

GEN 3040 Comparative Cultures

Talking Tales Oral History Project

‘Hong Kong Childhood’

Date of interview: 22 April 1999

Location of Interview: Lingnan College Library at Conference Room

Interviewer: Jack

Interviewee: Charles

Content of Interview

Jack : Thanks for you coming!

Charles : You are welcome.

Jack : Where and when were you born?

Charles : I was born on May the sixteenth 1977 in Hong Kong.

Jack : Could you tell me your family background information?

Charles : My family has four members. My father’s occupation is a postman. Before my parent’s marriage, my mother was a worker in a factory. But influencing by the moved up the plant to the Mainland China and cut down worker in Hong Kong, my mother has been unemployed for more than 3 years. Therefore my mother is a housewife now. I have a little brother whom younger than me for 3 years. And he is a secondary six student at Rosaryhill school.

Jack : How about you and your family relationship? Is it any big difference as before?

Charles : In the past, I often talked with mother with everything that I knew because she often asks me. For example, I talked with her about the life in school, who was the naughty in my class, even my student hand book which need my mother to sign it.

However, after a few years later, willnesses to talk with parents was less than before; it seemed that our relationship were far apart. Fortunately, after I had across the adolescence period, our communication time was increasing and became much closer.

I knew they just caring me about my life and hoping to deal with my difficulties during study period. It is easy for me to communicate with mother than father.

Jack : Your parents have any different treating you and your brother?

Charles : My father loves more my brother while mother loves me more than younger brother. For example, my mother gave more pocket money than brother did, however, my brother did not ask for why has this difference. May be he thought that this did not matter. My mother thought that I was the eldest brother, who needs much money for daily expenses.

Jack : Who made the decisions in your family?

Charles : In the past, my father was the final decision-maker. But, there are some changes. Because I am the eldest son, I act a critical role in decision making. For

example, purchased the electronic appliances what the brand name and what the style, also bought the furniture what the color. I made all of decisions. The power for decision making will be increase when I was as a financial supporter in my family. My little brother also did not request for that power. May be he still not mature enough. This is my family power hierarchy.

Jack : Would your brother dislike you about the power of decision making?

Charles : I thought no. Because he was an easy-going boy. This did not much matter for him. Even that he did not think about why had this phenomenon occurred. Parents also loved him so much. There was just no big difference in him and me.

Jack : Is there any great difference in living environment?

Charles : In the most previous, we lived in Shek Pai Wan Estate in Aberdeen. In age of 5 or 6, I had moved to Ap Lei Chau Estate. Both of them were public housing. I have lived there for 13 years. There were no special events in my old house which stick in my mind because I was so small.

Jack : What did the relationship between you and your neighbor? Would you play with their kids?

Charles : During primary five to secondary two, I liked to play with the same age group of neighbor's kids , e.g. riding the bicycle at the corridor. However , in recent year, my friends near my home have been moved out to other places. The new

neighbor seemed strange to me as they were mature adults. As a result we had less communicate with each other. It made our living environment less harmony than before.

Jack : What sort of things were you punished for? What kind of punishment did you receive? Who handed out the punishment?

Charles : It was a usual thing for every child. No child was naughty nor did not do the wrong thing. I remembered that brother and I was playing the “soft” football in home. Accidentally, we kicked up the football to the window, made the window broken. A loudly sound made mother awake. She was so angry because she told us no playing in the home. But we did not listen to her warning. Therefore she had beaten us .

Jack : As you mentioned before, except playing football, what other sorts of game and activity would you like?

Charles : When I was small, I liked playing the “ Vogue ” game in that time. Also I liked playing the basketball. In Form 1 , I engaged in the school Boy Scout Club as a member. It needed a rather high standard of group discipline, however, I was not behavior as a discipline –oriented person. Moreover, every Saturday morning at 6 a.m., I need to be training in the playground. This training was a terrible and hard thing. Therefore after one year I quitted the Member as a Boy Scout.

Jack : What type of leisure activities did your family have?

Charles : I remember when I was a child, my parents would take us going to restaurant with “ morning-tea”. Then we went to see a film or shopping in Town Mall.

After I and brother grew up, we had its owns friends and unlikely going with parents in weekends. Therefore, our parents rarely go outside with brother and me.

Jack : How were household tasks divided? Did you have to care for your brother?

Charles : Owing to as an elder brother, I need to take care for my young brother.

Actually, mother did almost all-household tasks. Occasionally, I washed the dishes and swept the dirty floor.

Jack : Looking back are there any events in your childhood which stick in your mind? Could you describe them?

Charles : In my mind, there was no great impression during childhood. But there was one event that was told by my parents about my story. At the first day of my school life in pre-school, I was so fear in such strange environment therefore I was stamp foot and cry until from the headmaster who took me to my classroom

Jack : After the period of pre-school, is there any great changes in your primary school life? Could you describe them?

Charles : From the age of four to six , my behavior had great changes. In the past, I liked play the game with myself. But after six years old, I like play with classmates and neighbor’s kids in a group. Playing with them had much happier than before.

Jack : In your primary school life, is there any special event that you can remember?

Could you describe it ?

Charles : In my primary school, there had a small garden for students to reading. But I and about 5 or 6 classmates used this facility for copying the assignments. In every morning , we woke up one hour earlier going to school. Unfortunately, after three months later one classmate saw our dishonest event, therefore he told to my class teacher. Our teacher punished all of classmates who had engaged in copying the assignments by re- writing all the assignments in the following 2 weeks. After these events, I have never again copied the homework.

Jack : After promoted to secondary school, your primary classmate's relationship between yours had any changes? Would you adapt the new environment?

Charles : They had their own schools and friends. Our relationship seemed far away than before. Sometimes, we had activities such as see a film. On the other hand, my seven years of secondary school life, my friends could divide into three stages. The first stage friendship came from Form 1 and 2. Their life style was total different to me, they just liked the bad things such as smoking, gambling and drinking. They did not put any effort or time in learning. As a result, I left out in that group of friends. Later in Form 3, a second stage of friends appeared. They had the same objective with mine- study hard in that period. We often discuss the problems in the subjects and

teach with each other. Therefore, my result in final examination got a rather good grade. The third stage came from my Form 6 classmates. There had only 30 students in one class. The communication time much longer than other stages of friendship.

Jack : Can you remember any your love story in secondary life?

Charles : I had a girl classmate who was my primary school friend. We entered the same secondary school but different class. I had feeling on that girl but I did not say to her. One-day morning, I met across her in the school corridor, we talked with other for a few minutes. However, I did not know she had a boy friend who was coming to her side. He looked angry that I talked with his girlfriend. He was a notorious student in my school. After a few days, he and his “ bad” friends followed behind me during I going back to home. I knew someone behind my back, therefore, I went around in my living place. To not allow their follow, I run quickly to safety place which near my home. Although they tried to follow me where was my home, they were in vain. After that they did not follow me again, may be he knew the truth . In form 4, the school discarded her and her boyfriend. They were not allowed to promote in Form 4 because they were poor in the academic result.

Jack : During your study period, what were your favorite subjects? Are there any friends or teachers treated you kindly?

Charles : I remember that in my Form 2, there had a class teacher who likes me so

much. One event that I would ever remember. In Form 2 , we needed to choose any one kind of subject: Arts or Science. My friends and parents told me to choose the science subject because it could find better career . Also it was more suitable for boy to study. Therefore, I chose the science subject as major study in Form 4 and 5. However, the competition among the whole school was so great that not everybody could take a sit. Fortunately, my class teacher knew someone who gave up the seat in science subject. He immediately put my name in the list. I really thank for his gift. Actually, after study the science subject I found this was difficult and boring subject. It seemed that I studied the Art rather than Science. My favorite subjects were Economics, Chinese History and World History, especially the Economics that led me to further study. Because my results of the Certificate Examination were not good, except the Economics subject.

Jack : Final question , How did your parents see your future? What did you want to do ?

Charles : They did not put any pressure on me about my future or even the study. They let me to choose what I want to be. But being a college student, I had a target in my future. I needed to have provided a stable living condition for my parents and my child. I want a 1000 sq. feet of flat and a dream car in near future.

Jack : That is the end of our interview. Once again thanks for Charles cooperation!

Summary of Interview

Charles comes from a nuclear family. Father, mother and a little brother. They have a close relationship with each other, although Charles more likely to talk with mother rather than father. Their family shows some typical events that many families also have it. For example, the father and the eldest son made the final decision in tackle the problems. The mother does the household tasks and take care the kids. The kids more like their mother than father. Charles talked three special events which stick in his mind. Most of the people did not remember what they did in pre-school life. They were told by their parents. That was same to Charles's situation. He had his best friends in different period when they meet. He has a good teacher who let him to study the Science subject. No matter how the friends and teachers treating Charles, his family is the best and the most important persons in the world.

Evaluation of Interview

The conference room in the library is quiet and nobody will disturb us. On the other hand, the recorder occurred malfunction during the first practice. The microphone was not properly used in the practice. Also there have some background noise come from the outside environment. My interviewee showed nervous and shy during the interview. Therefore, we had practice more than twice before the actual on air.