension between these two emotional modalities drives members of younger generations to go on coordinating their life-trajectories around the family.

While the first chapter addresses how an already signified and recognized discursive resource shapes family stories, the second chapter focuses on slightly less explicit

manifestations of cultural interference in the stories; these are carried out primarily through the body. This chapter traces how the negative affect (Ahmed 2004) towards the 'ethnic other' ('Mizrahim'), reported in family stories throughout the three generations, reflects the acculturation of the families and facilitates their integration into the local middle-class. In this way, the chapter demonstrates how family stories feature significantly in transforming the symbolic construction of the ethno-class boundary in Israeli society. That is, it seeks to probe the interplay between affect and emotion identity work, and by so doing to uncover an additional fundamental change in the generational readings of the family map through the ethnicity coordinate.

Findings show that negative affect manifestations towards Mizrahim feature in stories of all three generations, although they are discursively mobilized in different ways, depending on the emotion identity work performed by each generation. In the first-generation, Mizrahim are presented as a threat to the family, in a manner that resonates with and replays emotional scenarios of Jewish persecution. Racist affect, voiced in expressions of fear and disgust, motivates speakers to avoid lower-class Mizrahim, while readily moving towards urban spaces inhabited by established Ashkenazim. In other words, the racist affect appears to embody a social mobility strategy based on a dissociation from Mizrahim. Conversely, in the second-generation's stories, the racist affect towards Mizrahim seems to have been overruled. The interviewees speak out unequivocally against their parents' generation's racist attitude, describing a harmonious picture of urban life through stories about loyal friendships with Mizrahim, some of which even culminated in 'mixed' marriages. These stories bolster this generation's typical emotion identity work, which distinguishes between their parents' diasporic identity and the children's native-Israeli. The interviewees cast themselves as 'ordinary people' whose social mobility took place alongside that of the Mizrahim, and not at their expense. However, careful discursive analysis of the stories reveals that negative affect has not actually disappeared, but has rather been transformed into a class affect articulated via manifestations of elitism towards Mizrahim. In the third-generation's stories, the negative affect is not mobilized by overtly ethnic categories. These speakers employ cultural categories and epithets that carry ethnic meanings (such as 'Ars' and 'Eichuti'), but are in fact drawing class boundaries. In these stories, ethnic talk signifies the

speakers' personal traits and predispositions, characterized by a tension between folksiness and elitism that ultimately shapes their class identity.

Thus, comparing the generational readings of the family map in keeping with the ethnicity coordinate indicates two parallel changes – a moderation of the racial affect alongside an intensification of the class affect – both of which shape these families' flow within 'mixed' urban spaces. In the first-generation, reports of the racist affect suggest an Ashkenazi course of integration entailing a move away from Mizrahim. In the second-generation, explicit opposition to racism reflects and constructs 'mixed' urban spaces that provide Ashkenazim and Mizrahim alike with an opening for upward social mobility. At the same time, however, expressions of elitism maintain a ranking order within this new space, between those whose new class identity is presented as seemingly natural, and those for whom it is not. However, in the third-generation, although most speakers refrain from overtly acknowledging the ethnic tension, when evoking therapeutic identity dilemmas, they raise cultural categories bearing ethnic connotations which continue to reproduce collective patterns of differentiation. In so doing, third-generation speakers locate themselves firmly within the local middle-class. The younger generations are thus involved in shaping 'mixed' middle-class spaces, in which, on the one hand, it is quite legitimate to engage in practices and choose lifestyles associated with Mizrahim, or even to identify as Mizrahim, while, on the other hand, to nonetheless uphold the social hierarchy between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.

The third chapter sets out to establish how culture interferes with the interviewees' emotion identity work by focusing on broader institutional changes in the division of gender roles in the families. These were part and parcel of their integration into Israeli society and their accelerating social mobility within it. This chapter examines how women's participation in the labor market is reflected and shaped across generations through the presentation of gender roles in family care-talk. That is to say, analysis of the gender aspect not only explores the interplay between the family as an institution and emotion identity work, but also reveals another major shift in the way the different generations read the family map.

Findings show that changes in institutional practices are followed by a significant transformation in both the nature of care-talk, and the boundary it draws between

gender roles. In the first-generation, care-talk creates a firm boundary between women and men that is aligned with the traditional division of labor (women-family/men-work). The division of gender roles is presented as natural and necessary for the survival of the family and its integration into Israeli society. These stories thus reinforce the emotion identity work particular to this generation. In the second-generation all women joined the labor market. These institutional changes are reflected in care-talk in two major ways. Firstly, the gender boundary begins to blur as a result of a weaker identification between emotional codes concerning family-care and feminine identity. This shift is reflected in women's criticism of unequal relationships in the parents' generation, which aligns with emotion identity work that distinguishes between generational identities. Gender-boundary blurring is also manifested in the ways men begin to present masculine identities through talking about their involvement in child-care. However, at the same time, the boundary is still maintained and marked by speakers: women justify their role as primary caregivers through emotional justification(s) and men refer primarily to areas of care that are perceived as 'masculine'. In the third-generation, most interviewees are not yet parents, so their stories deal primarily with the care they themselves were given as children, and the way this shaped their gender identity. That is, these stories disclose the implications of the emotion identity processes formed in previous generations on the construction of gender identities in the youngest generation. Stylistically, the third-generation's therapeutic identity work obscures the gender boundary in several ways. The anticipation of family-care is directed at both men and women. Male interviewees, like women, present their gender identity through emotional introspection. Also, gender identities are presented as a dynamic and ongoing project rather than as fixed categories. However, in terms of content, the stories reflect contradictory representations of gender roles; some of them challenge the traditional division of labor while others uphold it.

Thus, the third chapter points to a shift in the ways gender roles legitimize how the family as an institution in Israeli society is both reflected in and shaped by family stories across generations. Findings show how emotional expressions concerning family-care intervene in the identity work of each generation, redefining the relationships between women and men, even as they also steer the speakers toward new life-trajectories. In the first-generation, the clear identification between care and

femininity drives women to stay at home, and men to become breadwinners and family leaders. In contrast, in the second-generation, while care-talk still motivates women to be primary caregivers despite entering the labor market, it also urges men to organize their lives around nurturing the children. In the third-generation, however, care-talk puts gender identities to the test, so that social practices and lifestyles previously perceived as fixed are suddenly subjected to criticism and change. This, despite the fact that in effect, stereotypical gender representations continue to determine interviewees' conduct. Thus, although the change in the readings of the family map from the viewpoint of gender across generations suggests a narrowing of the gap between the life-trajectories of men and women, the gender boundary continues to emerge in new ways.

The fourth chapter extends beyond the analysis of family stories in the examined immigration group, exploring the nature of the public culture that played a role in their shaping. This chapter examines the popularization of therapeutic discourse in the public arena in Israel during the 1980s through the TV show 'Keshet mishpachti' (Family Ties). This show introduced family counseling to the Israeli audience for the first time, when there was only a single television channel in Israel – the Israeli Public Broadcasting Service. As such, it would appear that this program was a primary resource of cultural capital for many middle-class Israeli families, including the families interviewed for this study. The launch of this program indicates the popular dissemination of therapeutic discourse in Israeli public spaces, a process that began as early as the 1970s. The inauguration of 'Keshet mishpachti' in the PBS during the second half of the 1980s reinforced the program's commitment to both the establishment of a collective-national affiliation, as well as to fostering a middle-class, individualistic and liberal lifestyle. Thus, the fourth chapter engages with the juncture of national culture and class culture, this time from the perspective of cultural production (rather than consumption). It explores how therapeutic discourse, which represents an individualistic worldview, is integrated into a national-ethnic society that honors collective values (the Jewish state and family), and participates in the shaping of national-civic identities that promote liberal values and agenda. That is, this chapter provides an explanation for the transition in generational readings of the family map (between the first-generation and the second) from the viewpoint of public culture.

The chapter is based on a discursive analysis of 19 episodes of the TV show alongside two books written by Rudolf Dreikurs (whose psychological-educational method was popularized through the show), and hundreds of articles published on the show and its consultants in the national press. Findings reveal that the TV show presented itself as a project aiming to reshape Israeli national identity in three main ways: Firstly, family counseling was presented on the TV show as a necessary tool for saving the nation through strengthening its democratic foundation. Secondly, 'Keshet mishpachti' sought to provide daily representations of the typical 'Israeli family' which contributed to generating a sense of national belonging. Finally, it established an active community of viewers, thereby exemplifying its role as a site of national convergence. From an emotional perspective, the incorporation of national culture and class culture is conveyed in two key respects: Firstly, the show used therapeutic practices (emotion management techniques) for collective identity work (establishing national identity), a process that began at the Adler Institute's meetings, was modified into a television format, and later incorporated into the national agenda. In this context, families were encouraged to air personal problems in public, as well as to distinguish between emotions that harm the effective functioning of the group and emotions that strengthen group solidarity. Secondly, the TV show provided middle-class viewers with emotional capital aimed at securing their standing in Israeli society. It sought to teach middle-class families new emotional competencies (such as: emotional control and democratic leadership), which could give them an advantage in a competitive, post-industrial labor environment. At the same time, the show also taught viewers how to avoid emotions that might be damaging to group solidarity, and to eschew any criticism of power relations. In this way, 'Keshet mishpachti' promoted emotional practices that reflected and shaped a liberal-nationalist agenda, thus ascertaining the central position of the middle-class in the local arena.

This chapter further argues that the advent of 'Keshet mishpachti' in the public sphere reflects a major breakthrough in the reshaping of a national identity code for the Israeli middle-class, and contends that the ability to articulate emotions in public played a key role in this process. By translating therapeutic discourse into the local national context, the show sought to authorize Israeli middle-class culture through national concerns, thereby facilitating its critical role in reshaping the liberal-national ethos. This finding also helps to explain the acceptance of therapeutic discourse in the

immigration group from the second-generation under examination. Through the integration of therapeutic and national discourses, the TV show addressed the tension between personal and collective concerns that emerged in the second-generation's stories. In this sense, the show reflected and shaped these speakers' identity dilemmas, regardless of whether they themselves were aware of this. As for the third-generation, although therapeutic identity work seems to weaken collective affiliations at the expense of an individualistic viewpoint, as stated above, these interviewees persist in protecting the cohesive, unified image of the family. Therefore, even the third-generation's stories still echo the integration of therapeutic and collective discourses promoted by 'Keshet mishpachti'. This chapter provides a different perception of the cultural setting that shaped the generational readings in the families, thereby expanding the discussion regarding the tension between individualism and nationalism in the translation, acceptance, and adaptation of therapeutic discourse into the Israeli public culture.

The four chapters reveal complementary aspects of the cultural changes that have taken place in the families across generations. They illustrate how broad cultural processes (middle-classing, individualization and globalization) are reflected and shaped by the emotion identity work performed by interviewees through family stories. The final and concluding chapter further theorizes these findings from a panoramic perspective. The generational readings of the family map are redefined as *emotional orientations*, that is, as 'feelings of directionality' through which the interviewees navigate their lives. Reorganizing the findings advances the view that each generational reading is in fact a unique and comprehensive discursive style that shapes generational life-trajectories. Each style is sustained by various emotional codes brought together in a basic pattern of attachment between the self and the family, through which individuals decode their feelings and navigate their way(s) in the world. Three generational reading styles are presented: *Protective reading* in the first-generation, *Oppositional reading* in the second-generation and *Restorative reading* in the third-generation. Some explanations for the social and cultural contexts in which these readings were formed are suggested. The final chapter thus illustrates how broad cultural processes that have brought about significant changes in Israeli society are manifested at the micro-level – in the emotional orientations that direct generational life-trajectories.

In conclusion, the main objective of the present study is to show how emotion identity processes that took place within a 'transparent', successfully acculturated immigration group in Israel shed light on broader cultural processes that contributed to the formation of the Israeli mainstream. The study argues that family stories play a major role in these changes and that their analysis makes it possible to uncover the complexity and ambivalence involved in the adoption and adaptation of new cultural patterns. As ordinary self-signifying practices embedded in time and space, family stories are shaped by culture in various ways. Therefore, they constitute a site where cultural patterns, emotions and identities fuse together and direct speakers into desirable lifestyles. The study thus shows how emotion identity work/generational readings/emotional orientations bring about cultural changes in a given social group and a given social setting over time. Finally, the study's recommendation for a micro-examination of cultural changes in immigrant groups not only sheds light on the complex dynamics that shape the tension between individualism and group commitment in Israeli middle-class families, but also contributes to the scholarship addressing the adoption of therapeutic discourse in Israel, and the limits thereof.