Reminiscence and War Trauma: Recalling the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, 1942-1945

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The practice of reminiscence, the act of relating one's life story within a social context, has been widely studied to uncover the personal identity of the individual. In the case of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, a traumatic period in the lives of many Singaporeans, the process of sharing reminiscences with others is critical to understanding the psychological impact on individuals. This study explores how internees interviewed about their experiences during the occupation. It highlights the importance of understanding their personal stories to gain insights into the historical events and their long-term effects on society.

Studies on veterans reminiscing about war experiences have indicated that acts of remembrance aid in the construction of a narrative and provide a sense of identity. However, there is little research on the impact on internees during the Japanese Occupation. This study contributes to our understanding of the lasting effects of war trauma on individuals and the importance of documenting their experiences.
Siegseg school children survived the horror of war (Hans Richard)

remembrance and war crimes against Asian civilians who endured a British Imperial Occupation during World War II. The use of concentration techniques to imprison Asian people of the countryside occupied by Japanese was one of the most sensitive issues remaining for Colonists and other soldiers on recalling war trauma. Does it show that "concentration memories" develop in which the child's experiences become less emotional but are narrated into a life story to the older person to convey an meaningful personal message to the much younger interviewee?

The Japanese Occupation of Singapore was a traumatic period in the lives of many people who were over seventy years old. From 1942 to 1945, Singapore was occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army which imprisoned a local Jewish over the local population. During the Japanese Occupation tens of thousands of Chinese people, suspected of anti-imperial activities by pulling China's strong against Japan, were killed by the Japanese in massacres. Ordinary people were being forced to work for the Japanese military in factories, by neighbours and acquisition. Shifting towards the Japanese occupation for daily "livelihoods". Young women fell in their homes, young and elderly were fearful of being raped and sexually abused as "comfort women" by the Japanese military due to the country's long isolation of food supplies and women.

This study proposes to examine several adult-student relationships dealing with war trauma during the Japanese Occupation, reported from the Photon Education at Nanjing University, Singapore. Interviews were conducted by graduate students in Social Studies teachers who, as interviewers, were prepared to superimpose their own past experiences of war on older people for the oral history exercises in the studio. The interviews on the Japanese Occupation were conducted using a remembrance technique to interview the question of how the Japanese interviewed about the Japanese Occupation in Singapore appeared what they experienced and witnessed during the Japanese Occupation in their oral life story.

Methods of these interviews covering war traumatic experiences James Doerr's claim that remembrance and life story approaches to interviewing, and the use of oral history, can benefit from listening from each other's techniques. Interviewer has been made "while oral history tends to focus on the context of the memory, what is perhaps more important the remembrance and the context in attention given to process and outcome for participants." The desired outcomes include remembrance benefits that focus on the other process and oral history is not just about listening but about the stories that are being told and about the person who is telling them. Here interviewers are in a life story that is the Japanese who focuses on a life story and the one who is telling the story while an individual life story is told. In contrast, the interviewers work in the past, reflecting on their inter-personal but with a view to increasing personal understanding and personal reflection by the other person engaging in reminiscence. She FM regard that
more holistic approach to remembering in the life of older people is one we might benefit from. Oral history, introducing more interpretative layers once "the person who is..." comes to be read as much as "the person who was...". What reminiscence can gain from oral history is "recapture of the significance of the value not just in places in the history of a particular life, community and society."

APPLYING REMINISCENCE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The exercise of gathering narratives from the wartime generation of Singapore at the National Institute of Education in Singapore was an activity that benefited from both reminiscence techniques and the methods of oral history practice. In the project, the therapeutic outcomes of the interviews that the music therapists were required to do as part of their teacher training in Social Studies were as important as the content they were gathering. Oral history activities in the Singapore schools are often set by teachers not primarily as fact gathering exercises for the school pupils in interviews about the past. There are values and attitudes that insist to be encouraged in school children involving older relatives for oral history projects. In a conservative Asian society, such as Singapore, it is common for the grandparents to live in the same household as the grandchildren, whom they might look after when the parents are at work during the day. Oral history projects in these settings are often aimed at helping the grandparents and the grandchildren, and teaching both about the past. The aim is to capture information which is a story of value that should be passed onto the school pupil. Oral history interviews, regularly happen in the Singapore Ministry of Education's schools, particularly in the Ministry of Social Studies. If Primary 1 pupils are asked to interview one of their grandparents about their school day, while Primary 3 they must again do an interview with an older relative of their family about their own cultural heritage. Primary 3 pupil in Social Studies could then go to the projected interviewing a member of their family or friend's family who lived through the Japanese Occupation.

The purpose of doing oral history in Singapore schools is closer to the reminiscence therapy sessions of gerontology. In 2001, at, Harris Jusep College, Edinburgh, an English Librarian, who was asked to use the precious old film home to interview older pupils in order to record their life stories and work samples. So concerned on the objective of the project. Even if they were not directly, they have something about empathy. Older pupils who live in the young makeovers, who are not just collecting fact about the past but are engaged in an exercise in understanding their older family members and bonding with them. Collecting oral history in such a context is inevitably linked to a social function of the old and the young bonding together and developing an emotional respect. The younger generation learns to empathize with older people, either their grandparents, or older relatives and family friends, with whom they would not otherwise speak to very often.

In order to understand the process of doing oral history, young undergraduates training to be teachers have to complete an oral history interview themselves. The east teachers, who would later ask their own pupils to do oral history in Social Studies, are asked to facilitate discussions with older people not just about an historical period, but also to engage them in conversations that would restore the whole lives of the wartime generation albeit with a focus on one particular period of time — the Japanese Occupation — which is recognized as a historical watershed. In addition to the step-by-step descriptions of the historical events that the oral historians listen to, the oral history projects for primary pupils included in them, in addition to the content, is to make them complete a self-evaluation of the project and to write an essay about the value of reminiscence that they have facilitated. They regularly commented that the interviews, in which their older family member emerged in reminiscence for second hour was the fact that they have actually sat down and spoke for more than a few minutes with their grandfather or grandmother. The younger interviewers inevitably come away from the interviews with a greater respect for older people and the value of the family unit. Thus the essence of the older generation is passed to the younger generation. The identity and sense of self-worth of the older people is enhanced by the interviews shown by the pupils.

Collecting Oral History in the context of the Singapore school system is different. Singapore schools do not have the kind of system that differs from those of a national and archetypal system of oral history interviews. The larger collection of oral history testimony in Singapore is held at the Oral History Project — a permanent division of the National Archives of Singapore. The testimonies are recorded and told their whole life stories generally publicized in the museum at the National Oral History Centre. The testimony collection is part of the oral history project and the view of the national reminiscence. The Singapore National Archives and Oral History Centre,
which have as their mission the goal of collecting material that contributes to the story of the nation. According to David Chase, of the Oral History Centre in Singapore, the approach of the interviewers at the Centre was to provide and history that was “not just a revelation of the personal self but also comprehensive records on social and historical processes at work.” The oral history interviews of individuals were not set for themselves, but for what they could contribute to the story of the nation. Chase argued that oral history was not bound to say that “it is no more the individual stories but rather the collective narratives of people, their tradition and dispute.”

U.S. STORIES OF WAR TRAUMA AND THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION
Oral history narratives taken from older people talking about the Japanese Occupation in Singapore, and the written authentication essay on this testimony by the museum at the National Institute of Education, illustrate the points made by Becker on the benefits of using interview work. Becker discusses this in his article: “The importance of these interviews is that they can be a source of information, of personal stories, and of the values held by the Japanese in the Occupation.”

I remembered the conversation with the Japanese woman I met on the bus. She talked about her experiences of being a prisoner of war and how she managed to survive the Occupation. She told me about the food rations they received, the harsh living conditions, and the strict discipline imposed by the Japanese authorities. She also spoke about how she managed to keep her spirits up despite the hardships she had to endure. She said that the resilience and determination of the people in Singapore were a testament to their strength and courage.

The Japanese woman in my story was determined to survive and resist the occupation. She was a symbol of hope and resilience for the people of Singapore. Her story is a reminder of the strength and resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

My grandfather became very sad when she told me how the war ended. He was very young when the Japanese occupied Singapore, and when the British troops came back after the war he was happy that they would kill every Japanese. He was confused when I found out how they treated his grandparents and other family members. He was sad to see his mother and father, but he was happy to see his grandparents again. His story is a testament to the strength and determination of the people of Singapore.

My grandmother had many stories to tell about the Occupation. She spoke about how her family were separated and how they managed to survive. She also talked about how she managed to keep her spirits up despite the hardships she had to endure. She said that the resilience and determination of the people in Singapore were a testament to their strength and courage.

In conclusion, the stories of war trauma and the Japanese Occupation in Singapore are a reminder of the strength and resilience of the people of Singapore. They are a testament to the human spirit in the face of adversity. These stories should be remembered and passed on to future generations so that we can learn from the past and ensure that such events never happen again.

To Oral History Autumn 1985
It was the most unforgettable time of my life. They were the most frightening days of my life. Even now when I recall them, there are still little fears in me. When I see Japanese people on television, I am reminded of the terror that took place. Though life was tough, but my family and I survived. None of us perished in the Occupation, and we were still able to carry on our usual life during the Occupation. I felt that was possible to go through the most difficult moments; I learnt that I must maintain our security and the things and food. And if we want to survive, we must depend on ourselves, not on those foreign people. As long as there is money and food, we won't die. So don't worry too.

Members of the war generation interviewed showed considerable awareness of how their experiences fitted into the historical record of the anti-colonial struggle that grew out of the Japanese Occupation. They argued that the period had shown that it was better that the local people decided their own lives as an independent country under their own force, than being guided by colonial powers. This is often summarised by a quote from Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister (1959-1963), author of the 'Singapore generation' (1992), and an anti-colonial political leader. He commented in a speech that the Japanese occupation was an opportunity to experience the independence of young men who went through the Second World War and managed to assert that no one—neither the Japanese nor the British—had "the right to push and kick us around." Many of the war generation who have never heard this phrase will express it in other words the same sentiments. Madam Wong Wai Kam, 87 years old during her interview with Jon Alill Recor in October 2004, told the story of her suffering during the war and then went into the narrative perspective of the Japanese Occupation. She thus reconstructed the message that she wanted to her younger interviewer:

The three years and eight months which we went through were the darkest moment in my life. It was a long period of suffering; I lost almost everything. I lost my husband, my newborn son and even lost the family's wealth. The Japanese Officers were showed and shouting people who loved to launch attacks on the people when they the British and (Dutch) still were in Asia. They were also a bunch of Japanese people who enjoyed killing people and raping women. The British, on the other hand, were indifferent to them so much but they did not try to protect us. I had learnt a lot from this darkest period. I learnt that I must protect our own country and not of waiting for other people to protect it for us. We must maintain our independence at any cost. We must also be brave in the face of all kinds of difficulties. In addition, I had also learnt to become more courageous in order to survive and that money was not everything. There are some things which money cannot buy—peace/
described himself as working at a "farmer's method." During the Japan-
ese Occupation, he maintained the strong sense of identity that older people who lived through the Japanese Occupation derive from remembering having endured it. In his inter-
view, Thanh Ha Doan-Do-
dam recalled how he had never had enough food to eat and had to store his education at any corner in order to go to work to earn money for his family. As the end of the interview, Thanh Ha Doan-
Dam, upon being grappled by the Kasem, commented on the Japanese Occupation:
Ilearned that willpower was very important... that you need that to carry on to the hard times. And Ilearned that I was very young, so, I think that was one very good thing about the Japanese Occupa-
tion. Ilearned how to be strong, and that has while-
ne who are now. I think basically what Ilearned was that... we should not let will power be conquered by our enemies. Ilearned at that time, I learned a lot of things but I couldn't get it all... but I had to tell myself to be strong and go on, if I didn't than I wouldn't be here... you know talking to you about all this... Ilearned to not be afraid of anything... not about throwing away food... I just learned to get it from the most thing possible to be happy... just be simple because you never know what is going to happen. You have to be prepared. That was what Ilearned... never to let my will power be conquered by my en-
demies. So, the Japanese Occupation taught me something good... something valuable that I will... cherish a lot. And I appreciate life a lot more since then, and as a young adult I think there's a great value and something that you can learn. Sometimes they days... don't know what a lesson is as they also everything is changed. And that will not be a good step at all to be one's life... taking things for granted."
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