Commemorative Films: Cinematic Narrative and Coping with Bereavement

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Israel has lost more than 22 thousand young people in wars and in terror attacks.

The need to cope with so many losses in Israel, on both societal and personal levels, has led to the development of coping strategies such as personal commemorative films.
Bereavement
Continuing the bond

Reconstruction
Retelling; Re-authoring; “Shilhon”

Commemorative films
**Truth & Subjectivity** - While facts are the material from which the narratives are created, the narratives do not deal with the absolute truth. (Lieblice & Josselson, 1994; Rothenberg, 2005)

**Choice** - The narrators' created meanings and their choices through using the "facts" are an indication of their needs and provide a response to those needs.
commemorative films

One film - Two stories

- Biography of the dead child
- Narrative of the parent
  [the story teller]
Remember - Re-member

Why films?

- As close to real life - variety of complex tools that enables the reconstruction of an alternative reality.

- Enables a dialogue between the narrator and the audience.
The research

- 20 personal documentary commemorative films, selected from a pool of 50, that were screened on Israeli television on Memorial Day in Israel.

- Films average of 20 minutes long, an analysis of approximately 400 minutes of film.
qualitative-constructivist paradigm - Constructivism deals not only with the events but with interpretations of events and their significance for the participants and researcher (Shlasy & Alpert, 2007)

The interpretive-qualitative analysis of the films was a circular, dynamic process, in which themes were exposed, unified, separated and reunified by the two researchers.
Findings

Chronology of narrative
(Hedtke & Winslade, 2004; Malkinson, 2007; Mathes, 2006; Neimeyer, 2000, 2001; Rosenblat, 2000; Rynearson, 2001):

Past chapter

The Break" chapter

Present chapter

Thoughts about Future chapters
“The break”

- Last shard Experience
- The Death Event
- Notification of the Death Event
Last shard Experience

- Concrete Last Shared Experience

- Abstract Last Shared Experience
Concrete Last Shared Experience

Father: A week before he was killed we went together, my son, his mother and I, on a ski trip …
Danny
Last time he said to me:
"Mom, I'm going to reserve duty."
Abstract Last Shared Experience

togetherness with the child beyond time and space –
The narrator experiences sensations, that create a symbolic connection between himself and his fallen child.
Abstract Last Shared Experience

Mother – That Friday, I was waiting and waiting for him to phone, to hear something from him. I think that Friday, I was waiting for him to phone more than at any other time. [Her son was killed on the same Friday]
Sharon
The Death Event

Death Event is apparent through a range of representations:

* Eye witnesses telling the story
* Visiting the place of the battle
* A picture of the grave
* Excerpts from television broadcasts
* Military archive material
Symbolic representation

The camera pans over a felled palm tree on the ground;
Title: "A tree at Nissan's parents' house Uprooted on the day that Nissan was killed…"
Notification of death

Being informed of the child's death

The Death Event, however shocking, is not present in the parent's narrative until its existence is known to him.
Eitan
Thanks!

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