# Immigrant narratives from a psychological strength perspective.

**Open Lecture: Immigrant narratives from a psychological strength perspective. The use of a survey as a tool for voicing and humanizing experiences**

The programme areas DEMCI and FPG are delighted to welcome Dr. Mónica Torreiro-Casal from the University of California, Davis to the University of Stavanger. During the course of her stay, Dr. Torreiro-Casal will be giving an open lecture on the topic of:

Immigrant narratives from a psychological strength perspective. The use of a survey as a tool for voicing and humanizing experiences

Dr. Mónica Torreiro-Casal will describe findings from an online survey developed by UC Davis students using a psychological strength-based perspective. Monica will describe cultural constructs, migration experiences and immigrants’ perceptions on current anti-immigrant rhetoric. The rationale for using this survey will be discussed as well as the relevance of collecting qualitative data. Further, Monica will describe the current analysis of data and purpose of codifying themes from these narratives. The analysis of these narratives so far has helped to identify immigrants’ strengths and psychological protective factors. These findings contribute to voice counter narratives to the current political climate in the USA.

Dr. Mónica Torreiro-Casal holds a PhD in counseling psychology from Northeastern University, Boson, MA. She is also a trained psychologist who has clinical work experience with immigrant populations (refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented populations) in the Netherlands and in the USA. Currently, Monica is affiliated with the Chicano/a Studies Department at the University of California, Davis where she teaches and researches on mental health-related issues with vulnerable immigrant communities. Mónica’s teaching practices are targeted towards empowering minority communities of immigrants and first-generation college students. Her research focuses on collecting narratives (survey, interviews, art/media) and conducting qualitative research to document the undocumented narratives of marginalized individuals.

Research: Mónica co-leads a Research group for undergraduate students at UC Davis on topics related to immigration issues. The students who are part of this group belong to minority and immigrant backgrounds. They conduct research on topics related to their experiences or their own communities. Research becomes a tool to voice the silent realities of immigrants and a dissemination path of those narratives as well as a research training for students. The group uses participatory research approaches with a social activist component of “giving back to the community”. As part of contributing to the international and global understanding of immigration, Monica is collaborating with Dr. Linn Normand, a former visiting scholar at UC Berkeley, CA and affiliated faculty at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Linn and Mónica are collecting narratives of immigrants in Norway and in the USA. The comparative study includes understanding the path for the immigrant’s integration in the context of public policies in Europe and USA. The aim of this collaboration is to bring a global perspective on migration and transnational exchanges. The research project includes using immigrants’ narratives, media and art as counter narratives to anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobia.