

Home is Where my family is:
Intergenerational Differences in
Constructions of Belongingness
in the Chinese Diaspora in
Australia

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Overview of presentation

- Introduction and purpose of the paper
- Conceptual issues
 - Memory, belonging and identity
 - Diaspora
 - Chineseness
- Two empirical studies
 - All male older sample
 - Mixed gender younger sample
- Discussion of results
- Conclusion

Memory, belonging and identity

- Identity is rooted in memory
- Memory is a construction of culture which both shapes and constrains its bearers.
- Influences on memories, especially leisure
- Distortions, selective forgetting and remembering.
- Memories as fragments of the past
- The eclectic nature of memories

Memory, belonging and identity

- Memories across time and space
- Memories linking individuals within generations
- Memories linking individuals across generations
- Memories tying individual identities to social and cultural identities
- Identity lies in the dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding
- Identity is fluid
- Memories and identity of places.

Memory, home and transnationalism

- Memory and context
- Home is a constantly negotiated place for the migrant.
- Where does the migrant feel most at home?
- Home is linked with special moments or sites. The influence of leisure
- Home as 'where I was born' and home as 'where I am now'. Is this transnationalism?

Methodology

- Sample
 - (a) Migration and Male Gender Identity Study
N=40 Av. Age=36.9 yrs, Av duration of settlement=8.4 yrs range 1.0 to 45.0 yrs. From HK(14), Taiwan(10), PRC(9), Malaysia(6) and Singapore(1)
 - (b) Taiwanese Young people Study N=22
Males=13, Females= 9, Av age= 20.25 yrs, Av. Duration of settlement=8.5 yrs range 8.3 to 8.8 yrs

Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews in English and Mandarin
- Focus group and individual
- Coding and thematic analysis
- nVivo and Atlas/ti
- Issues-insider/outsider, comparing interviews done in English and Mandarin, gender differences interviewer/interviewee, individual compared with focus group interviews

Themes

- Chineseness
- Memories of home, family and parents-
Chinese male migrants
- Migration, Memories, Belonging and
Identity
- Home for the Taiwanese Young People

Chineseness

- Reinforced by place and diaspora
- For males who studied in UK, USA, etc differences became obvious concerning the influence of sport participation on constructions of masculinities and significance of the body. Some adopted local practices.
- Social sport used by migrants to find out about activities in the diaspora
- Males as centre of the family but fathers in the sample did not want to be as distant and severe as their fathers
- Keeping feelings inside
- Perceived differences in the male sample
- Connectedness and hierarchy

Memories of home, family and parents-male sample

- Influence of visiting relatives. Recognition of personal changes.
- Links individual, family and kin, the state
- Memories of childhood games-gender, heroes, morals, values.
- Karaoke, language, Asian restaurants, businesses
- Home in a diasporic space
- Gay males as the exception

Migration, memories, belonging and identity

- Taiwanese-Australians, Chinese-Australians. Hyphenated identity. Half-and-half
- Friendship networks reinforce identity
- Strong reactions to possible invasion of TW
- Preference for ethnic popular culture reinforces ethnic identity
- Employment and unemployment
- Recognition of personal/social changes when visitors arrived

Home for the Taiwanese Young People

- 'Where the family is', 'Where I am now', 'Where relatives and friends are'
- A place as home
- Taste, noises, smells,
- Two homes for some
- Familiar lifestyles
- Home as a 'constantly negotiated place'
- No longer losses

Discussion and Conclusions

- Memories of home, customs and cultural traditions are reinforced by popular culture , mass media and friendship networks
- Community moments (Raj,2003) at karaoke, yum char, at church, grocery shopping and in social sport are experience by Taiwanese young people and more settled Chinese males
- Fragments of the past are related by the older males from memories of childhood games and gender is a factor

Discussion and conclusions

- Construction of a social world similar to that from the past. The Diaspora and Chinese friends, language and leisure activities
- Identification as Taiwanese or Taiwanese-Australian. Friends and activities evoke memories of place of origin
- For the young TW transnational migrants home is where family and friends are but home can be a continuous process
- Older Chinese heterosexual males retained traditional markers of masculinity while gay Chinese males were different in sexual preferences

Discussion and conclusions

- Learning about local networks is important. The influence of social sport is important
- A sense of belonging is associated with being in close proximity to people of similar ethnic background
- Younger Taiwanese differ from the older Chinese male sample in use of sport for purposes of acculturation.
- Need to look at the next generation of Chinese and Taiwanese young people, especially those born in Australia
- Are some memories more resilient than others? Why?
- Lifestyles no longer end at national boundaries. Are transnational identities taking on new significance?