PRESENT PAST:
RESILIENCE AND REMEMBERING IN THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE
MEMORIES OF ELDERLY POLES WHO SURVIVED THE GULAGS AS CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

Following immigration and trauma experiences, memory, adjustment, and personal transformation prove to be complex processes across the lifespan. The overall aim of this thesis is to examine how elderly Polish individuals who experienced childhood trauma reflect on their lives and remember both their life experiences and their migration trajectories. During WWII, after having been exiled from their homes at the onset of war to Soviet labour camps (gulags), Polish children and youth spent several years in international refugee camps beginning in 1942 before settling, often very successfully, in Canada or New Zealand. The first study focuses on the individual and collective memories of those who were in African refugee camps (the "Africans", or "Afrykanczycy"), through the content analysis of individual interviews (N=10) and collective reunion materials, respectively. Individual memories reveal a diversity of lived experiences in the camps, while the collective memories emphasize timeless friendships in an idealized past. The second study looks to the publicly available testimonials (N=51) of those who were New Zealand's first refugees. Evidence of posttraumatic growth presents itself as changes in relationships and changes in self, in the context of a welcoming and supportive society. Taken together, these studies of a common trauma and migration experience, as expressed through various lenses, provide representations of subjective experiences and recollections in late life, which is helpful for understanding the resiliency process. They inform our understanding of memory processes following migration and trauma, the use of qualitative life trajectory research as a tool for longitudinal studies, and what may help or hinder well-being across the lifespan.

Résumé

La mémoire et divers processus d'adaptation sont au cœur de la transformation personnelle qui prend place tout au long de la vie, suite à une expérience d'immigration et à un vécu traumatique. L'objectif général de cette thèse est d'examiner comment des individus polonais âgés, ayant vécu un traumatisme durant l'enfance, réfléchissent et se souviennent de leur vie et de leur trajectoire de migration. Pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, après avoir été exilés et placés dans des camps soviétiques de travail (les goulags), un grand nombre d'enfants polonais ont passé plusieurs années dans des camps de réfugiés internationaux. Ils ont par la suite immigré au Canada ou en Nouvelle-Zélande. Cette thèse est composée de deux études portant sur les adultes qu'ils sont devenus. Une première porte sur les mémoires individuelles et collectives de ceux qui étaient dans les camps de réfugiés africains (les «Africains», ou «Afrykanczycy»). Une analyse de contenu des entrevues individuelles (N=10) et des matériaux des réunions collectives a été effectuée. Le contenu des mémoires individuelles illustre la diversité d'expériences vécues dans les camps, tandis que les mémoires collectives mettent l'accent sur des amitiés éternelles et un passé idéalisé. Une deuxième étude examine les témoignages publiquement disponibles (N = 51) des enfants polonais qui ont été les premiers réfugiés de la Nouvelle-Zélande. La croissance post-traumatique est documentée au travers des changements dans les relations aux autres et à soi, dans le contexte d'une société hôte accueillante. Pris ensemble, ces résultats démontrent que la transformation subjective des expériences de traumatisme et de migration par la mémoire soutient les processus de résilience jusqu'à un âge avancé. Les résultats de ces études informent notre compréhension des processus de mémoire à long-terme après la migration et des traumatismes.

Acknowledgments

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do

than by the ones you did do.

So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor.

Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover."

- Mark Twain

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Preface

"The content of recall of the past is determined by one's life history as well as one's current life circumstances; the present is a filter through which life is understood, interpreted, and constructed." (O'Rourke et al., p. 4, 2015)

Over the last five years, I have engaged with Polish survivors of Soviet labour camps of WWII who now live around the world: Canada, USA, UK, Poland, Australia, and New Zealand. As a child, I wanted to understand why people tried to kill my grandparents. They were exiled to gulags as children at the beginning of WWII. Growing up with stories of terror, suffering, trauma, and loss, as well as hope, strength, adventure, and courage, fostered my profound interest and sensitivity towards the experiences, struggles, and feelings of others.

Throughout my educational career, even into university, I have faced people not believing what I told them. The story is indeed unbelievable. Polish children of various faiths exiled from their homes during WWII to the labour camps of the Soviet Union, where they went to school and were taught that they should adopt a new identity, journeys South to Persia following their liberation, shaky boat trips to exotic lands where they met the Maasai people, sang in Swahili, lived in round huts, and swung on lianas "like Tarzan" into Lake Duluti, between going on safaris and performing Polish folk dances on an African jungle backdrop, all while WWII was raging on and they were in refugee camps established by the Polish Government-in-Exile? Were my grandparents making this up? Why would they do that? No one I knew at the time had grandparents like that. As I grew older, I learned of others who had had similar experiences as children "growing up traveling" between labour camps, transit camps, and refugee camps. Still, to many it was, and is, unbelievable. And so I traveled around the world from one reunion to

another, one archive to another, one leading expert to another, and the various corners of libraries and the internet to discover materials, testimonials, and celebrations. This thesis therefore is the result of a lifetime of interest and efforts directed towards several key areas. One of the greatest struggles as a first step has been to mourn all the important things that I could not capture and share, yet. I have accepted that some analyses and ideas will need to wait for later.

Following some undergraduate work on the topic, I quickly learned that quantitative methods could not grasp or disentangle the complex experiences and stories of these individuals as I was experiencing them. They wanted to talk, not circle numbers. For lifetimes, they were looking for people with whom they could share their stories, especially if the listeners were young. I found myself asking Likert Scale questionnaires to which the responses were "well, before the War I was a 4, then in Siberia I was a 1 given those circumstances, arriving in Canada I was probably 5, now I am a 2", with each statement unintentionally eliciting fascinating tales of adventure or hardship to contextualize and explain their choices. At that point, it became evident that their insight was begging to be explored through qualitative methods.

One of my major efforts for many years has been to educate society and academics about a history that was forcibly repressed following WWII. Another has been to better understand these remarkable experiences and the associated processes. This work has allowed me to better understand myself, my strengths and struggles, and the direction I wish to direct my life's efforts. The process of writing this thesis has also helped me discover my own experiences of personal growth and transformation. It has been a means to understand the experiences of my family and friends who have experienced various forms of migrations and traumas. This work and self-discovery has literally taken me around the world, visiting communities, archives, people, and memory spaces.

Introduction

During WWII, Poland was divided between a Nazi-controlled West and a Soviet-controlled East. Under the Soviet-controlled East, four major waves of exile took place of local Polish citizens towards the Soviet labour camps, known to modern society as the gulags, and to the exiles as "Siberia". Although specific numbers will likely never be known, current estimates range from 1,442,000 to 1,682,000 Poles exiled between 1939 and 1941, with approximately 379,500 suggested to have been under the age of 15 (Jolluck, 2002). They were mostly Catholics but also included Atheists, Orthodox Christians, and Jews, and were mostly landowners, intellectuals, military-affiliates, and professionals (Radzinsky, 1997). The exile narrative involves uprootedness and a knock on the door early in the morning, Soviet soldiers entering their homes with weapons telling the family that they have a short period of time to pack their belongings and leave, followed by being loaded onto cattle cars for the transport that lasted days to weeks. Life in the labour camps varied by location, but overall living conditions were poor, with very little food and much hard physical labour. Children were often exposed to multiple traumas such as witnessing death, experiencing forced exile, separation from family members, starvation, freezing weather, and inadequate living conditions. Some children were sent to classrooms that were organized by the Soviets in order to assimilate children into Soviet society and thinking.

In the summer of 1941, the Nazis broke their 1939 Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviets. As a result, additional resources were required against the Soviets' new enemy. Talks between the Polish General Sikorski and the Soviet ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky, began shortly after this news. Forced to work together against their common enemy, Nazi Germany, Stalin sought mutual military support to ensure Soviet success. General Sikorski agreed, on the condition that the Polish citizens within the camps be freed, which Stalin granted. The Sikorski

Maisky Agreement was signed soon after, granting the amnesty and release of the imprisoned

Polish citizens (Applebaum, 2003). The Poles, being part of the Allies, made their way South to

Persia (present-day Iran) where the Second Polish Corps was forming under the Polish General

Wladyslaw Anders. This travel was largely unassisted and involved hopping on trains (a process

that resulted in the separation of many families), bartering for a horse or wagon, and walking.

Those who could joined the army and the war effort, but approximately 33,000 people

who arrived in Persia could not do so. In response to the influx of children, refugee camps for

them and some displaced families were established around the world by the Polish Government-

in-Exile based in London. These locations included Mexico, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya,

Tanganyika, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Lebanon, India, and New Zealand (Piotrowski,

2004). In these camps, children received an education largely provided by the Polish adults who

had been with them in the labour camps. These adults provided social activities (including scout

groups, dancing groups, and theatre groups), as well as comfort through food, housing, and

religious institutions. By 1952, the last of the refugee camps ceased to receive foreign aid and

was closed down. Some children and their families stayed in the countries in which they had been

refugees, while others immigrated to other Allied countries (e.g., Canada, USA, and UK). Upon

arrival, they faced varied attitudes from the countries into which they were immigrating. Polish

communities and support systems began to develop, and if they already existed, they were

strengthened by the post-war immigrants. Many of these communities and organizations continue

to exist today (e.g. churches, schools, social groups, dance groups, community organizations) and

continue to be frequented by generations of Polish people of the diaspora.

The personal transformations of the Polish child survivors of the gulags are now 75 years

in the making. A paucity of knowledge and lack of consensus regarding long-term adjustment

and protective factors over the migration experience make research on this group of now elderly individuals timely and valuable, especially within an international, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary context. A review by Tol, Song, & Jordans (2013) suggests that resilience is a complex and dynamic process. There are various degrees to which people are believed to be vulnerable or resilient under conflict and stressful situations (Bonanno, 2004). Considering human development in this context, it is suggested that resilience occurs through complex processes of experiences and interpretations. How meaning is attributed to reality is significantly impacted by developmental changes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Perceived environment, as compared to objective environment, among children undergoing migration needs to be considered and understood (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006), as these first efforts at interpreting, evaluating, and making sense of their lives may influence their adaptation processes and experiences (Kuczynski & Navara, 2006). A notable predictor of well-being during the post-migration period is social support (Montgomery, 2008), which speaks to the developmental processes of children beyond the pre- or during-migration experience, as well as to the importance of understanding ethnic communities, the significance of these childhood experiences over time, and how they are remembered, celebrated, and understood later in life.

Chapter Précis

This thesis represents an effort to learn from the memories, reunions, and testimonials of the Sybiracy (the Poles who were exiled to "Siberia" during WWII), in order to better understand the processes of resilience, personal transformation, and memory across the lifespan. It is an effort to enrich knowledge on these topics by taking a longitudinal, life trajectory approach using qualitative methods. In Chapter 1, I focus on the themes that emerge in individual memories and collective memories of Africa; a place of refuge following the traumas of war. Through the

analysis of material from individual interviews in Canada and collective reunions in Poland, what

is remembered, celebrated, and avoided in different memory spaces and contexts is revealed. In

Chapter 2, I focus on the posttraumatic growth of the orphaned survivors who made the

welcoming land of New Zealand their home. Thematic content analysis was done on the

testimonials present in the book "New Zealand' First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children"

(Manterys & Zawada, 2014) to reveal the various resilience strategies that arose in this context.

Taken together, these two chapters demonstrate the many voices, memories, and strategies

present in the life trajectories of the elderly Poles who survived the gulags as children during

WWII and in the various contexts that followed their initial traumatic migration experiences.

Chapter 1

"Under the Baobab Tree":

The "magical" representation of Africa in the individual and collective memories of Soviet

labour camp survivors

Abstract

Memory tends to vary based on the context and purpose of its recall. Memories of war, trauma, survival, and "safe spaces" on a migration journey require further study, especially relative to their emergence and significance later in life, as well as how they relate to personal transformation. The objective of this study is to understand the role of the reunions and individual memories among the elderly Afrykanczycy and the different themes that emerge in this memory space. The material from two groups of participants was analyzed to better understand the representation of Africa in individual and collective memories. Ten participants completed semi-structured interviews that allowed for a discussion of their life trajectory. The second group represents the collective memories of individuals who attend reunions in Poland of the Afrykanczycy from around the world. The interview transcripts and commemorative song book lyrics were translated to English. Major converging and diverging themes were revealed through narrative analysis based in grounded theory. Individual memories reveal a diversity of lived experiences in the camps, while the collective memories emphasize timeless friendships in an idealized past. Individual and collective memories have complimentary roles to preserve and to give meaning to partially shared experiences. The implications of this study suggest that we ought to continue questioning the centrality of disclosure in the reconstruction process. It proposes that more attention be given to the life trajectory following trauma and migration experiences.

"Under the Baobab Tree":

The "magical" representation of Africa in the individual and collective memories of Soviet

labour camp survivors

Africa… well, our huts […] were usually twigs and covered with mud, and in our place it was straw on the roof, no ceiling, so things could be coming down. We had mousquetaires to keep us out of reach of whatever was coming down and also the mosquitoes… But you see there again. You had no running water, you had no electricity, but you could do something about it. You could make a mat out of whatever; it was just dirt that floor. You could embroider something, [...] you could [...] grow papayas or bananas, something like that. It was beginning to be a normal kind of life. It was heavens above what we had on our way, in tents and so on. And because we were young then, it was a kind of adventure as well […] because it was no longer hunger, it was no longer persecution, we were all in the same group. We were all kind of friends together. So when people from Africa [get together], we always treat each other as we are all friends […] like family.

- Matylda[1], Female "Afrykanczyka", Canada, age 84

"Africans, do you know;

That the best thing in this world;

Is to have friends and memories;

Because that changes our lives."

- Verse from the 1998 Reunion Song book of the Under the Baobab Tree Club

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[1] All names in Chapter 1 are pseudonyms to protect the identity and confidentiality of participants.

Matylda's representative recollections of life in Africa, coupled with extracts from the Under the Baobab Tree Club reunion songs, offer important insight onto the interplay of various themes that emerge in the individual and collective memories of elderly Poles living around the world. They also shed light onto the experience that brought together thousands of Polish children during the 1940s. Close social ties, adventures, and long-term group formation emerged following exile, trauma, and a journey of hardship on their way to Africa, which nevertheless had its own daily struggles. From this experience emerged the shared identity of "Afrykanczycy", which from Polish translates to "the Africans". This new common identity established a link among survivors which was neither directly associated with their common traumatic past, nor with the host countries where they finally resettled. Instead, it was a new common identity linked with a third space; the remembered safe space of Africa in their survival moment. The aim of this paper is to analyze, through narrative and documentary analysis, the memories of Africa as a space that facilitated the life reconstruction of these Polish refugee children.

I begin this paper with literature on long-term memory and negotiating trauma, individual and collective memories and commemorations, and protection spaces that are not the home country, site of trauma, or host country. This is followed by findings from a grounded theory content analysis, first of individual interviews that took place in Canada, and second of material received during the Under the Baobab Tree Club reunion of Afrykanczycy in Wroclaw, Poland. Emerging themes from the material are noted and critically examined to better understand the roles of remembering and celebrating the African refugee camp experience, individually and collectively, as related to the meaning given to the Afrykanczycy's migration and life experiences.

Long-term memory and negotiating mass trauma

Memories of trauma experienced in childhood may vary across the lifespan as one comes to terms with one's experiences. In the creation of coherent life narratives, elderly adults often come to terms with the past and cope with losses (Haight, Michel, & Hendrix, 2000). According to Erikson (1959, 1998), life reflections among elderly individuals are believed to result in integrity (serenity, acceptance and compassion) or despair (hopelessness, regret, and bitterness). Reminiscence functions appear to be linked with well-being later in life (Westerhod, Bohlmeijer, & Webster, 2010) depending on how these autobiographical memories are recalled (Webster & Haight, 2002). The Tripartite Model of Reminiscence Functions (Webster, 1997) is an example of a model that offers a means to understand reminiscence. It suggests the categories of self-positive (identity, death preparation, and problem solving), self-negative (bitterness revival, boredom reduction, and intimacy maintenance), and prosocial (conversation and teach/inform others). In a study of Holocaust survivors, O'Rourke and colleagues (2015) found that these three types of reminiscence are present among individuals who have experienced childhood trauma and the long-term sequelae of trauma, but further research and confirmation is still needed.

Individuals and cultural groups who experience mass violence may engage with memory, while grappling with determining how to represent the past and their traumas. Age and gender are two important factors that may affect how one reacts to mass violence and trauma. For example, children may be particularly vulnerable or predisposed to certain traumas. Cohorts may form at certain ages because they make up a group with shared socialization, media exposure, and education (Hinton & Hinton, 2015). Memories within such cohorts often become the collective memory over time (Pennebaker, 1997).

Memories and commemorations: Individual and collective

The means by which individual and collective memories may become relevant has been examined but still requires further study. Although much attention has been given to understanding the development of individual memories, the understanding of when and why collective memories develop lacks relative empirical study. Events or objects that lack personal impact or adaptive relevance tend to not be recalled. Similarly, collective memories tend to be formed by significant historical events, with present circumstances influencing the events that are considered significant. Commemoration is an example of a means to keep a memory alive and relevant. There is a natural inclination for people to commemorate aspects of their own past or of their culture's past. There are multiple ways by which the translation of events or images into language may affect how those experiences are thought about or recalled. The social act of language allows for the discussion of an event, affecting its perception and understanding through conversation. It then becomes a form of rehearsal. In so doing, the organization of the event in memory, and how it is recalled in the future, is also affected (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997).

Individual and collective memories appear to be interrelated in several ways. Nostalgia for a place or time emerges when an individual embraces collective memories, which results in the reliving and reexperiencing of a previous identity. Reunions are a means of commemorating and sharing memories with those who had similar or shared experiences, which may benefit well-being. For example, prosocial reminiscences promote social encounters as opportunities to experience positive emotions (Cappeliez, O'Rourke, & Chaudhury, 2005), affecting physical and mental health via emotion regulation (Alea & Bluck, 2003; Pasupathi, 2003).

Protection spaces in memory

Individual and collective memories may develop relative to a particular space or site of trauma. Similarly, they may develop relative to a site of healing or a safe space. For memory,

locations and local habitations are relevant in the development of both individual and collective identity. There continues to be little understanding and agreement on specifically how space and place matter. There are both literal and imaginative ways of understanding a therapeutic space, as a physical place and as a space in the mind (Gastaldo, Andrews, & Khanlou, 2004; Williams, 2004). An additional level of understanding is at a community level, where interactions with individuals and environments may facilitate healing (Miller & Rasco, 2004). A "protection space" such as a refugee camp may therefore serve a role as a therapeutic or healing space, combining community space, physical space, and "memory" space. Such may be the case if social links are repaired, which are often damaged during trauma and war-related migration. These considerations are therefore especially relevant for children who have previously experienced trauma.

The spatiality of refugee protection and spaces remains an area requiring further improved understanding (Lyytinen, 2015). The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) understanding of a "protection space" is defined as the extent to which an environment facilitates the respect and maintenance of the internationally recognized rights of refugees (Crisp. Janz, Riera, Samy, 2009). However, this definition arguably misses the "importance of everyday mundane encounters and spatial struggles expressed by refugees" (Lyytinen, 2015, p. 46). In these spaces and contexts of transition during migration, there is potential to threaten or enhance well-being. In working to understand the multiple facets and experiences that may occur in such protection spaces, their potential for healing as "therapeutic spaces" is especially noteworthy.

The process of memory and remembering is complex and integrates various levels of experience both present and past.

Remembering, therefore, involves not only the neurobiology of memory but also family dynamics, individual and collective constructions of identity, the

geography of memorial landscapes, and the political uses of events. Collective memory is a function not just of the witness and the storyteller but of the audiences that participate in the memory's performance and transmission. These audiences (real or imagined, present in the flesh or virtual) are central to the moral significance of remembering. (Kirmayer, 2015, p. 413 in Hinton & Hinton)

The Afrykanczycy: How and why Polish children came to Africa during WWII

At the start of WWII, over 1.5 million people who were considered threats to the Soviet Union were exiled from Poland to the gulags. These included nearly 380,000 children, most of whom were exiled with their families. While in the gulags, they were sent to schools to receive a Soviet value-based education that promoted Communist ideals that countered the religious and ethnic identities of the children. They were forced to adopt this new identity in rather harsh ways. In addition to loss of family members and unfavourable living conditions, they were direct targets of identity transformation during their critical years of development of the self.

In 1941 they were liberated due to an Amnesty that was agreed upon among the Allies; a response to Operation Barbarossa and the Nazi turn against the Soviets that broke their previous Non-Aggression Pact. The Poles, being part of the Allies, made their way South to Persia where the Second Polish Corps was forming under General Anders. In response to the influx of children, refugee camps were established around the world by the Polish Government-in-Exile based in London. Nineteen refugee camps were established in Africa. These included Uganda (Masindi and Koja), Kenya (Rongai, Manira, Makindu, Nairobi, and Nyali), Tanganyika (Tengeru), South Africa (Oudtshoorn), as well as North and South Rhodesia. Along with other smaller camps, these housed approximately 18,000 people, mostly children, who were resettled in Africa. The last of these camps closed in 1952.

Poland remained under Communist control until 1989, and the land that had previously belonged to these exiled Poles was annexed into Eastern countries including Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Therefore, these individuals did not have a "Polish home" to return to, as their birthplaces were no longer part of Poland. Under Communism, Poland and Poles abroad were largely unable to speak of their experiences being exiled, in the labour camps, and in the refugee camps. It was neither safe to speak of their exile or of their Soviet labour camp experience (since it could have had consequences from the Communist government for themselves or their families and friends in Poland), nor was it encouraged to be discussed in their new countries where the local attitude was too often to "move on" and integrate. Therefore, this history remained largely unknown except for among the survivors themselves and within both their memories and communities. This situation changed in 1989 with the fall of Communism in Poland and when there was less pressure to keep the history secret. At that time, the survivors were entering a new phase of their lives as their children had become adults and many were becoming grandparents. Despite the relatively brief period of time that individuals spent in the refugee camps, for many of them this time, place, and associated people hold an important status in their memory to this day, involving various forms of ritual, celebration, and gathering around the world. Those who were in the refugee camps of Africa continue to refer to themselves as the "Afrykanczycy" (the "Africans"); a name which indicates how this experience profoundly structures their identity even presently in their old age.

Research questions

The objective of this study is to understand the role of the reunions and individual memories among the elderly Afrykanczycy. To address this objective, we sought to answer (1) how is the African experience expressed, collectively and individually, in both the gatherings and memories of the Afrykanczycy; and (2) what themes emerge in this memory space? In particular,

what place is given to the common traumatic past? How is post traumatic reconstruction addressed?

Method

Given the richness of detail, limited sample size, specific research questions and objective, a qualitative research design was adopted. It involved first a content analysis of individual life narratives, and second an ethnographic and documentary analysis of the collective reunion experience. The study was composed of two groups of ethnically Polish individuals. All participants in both groups had been exiled from their homes in Poland during WWII to Soviet labour camps, and were then in refugee camps in Africa for up to 10 years. As the granddaughter of individuals who had similar experiences to my participants, as well as given my acceptance in their groups and my basic knowledge of Polish, conducting interviews and participating in events was welcomed.

Participants and settings

Individual interviews. Ethical approval for research with human subjects was granted by the McGill Faculty of Medicine IRB. Ten interviews were conducted in the Montreal and Ottawa area. All participants had immigrated to Canada between 1950 and 1970. They included 5 women and 5 men, with ages ranging from 73-87 and a mean age of 81.6 years at the time of their interviews. Seven of the participants in the individual interviews had also attended some form of the collective reunions. Participants were recruited for individual interviews from a set of diverse ages to better assess variations of relevant subjective experiences and personal meaning. Two recruitment methods were implemented: (1) Polish community oriented methods (e.g., adverts and announcements in Polish churches, community events, and radio), and (2) the snowball sampling method through pre-existing contacts and new contacts from method 1.

As per their choice, all interviews took place in the homes of participants. I usually arrived with my research assistant who also served as an interpreter when necessary. After reviewing the consent form, he would set up a video camera and/or audio recorder while the participant and I prepared tea and various sweets that I brought as a thank you for their participation. They quickly accustomed themselves to the equipment and were eager to talk. Once all topics were covered, we usually transitioned to discuss other topics. We always left being asked when we would come back because they enjoyed the experience and still wished to share more stories and experiences.

Great importance was placed on establishing rapport and maintaining trust with participants given the nature of the discussions, which included various moments in their lives. Semi-structured interview questions were developed, and the interview guide was divided into five sections: demographic information, migration narrative, prototype, impact of migration on life, and present experiences related to migration. The interviews were fluid and often moved from one section to another, being guided mostly by the participant. They took place over 1-3 sessions depending on the participants' availability and preference. A lifeline was also created to document major migration events, city names, and important dates. Interviews took place in their preferred language, often incorporating English, French, and Polish. Interview guides and consent forms were therefore available in all three languages.

Collective reunions. The second group represented the collective memory and experience. Since 1989, following the fall of Communism in Poland, several hundred individual "Afrykanczycy" gathered in Wroclaw, Poland for yearly or bi-yearly four-day reunions. Their current residences included Canada, USA, UK, Poland, and Australia. Given my family and personal connection with their experience, one of the individual interview participants proposed the reunion, to which I was then invited to attend.

Data for the collective experience was acquired during the 25th anniversary reunion of the Baobab Club in Wroclaw, Poland during September 2014. During the reunion, I was given the same materials as all participants had received. This included their 2014 reunion book, complete with pictures, letters, poems, and updates about members. I was also given their most up-to-date song book, which I used during the reunion to sing with them during their various activities. The songs of the song book were written by one of the Afrykanczycy who has been attending the reunions since 1989. The song content was considered to be representative of the collective experience given the enthusiasm to sing the songs at the reunions, and the explicitly stated gratitude to the songs' author. The opening statement of the song book addressed the author and read: "We express our warmest sincere acknowledgments for all the reunions' songs that provide countless emotions and bring to our memory the most beautiful years of our youth. They also make it so that today is different from any other day."

I arrived as the group of approximately 80 attendees was returning to dock from a cruise they had done in Wroclaw. Together we took the short walk to the "Pomnik Pomordowanych na Kresach" (the Memorial to the Murdered in the Kresy Region). This monument commemorates those who were killed by the NKVD, Gestapo, and UPA between 1939 and 1947 on the South Eastern border of Poland, known as the Kresy Region. It is a memorial of particular significance to the Afrykanczycy, given that most of them were born in the Kresy Region and were exiled by the NKVD. We then borded the buses that brought us back to the main hall. With our dorms just across the street, we went to our rooms and prepared ourselves for the dinner that followed. Upon arriving at the dorms, I was greeted by a large green sign draped across the main entrance: "Welcome Africans" ("Witamy Afrykanczykow"). Their programme for the four-day reunion also included sight-seeing tours, and ended with a banquet. Here, we sang songs together from the song book, attendees shared memories, there was a singing performance, and an impressive

dinner. The evening concluded with attendees gathering based on which refugee camp they had

been in, with small signs that they had made to identify their groups. They took some final photos

and gave memorable hugs as another reunion came to a close. Many made sure to write their

names on various spots on a map of Africa that was displayed in the hall, identifying where they

had been on this great continent. During the whole reunion, including free time, I was warmly

welcomed and incorporated into group activities. I was even invited with great delight into the

group photo with others who had been in the same camp as my grandmother.

Data analysis

The individual interviews, reunion book, and song book were all transcribed and

translated to English by a native Polish speaker in consultation with me for context-specific and

historically relevant terminology. All materials were analyzed by means of grounded theory. This

approach to qualitative research allows categories and themes to emerge from the data rather than

being preconceived or imposed (Green & Thorogood, 2009). After several interviews were

conducted and went through initial categorization, basic coding was done followed by additional

interviews. This process of concurrent data generation followed with initial coding of reunion

material and additional individual interviews. Constant comparative analysis took place

throughout this procedure as incidences, codes, and categories were compared. Intermediate

coding then took place to link categories. Memos were recorded throughout the research design,

collection, and analysis process (Birks & Mills, 2011).

Results

An analysis of the interview transcripts and reunion material revealed several major

themes, some of which overlap across individual and collective memories, while others diverge.

Individual memory appears to focus on the lived experience, while collective memories focus on

the memories themselves and the relevance of remembering.

Daily life in Africa

Africa, in its broadest sense, is described in terms of environment and people, with frequent and relevant overlap between the two. The physical space of Africa is described similarly in both the individual and collective memories, with the individual ones offering additional description while acknowledging both the good times and the hardships. The social relationships are also similarly described in terms of content. Here, individual memories offer insight on the process of how social support and social activities benefited them, while collective memories reveal the intensity of long lasting friendships and group formation. Further references and evidence of these similarities and differences are accounted for throughout the other themes in the Results section.

Daily life in Africa: Environment. In describing the environment, Karolina recalls with a smile "…Africa was… magical […] there was something about it. It was outdoorsy, it's not confined. You think of orphanages in Canada and England and its buildings, it's grey. But out there it was as much as possible outdoors." Jozef adds to this view of Africa by describing that:

> We were going to school of course and that was a necessity, not necessarily that we liked school, nobody seems to like school initially. But then look, freedom that we had. We were right on Lake Victoria, we were swimming there every day, beautiful lake, uhm… or the mountain. Mountain about the size of Mount Royal, so we climbed that, or we went wherever. Freedom. There were a lot of birds there, a lot of snakes, other animals that we have seen, lizards, hippos, crocodiles. Oh crocodiles were plentiful.

> Echoing the physical descriptions of everyday life in the opening excerpt, Anna describes that:

The houses were extremely small, round. At the orphanage we had the big rooms for us, covered by banana leaves and beds next to it. But when our father [who was separated from us during the journey South] finally reached us […] and we were living in one of those little round houses, where there was no electricity and the floor was simply just a soil… and the beds were mattresses made of some sort of grass tied together with a rope and each bed had its curtain so the mosquitoes didn't bite us. And an oil lamp. And that was all. Our camp was the biggest, there was close to five thousand people, so [the Polish Government-in-Exile and our caregivers] organized everything, everyone was supposed to cook for himself, for each block there was one kitchen – it was just an attic covered with metal sheet, there was also a furnace, a little bit narrower than this but much longer and we put the wood into it. Every housewife was bringing her own little pot or whatever she had. And they gave us food every day but because it was hot over there and no place to store the food, we had to go every day to get it – a piece of meat, potato or whatever… we got a lot of fruits, oh yes, bananas…

How people survived and got by, creating stability and a normal life, is described by Zofia who notes that as a child:

When I started going to school, I gave private lessons. I took one dollar… one shilling, it was shillings, for one lesson [for] Polish children, rascals, who didn't want to study. […] A mother went to work, it was possible to go to work. For example, digging the area. Poles started to plant potatoes, tomatoes, or something like that. A mother was hired in a sewing room. […] We were introduced to kind of an independent life.

Anna offers insight into some of the daily wonders and struggles:

At school we were making beautiful, incredible table cloths, for twelve, sometimes even for a table of eighteen people! Table cloths, serviettes and once a year the dames from Kenya, Nairobi or Dar es Salaam were coming to buy something. […] And we were using the money to make something else. Then we got books, so it was fine but before we had a notebook and we had to write in it really carefully because we were supposed to leave it for the next ones. […] The beginnings were really tough… And on top of that we had those fleas crawling underneath our nails, it was horrible, it was … ugh… it was so painful, because when they laid their eggs, we had to go to a doctor to cut it and removed it.

In contrast, the collective memories of the African environment avoid mentions of hardship and struggle. The times and memories of Africa are referred to in the highest regard, as reflected by the 1992 song lyrics: "In the bush of Africa, somewhere in Kidugali; Or Tengeru there was a Heaven on Earth; Everyone secretly praises those times; And often thinks: it was the best…" Furthering the idea of Africa as a physical and welcoming home to which they continue to belong are lyrics from the 13th reunion: "Welcoming Kenyan soil, it's an African world; In Uganda and Tanzania remains a Polish footprint."

Daily life in Africa: Overlap of environment and social support. There is an important overlap in the descriptions of environment and social support. It appears as though it was not only one or the other that necessarily made the experience beneficial and memorable. After mentioning that time in Africa was a good time, Jozef further describes what made it so:

Freedom, and the nature that we had seen. It was fantastic! It was all a mystery, you know? [LAUGHTER] Oh it was great! It is hard to express it in words, you have to experience it, you have to be part of it as I was, as were others [...] I would say in my case the location was more important than the people. Because I was

young and many people were older than I was, of course, so people didn't matter that much. Conversation was secondary [LAUGHTER] at that age it's practically non-existent or silly talk.

Matylda summarizes that "Africa was fun, in spite of everything that happened [...] It was one big adventure for people our age, it wasn't comfortable, [...] but we had each other and everything was within walking distance." In the following section, I further examine what is meant by "we had each other", along with why and how that was and continues to be important.

Daily life: Social support & social activities. In describing their daily lives in individual memories, there is a great amount of detail provided regarding the social activities and social support that was available to these children. These activities and supports are recognized as having been quite impressive. Julia enthusiastically recalls that there were theatres, music, and all sorts of activities, and that "[the caregivers] tried their best […] because what else children could do? Boys were more into playing with Negros, but we really organized little trips to everywhere." There were also scouts groups organized for the children. Zofia recounts that "in Africa, during the six years, I was only occupying myself with studying. And I was a scout, traveling all around the jungle. Wherever there was a scouts' camp, I went there." Jozef recalls that "I was reciting poems [...] and some others of course were singing or reading or whatever or acting on the scene […] Oh it was a full life! And considering that the population was under 3,000 it was quite rich."

Continuing on the important role of the caregivers and camp management, Anna states that:

The caregivers tried to play with the children, they were telling fairy-tales about how it's going to be over here, that there are a lot of monkeys, different kinds of animals that we'd never seen before and kids were very interested in all that.

Eventually they organized classes and we had our seats on the pebbles… The beginnings were really very, very much complicated, oh yes.

She continues to reflect on the role of these caregivers, especially for orphans, in helping to ensure the children's long-term well-being. "We've been raised by the caregivers from the orphanage, and thanks to them nowadays I'm on the right track." Leopold, who was separated from his family in Persia as an infant and grew up as an orphan, recognizes the relevance of these social supports when he states "I had people who helped me, [in Africa and in Canada], until I was able to take care of myself. I had a normal upbringing, even if they were not my real parents." As he further reflects on having been an orphan, he says:

> It did not disrupt my life. I find myself to be lucky for the past I have, and as I told you, there are a lot of people who not only helped me. Us immigrants, we were not alone. I fell into a good group that cared for my well-being.

International aid and support is mentioned in the individual memories but is not present in the collective memories. Karolina notes that "in Africa we had the YMCA which housed the library and we had books from American Polonia, [the Polish diaspora community and organizations], who sent us books. The Polish Government-in-Exile sent us books."

Reflecting on the variability of responses, which is not present in the collective memories, Julia recalls that:

> Some people can take it, some can't. To be honest – our lives were easy. Maybe we had a hard road but the life was easy, we didn't care about those things. [...] It was a completely different life. Let's say, when the war was over, […] it wasn't totally peaceful yet, right? So I didn't see anything but dancing. And in Africa every evening we used to go to parties, we were listening to records and we were dancing. […] So we had singing, dancing, parties […] people walked on the

streets […] in the camp and you could hear them singing everywhere. Really, I'm

not joking. It was fun.

Although some aspects of social support and social activities are also referred to in the

collective memories, detail on the process of support and activities is not as present as in the

individual interviews. For example, the passage from the 1999 "African Feast" song reads: "We

used to go to the YMCA youth club; There were dances and great balls; […] We experienced

wonderful scout adventures; We were all happy as we were young then" and map onto the

activities recalled in the individual memories. Social support in collective memory is mostly

expressed as friendship. These long lasting friendships have origins in Africa, and appear to serve

as social support at present through the reunions.

These points contrast with the individual memories, which discuss social supports while

in Africa. Individual interviews appear to offer more insight into the process of how these

friendships developed along with what provided reasoning for the basis of these long-term bonds

and group formations. These friendships are described in the collective memories as timeless and

as having developed their own traditions, as described in the 1996 lyrics: "It's all in the past and

won't come back; But sometimes tears well up in the eyes; Nothing will sadden the "Africans";

Because our friendship lasts forever." Friendship is also alluded to as a means for coping, as

made evident in the 1998 lyrics: "You win some, you lose some; In the sunshine and in the frost;

We can survive it all; When we have our friends nearby."

Age and gaze

Age emerges in both individual and collective memories as a common theme with

diverging content. Age as a theme in the individual interviews is largely expressed as a protective

factor. More specifically, participants appear to believe that the migration experience was more

difficult for older children and adults than for younger children, as well as that at their young age

during their time in Africa their life was an adventure and "normal". For example, Jozef notes

that "first of all I must tell you that anybody of my age or slightly older had a great time wherever

we were in Africa [LAUGHTER]." He then goes on to say about his experiences that:

> It's not negative, it's positive. Had I been older… like my parents undoubtedly
>
> suffered a lot when in Russia and elsewhere […]. I am not sure about my brother
>
> and sister, it is debatable to some extent. They were 4 and 5 years older than I was.
>
> So they were affected probably negatively, probably somewhat more than I was.

Julia offers additional insight into the potential reasoning for an age difference, when she

suggests that "when one is young, he takes everything much easier than someone older, he never

thinks about death, maybe because nobody close to him [has died] yet." When asked about how

prototypical her experience was relative to the experiences of other Afrykanczycy, Julia

continues that:

> Not all of them [think the way I do]. Not all, no, I think that for older people who
>
> passed the same way as I did, it was a little harder. But when you are young and
>
> you travel the world since you are eleven [LAUGHTER], you go from one place
>
> to another, you get so used to it and it simply becomes natural and necessary.

In contrast to the potential protectiveness and benefit for well-being when one was young

in the African camps, age emerges in the collective memory through songs largely to define their

current state as elderly individuals and to identify themselves in their youth. Interestingly, the

theme of age appears to act as a protective factor in collective memory. Specifically, the memory

of youth seems to be beneficial among the elderly in this group. The experience of having been in

Africa during their youth appears to be emphasized as important for their well-being at present

rather than during and immediately following time in Africa. Here, it is as though remembering

youth is what provides healing in the present. The 1991 reunion song lyrics read: "Nothing will

change in our lives; Days of youth are passed away; But we are not afraid of Fall; We have

African dreams!" Here, Fall likely refers to aging and death. When considered with the lyrics

from the 12th reunion song: "We are young with our souls, we don't get old; We are having our

12th reunion and the whole world is ours!", the listener develops a clearer understanding of how

these memories of youth and Africa may be relevant for these elderly individuals.

Results regarding age may also be related in part to the gaze through which both types of

memories are expressed. Here, gaze refers to how the memories are recalled, their tone and

language, and who appears to be the storyteller. There are moments in the individual memory

when it seems as though a child is telling a story. Even the participants' tones, postures, and

facial expressions at times resemble that of a child. This gaze is not present in the collective

memories. Through participant observation and examining reunion pictures, reunion participants

appear to act like children in some ways when gathered together. The reunion songs, however,

represent the gaze of elderly individuals reflecting on happy childhood memories.

For example, when recounting his first impressions of Africa, with great enthusiasm and

laughter Oskar recollects "Oh, Africa? Uhh... Warm! Trees! Monkeys! Everything! And those

Blacks - oh! Maasai people! Ey!" He then continues:

> And in Tengeru we had the round houses, you know, and they were placing four
>
> persons in one house, right. And then, when I was with my brother, our teacher
>
> […] she had a trouble with us! […] Because we didn't want to listen, right [and] at
>
> night I took paraffin oil and a match and I put in my nose. [LAUGHTER &
>
> MAKING GESTURES OF FLAMES] […] Like they do it in a circus! […] Then
>
> there was a lake nearby, the Duluti, everybody was running to the lake so we
>
> wouldn't have to go to school! […] And in Africa I didn't want to study because I
>
> was learning from Tarzans!

Swimming in a nearby lake was among the regular activities that Jozef participated in while in Africa. Regarding the crocodiles in the lake, he recalls:

They ate one [person], not a child, but uh… I was swimming at that time as well and there were three [people] that were swimming to the island, we called it the Crocodile Island. When we approached that island by boat, the crocodiles were running away. However they swam to it and at that time, a crocodile, well an older one because the younger crocodiles don't attack people. When they are older they are unable to feed themselves so they take whatever they can get. So that particular person was caught, and well, never found a trace of him. One only.

Speaking further to the innocence and child's gaze in the retelling of African experiences, Karolina describes:

I had a swing, we had a big garden and my mother had a swing installed, so I would swing and I would play with whatever toys I could find, the only running water was a community tap. There were taps here and there for I don't know how many taps together. Apparently I used to love to go and sit under the tap and take off my clothes, [LAUGHTER] play with mud, you know this kind of stuff. Actually it was a marvelous childhood, absolutely wonderful childhood, and [my caregiver] looked after all these things.

Anna, with childlike mannerisms, describes:

Overall Africa… when we saw the monkeys and others… And first of all it was very well organized, and right away they must have been scouting created. […] We were in one camp and boys were in another, we had a pole with a banner and boys were always trying to steal it, so we had to keep an eye on it all the time. It was quite interesting. But we had to perform the guard every two hours, even at

night! […] We carried whistles with us and there was also a Negro with a weapon and the most we were afraid of him [LAUGHTER]. Well, suddenly I hear… an elephant! Roaring! I had an impression like it was just behind my back, and we had our camp just by the river – small but very wild, narrow, and you know, probably it came up to have some water. I got so scared that I started to whistle and I woke up the whole camp [LAUGHTER].

Family

While all interview participants discuss their biological family in some way in the individual interviews, mentions of biological family are not present in the collective memory. Jozef, who was not separated from family and did not experience the death of any family members, happily recalls that in Africa "my parents were there. My father, [...] he got tuberculosis so he couldn't serve in the army anymore. My mother was there of course and my brother and sister so the whole family was there. And we all survived!" Leopold notes that:

When I was an orphan in Africa everyone was the same. My friends had the same fate as I. We did not care to tell our story. […] The older ones, yes, because they had experienced it. […] Interestingly, I never, never longed for my father, my mother, I never cried over it.

Insight from individual interviews reveals that the Afrykanczycy, especially those who were orphaned, treat each other as family. It is worth noting that this insight does not emerge in the collective memory. Karolina recounts that "the orphans lived together [...], whereas the families lived en famille. […] Nevertheless none of the guardians were substitutes for mothers. [...] They formed sort of surrogate families." She continues, "I know they went out of their way not to separate orphans if they had bonded. If they bonded into a family they tried to keep them together after that, because they had to move them around at times."

Normality and stability

An important theme that only emerges in the individual narrative is the normalization and stability that appears to have emerged in Africa. Individual memories seem to provide the details on the overall process and role of Africa for adaptation in the short term. As he reflects on his life and whether it was easy or difficult, Jozef chuckles "not one nor the other. Nothing… easy or difficult. It's just normal so to speak. The way I reacted to it at that time, it was quite normal. I was ready to accept just about anything." He further reflects, "look, once you are in Russia in the difficult conditions, and Africa which was primitive. It's good but otherwise primitive. You accept everything! That's a great preparation for life!" In describing her everyday life in Africa, Zofia recounts that they "mainly went to school, […] to scout camps, by the lake […] If you didn't have a swimming suit, you could borrow some and that's how we handled it. Me, of course, I read all the books from the library" She summarizes her life in Africa as "Normal." Returning to Matylda's opening quote of this chapter, she states that the way the refugee camps in Africa were established and the daily life taking place "was beginning to be normal kind of life, it was heavens above what we had on our way in tents and so on." Leopold further supports this thought. "Yes, it was an ordinary life", he says, "I was not depressed or saying "how can this be, why did it happen to me" […] because everyone that was with me was the same, and we didn't talk about it. […] It was just something natural; normal."

Reunions

Given the collective nature of the reunions and the associated memories, the song books and reunion material exhibit an abundance of this theme relative to individual interviews. Nevertheless, there is an important context provided by Jakub, who attended several of the Wroclaw reunions with his wife, including the first reunion in 1989:

The first meeting was very traumatic actually. Because we hadn't seen so many, after so many years, and we all went to the mass and the priest was very young. He did not know how to speak to us. [Our caregiver] was there. […] What I wanted to say… that it was traumatic. And some of the memories made people cry. Particularly some of the songs, which we used to sing, very sad stories were sung. And some of the religious songs are also very, very sad. And it was... it brought everything back so all crying etc. etc. during the mass. So in that way it was traumatic, in the sense that it was all relived for few minutes, but then it was nice to see them.

It appears as though this self-described traumatic component to the reunions was only present at the first one. The reunion songs, my personal experiences at the reunion, and the individual memories of subsequent reunions, do not demonstrate any overt representation of or focus on trauma. Instead, the memories and representations appear positive and uniting. For example, there are lyrics that support unity regardless of distance, as in the 1994 lyrics: "And on different ends of the world; We are never alone", and the 1999 lyrics: "And even though our houses are all around the world; We keep on meeting each other in our club." From the 11th reunion we see the more personal connection experienced at the reunions:

When we hold our hands; And make a great circle; Then joy burns in our hearts; As we feel our hands holding; We love to come here; Nothing will tear us apart; And we always have a hope; That it's not the last time.

It is noted from 1994 that: "Our reunions and meetings; Already have their own tradition." These lyrics further the idea of a collective commemoration of the African experience. The healing aspects of reunions for the Afrykanczycy is made clear in the 11th reunion song:

We're going to sing it loud today; It's already the eleventh time; We are always in

a good mood; Even though we've been tarnished by time; Nothing will disturb our

reunions; Neither age nor journey; We're still young at heart; Reunions are a

senior's drug.

Identity

Adding to the theme of reunions, a strong, common identity unites the Afrykanczycy from

around the world. Identity is mainly discussed in the collective memories as Africans

("Afrykanczycy"), Scout, and Wanderer, while individual memories make minor reference to

identity relatively speaking. For example, Julia notes:

I always say that [Africa is] my country […] because during that exile from one

place to another, with all that moving, Africa greeted us with its arms wide open.

[…] We all felt like at home over there. When we were about to leave, everybody

was crying. [...] From one hand I think [my life] got better. Not only my life got

better, because all this where I lived in Vilnius Region in Poland belongs now to

[Lithuania]. […] Yes, these young joyful years, I didn't care about anything. In

Africa or not in Africa, it will always stay in my heart.

Jakub goes on to mention that "the funny part of all of this is that, everybody, we call

ourselves Afrykanczycy; Africans."

Across all the reunion songs and collective memories, the term "Afrykanczycy" is

referred to in the songs to distinguish their group. The African identity is associated with pleasant

emotions and youthfulness, as emerges in the 1994 song: "The African gang stands united;

Always young and always smiling; One might think that we have lost it; For we've been singing

since the morning!" This identity also emphasizes togetherness and unity despite the passing of

time, as further expressed in the 1996 lyrics: "So "Africans" – let's be together; Even though

we're already snowy-haired; Let no one count our years; We will collect our crop of memories."

This togetherness and unity also manifests itself in a desire to continue celebrating these

reunions. They acknowledge a Polish connection, as stated at the 13th reunion with their

homeland still being Africa: "Where the baobabs grow and monkeys are in paradise; During

WWII we had our homeland." Also present across the songs is the identity of the Scout, namely

in reference to the Scout spirit, as they sing from the 11th reunion: "We have the charm of old

memories; We are glad to remember; The old school years, the old times; We've got friends

everywhere; The Scout spirit lives in us." Integrated with the theme of memory is the Wanderer,

or migrant, identity, which is especially present in the 1999 song lyrics: "We wanderers know

very well; That the memories connect us; And we can't forget; The times of youth."

Memory: "A clink of a chain that combines despair and hope"

Explicit references to memory and memory processes are rarely made in the individual

interviews. One of the participants, Julia, offers insight and perspective on the role of memory for

the now elderly Afrykanczycy:

Everything, all these memories of life are coming back in your older years, and

then you see it like it was happening right now. Literally. There is a little poem:

"Memory – is a quiet note, taken out from volumes of the past;

Memory is … [SILENT FOR A MOMENT TO RECALL] …

Memory is a thread drawn from the golden book of youth;

Memory is a clink of chain that combines despair and hope;

Memory is a deaf emptiness;

And only graves are turning white."

She continues, "really, I'm not joking. It was fun, we were feeling so good. That… that's

why people in their old age always return with their thoughts to what is passed." She goes on to

tell the story of the joy that music brought her when someone gave her a gramophone and records while she was working at a store in her refugee camp in Africa. "Music is good for you. And that's what sometimes I do here. I set up music and I go back with my memories to those times." With a smile, she continues, "sometimes I say to myself "Oh, I'll go dance around the house" when the music plays [LAUGHTER]. […] So, really, really, these were good times, there were also some bad ones… but they were good."

In contrast, explicit reference to memory is frequently made in the collective songs, with subthemes of healing, ownership, friendship and timelessness, with happiness as an overtone throughout. Beginning with the song at the first reunion in 1989, it is made clear that: "Our memories as a cure; alleviate worries of a bad day." These memories are referred to positively, such as from 1994: "Lots of fun and adventures; Remained in our memory." It is portrayed as though no matter what changes in their lives and in the world, the memories remain and are timeless. Excerpts from the songs of 1998 confirm this point: "We always keep in our memory; That African bush; We still remember the youth; Even though it's already gone." Furthermore, the collective memories make it clear that these memories cannot be taken away from them, as is explicitly stated in the 1991 lyrics "Our memories won't be taken away from us", and 1994: "Those times, these years; Will be with us forever."

This point may relate to all that they had lost on their way to Africa, such as physical objects and family, as well as to the pride and acknowledgment of their experiences and memories. It is important here to recall that until 1989 with the fall of Communism in Poland, it was difficult to openly talk about their experiences, and their story was largely concealed given the politics of the time. As this silence persisted, most of the world still has no idea that this ever happened. These ideas resonate in the 1991 lyrics: "We won't lack willingness and strength; To enter our fate in history; No one will erase it from memory -; Sounds the "wanderer children's"

voice," and 1996: "Let's keep on walking with heads up; And remembering the old times." The uniting properties of the memories are made clear from the 13th reunion lyrics: "Memories of old times will always unite us." Taken together, the songs reveal the topic of reunions and their own traditions that have developed with this shared experienced, commemoration, and remembering.

Discussion

These results contrast two broad types of memories that are both constructed by elderly individuals, yet have important differences. It appears as though the reunions and their respective material (e.g., reunion book and song book) represent an active process of maintaining the life of the collective memories, including a representation of the importance of these memories. The individual interviews, although converging to some extent with the collective memories, represent the memories of the African experience at a given moment for that particular individual as they choose to share with me, a community member and grandchild of two Afrykanczycy. While there is an evident overlap in expressions of happiness and fun in both the individual and collective memories of the Afrykanczycy, the individual memories portray a more balanced account as compared to the collective. The collective memories are potentially idealized memories of Africa which avoid addressing the trauma experience or any of the daily struggles in Africa. Especially in the collective memories, it appears as though a "community of memory" has been created by the very memory itself; memory of survival and happiness following hardship and trauma. Extraordinary and traumatic experiences may lead people to bond with others due to the shared nature of the experience (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). For Eastern European children to find themselves contributing to the village life and adventures of "wild Africa" during a time when such travel was unheard of was surely an extraordinary experience. Furthermore, a sudden forced exile to frigid labour camps where one is taught that most of what one believed in was false while often losing family members is evidently a traumatic experience. Beyond the events themselves,

the meaning associated with an event is known to contribute to the development of a community of memory (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). Interestingly, the collective memories avoid the traumatic memories and focus their "community of memory" on their positive experiences in Africa. This particular group seems to choose to commemorate and identify with the positive place of Africa.

Varied approaches to negotiating and understanding trauma in the long-term are important to consider here. As a means to address trauma, meaning-making and its reconstruction may be "the central and dynamic force during and after an event of loss" (Witztum and Malinson, 2009, p. 136). Victor Frankl, who was a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor himself, suggested that "a basic striving of man [is] to find meaning and purpose" (Frankl, 1969, p.35). Meaning may be found in different ways, including in survival. Informed by her work with Holocaust survivors, Giberovitch (2014) states that "many survivors find a sense of purpose and meaning in life by bearing witness to the atrocities they endured. In doing so, they control their feelings of helplessness and despair" (p. 96). During the latter half of the 20th century, collective commemoration of the Holocaust became increasingly understood as prevention and as a protective mechanism. The duty of memory encourages Holocaust survivors and society to remember the traumas in order to prevent similar genocides and mass violence from happening again. This duty may make it difficult for some survivors to do what some of the Afrykanczycy appear to do; namely, to remember what they choose to remember and avoid elements that they may wish to forget. It is almost as though, among those who celebrate collectively, they have a "collective prescription" to remember that they were and continue to be together, that their link and solidarity is important, and that they are not obliged to collectively remember their traumas. The trauma nevertheless appears between the lines. However, collectively there appears to be a greater need to remember and celebrate their togetherness both past and present.

For the Afrykanczycy, the collective remembering of their strength seems to be in a third place. In their elderly age, they are remembering and associating survival, community, and resilience in a third place where they did not stay permanently. Africa appears to have become a symbol; a memorial and community is placed in the physical space of Africa, in memory of their life experiences, and in the memories of Africa. The Afrykanczycy are not celebrating the community of their current countries of residence or even the community of their native land of Poland. They may celebrate community and survival in "African memories" because celebrating in their memories of Poland or of their current countries implies a recognition of forced exile. They appear to be celebrating survival as a group that still has the strength and joy of "youth" and the "Scouts", with limited and contextualized recognition of the "Wanderer". Collectively, their memorial seems to be the celebration of what was possible immediately following the trauma of exile and life in the labour camps, in the survival moment when they reconvened and appear to have returned to a normal life that was established for them. Their existence is a testament to their survival, which may be part of their meaning-making process.

Africa appears to be an intermediate safe space in which the Afrykanczycy were able to develop a common and invested identity. This identity maintains a link and bond between these survivors of trauma without evoking painful memories, since their bond focuses on their relatively positive experiences. The songs and collective memories of this group reinforce their strength, friendship, and positive experiences in Africa. They even express ownership of their memories, which may be reflective of that which they lost or were lacking pre-, during-, and post-migration. The struggles even in Africa are therefore erased. Especially in the collective narrative, the original geographical site of identity and memory (pre-war Poland) has been lost due to politics and trauma in those places. Similarly to many Holocaust survivors of Eastern Europe, entire communities were destroyed, including family, friends, homes, and institutions.

Therefore, despite their survival, this past exists as a painful memory (Giberovtich, 2014). The Afrykanczycy may be allocating meaning to the "survival moment" in the potentially therapeutic space of Africa; a suggestion that is further reinforced by the reference in both individual and collective memories to Africa as their homeland.

The insight gained through this study sheds light on the possible positive long-term outcomes of this particular type of refugee camp experience, as well as what factors may contribute to these types of memories later in life The issues that emerge based on each theme are relevant for related literature. Age, for example, is an important theme in both individual and collective memories. The observations present in the individual memories appear to align with the current research on outcomes regarding age and trauma. All participants in the individual interviews were under the age of 12 when they were exiled from Poland to the gulags. Reed and colleagues (2012) suggest that better outcomes in well-being are found among children younger than 12 years of age who have experienced forced displacement as compared to older children. However, the current evidence base is rather small and limited, and researchers need to more strongly consider and assess age-related rates of mental health issues in the general population (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford, & Goodman, 2004).

Although this study did not explicitly measure psychological well-being, there are some elements of resilience and positive well-being present in the memories of both groups. From the individual and collective memories, some possibilities for why these elements emerged include: the management of the camp, the relativity of the experience compared to previous traumas, the culture of the refugees, and the available social support and social activities, among others. Despite the unavailability of many basic needs especially during the beginning of their time in Africa, it seems that many of these were eventually obtained. Existing research suggests that good-quality social support is associated with lower levels of psychological disturbance during

prolonged exile, but whether and how social support mediates or moderates the effects of

stressors has not been studied in depth (Bolton, P., Bass, J., Betancourt, T., et al., 2007). The key

policies identified in a review by Fazel and colleagues (2012) support the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee's guidelines (IASC, 2007) which specifically recommend the enhancement of

community self-help and social support, helping the provision of appropriate cultural, spiritual,

and religious healing practices, and support, particularly for young children (0-8 years) and their

caregivers. In a review by Reed and colleagues (2012), it is suggested that, although the

consequences for children living in settings such as refugee camps have received little attention,

current evidence suggests that living in camps raises the risk of psychological disturbance.

Experiences that strengthen comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness (components

of Sense of Coherence) may be beneficial while providing meaning, perceived sense of control,

and efficacy (Chatard, Pyszczynski, Arndt, et al., 2012). These were present in Africa, through

school, communities, social activities, and social support, likely providing both immediate and

long-term benefits.

Interestingly, now in their older age it seems that the reunions and opportunities to

remember and retell their stories, both individually and collectively, may be offering the

opportunities for comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness to permit increased sense

of control and efficacy during the delicate aging period. Elderly survivors are faced with usual

developmental challenges as well as making sense of and giving meaning to their traumas and

life experiences (Shmotkin, Shrira, & Palgi, 2011). Reunions appear to help with these tasks

(recall from the 11th reunion, the lyrics: "Reunions are a senior's drug"), offering a stronger

sense of meaning and coherence.

A community of memory may be created not by the event itself, but rather by the meaning

associated with the event (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). Among self-positive functions, identity is one

that uses memories to promote growth and self-understanding. Remembering allows for coherence and meaning to be made, in line with identity maintenance (Korte, Bohlmeijer, Weterhof et al., 2011). Having this Afrykanczycy identity may therefore be beneficial. It focuses on positive bonds made in a post-trauma safe space (Africa in this case), and avoids the adoption of a trauma survivor identity.

Limitations and future directions

There are several important limitations in this study. First, the data is largely composed of interviews and reunion material from individuals who willingly discuss and participate in commemorative ceremonies related to their experiences in Africa. One would imagine that those individuals who were perhaps negatively affected by their time in Africa, or who choose neither to remember nor celebrate that experience, likely would not attend these reunions or want to discuss these topics with me. Furthermore, this study only conducted an in-depth analysis of reunion material from the Wroclaw reunion. The sample for collective memory is therefore only representative of that particular group. There are reunions of the Afrykanczycy that take place, for example, in Connecticut, USA that draw from a different group who had a more similar host country experience; namely those who currently live in Quebec, Ontario, and North Eastern USA. In contrast, the Wroclaw reunion has an international participant presence. In addition, this study exclusively used qualitative methods for analyses, without attempts to quantify resilience and well-being indicators. These limitations will be addressed in future research.

The Afrykanczycy are only one of the many groups of Polish children who had similar experiences during WWII. Thousands were also in the refugee camps of India, Lebanon, New Zealand, and Mexico. Each of these groups appears to have developed their own unique migration identities and reunion rituals, requiring further research, understanding, and comparison. Future research will further investigate similarities and differences of narrative

between those who attend reunions and those who do not, as well as some of the reasons why. Given that I am working with elderly individuals, the issue of transport, distance, and health emerge as restrictions on participating in reunions. Many of their childhood friends are also dying, making the reunion experience potentially more difficult emotionally. However, these limitations might not restrict their engagement with the collective memory and experience. Alternative means of celebrating and remembering require further investigation. Further analysis with the experiences of participants before and after having been in Africa is required for the individual interviews. Placing these interviews into additional context relative to how they understand their pre- and post-migration experiences would shed light on how Africa is understood and discussed for these individual memories. The comparison of how individuals provide testimonial at reunions and out of a reunion context will help further understand the role of the lived experience in various settings, beyond the analysis of material such as songs.

Conclusion

This study offers insight on the ways in which individuals who experience trauma and war-related migration as children remember and celebrate, as elderly individuals, the "safe spaces" they encountered on their migration journeys. It also informs the discussion of how memory varies based on the context in which it is recalled and the purpose of the remembering. Individual and collective memories have complimentary roles to preserve and to give meaning to partially shared experiences. Under the collective lens, that which is cherished is preserved, while also allowing for certain traumas or negative experiences to be avoided. The implications of this study suggest that we continue to question the centrality of disclosure in the reconstruction process. It proposes that more attention be given to the life trajectory following trauma and migration experiences. It is clear from the literature that the migration experience, associated long-term outcomes, and how such experiences are remembered and "re-experienced" later in life

require further study and better understanding. The Afrykanczycy, in both their individual and

collective memories, appear to offer insight on these processes, especially when these memories

are considered together as complimentary building blocks of a greater whole.

Connecting Text

In Chapter 1, I presented the converging and diverging themes that emerge in the individual memories and collective memories of the Afrykanczycy. The sharing of these memories took place in contexts with a third-generation in-group member, and with other individuals who had a shared migration experience, respectively. Results highlight elements of resilience, avoidance, and memory-making. I concluded with the proposition that there are many lenses on any given process, and that the act of disclosure requires further investigation.

My early understanding of the migration experience of the Polish children who were exiled to the gulags was that they all went to Africa. It is only in my teenage years, when I began to further investigate the history, that the story of the New Zealand Poles became a part of my narrative. It was in 2012 while in Australia that an intriguing event presented itself on my Facebook newsfeed. It was a gathering of second-generation Polish New Zealanders to discuss what it meant for them to be Polish and New Zealanders. They are part of a community with a history that calls for particular celebration, as well as recognition of the country that gave the Polish child survivors refuge. Soon enough I was headed for Wellington.

In Chapter 2, I move to the Polish survivors in New Zealand, whose safe space also became their new permanent country of residence. Here, I further explore the processes of resilience and recollecting through the lens of individual testimonials representing a collective experience, shared in narrative form intended for a broad audience. Within the framework of posttraumatic growth, I offer a deeper understanding of their personal transformation, drawing also on the gerotranscendence literature.

Chapter 2

Posttraumatic Growth in the aftermath of WWII:

Personal transformation in the narratives of elderly individuals who arrived as child

refugees to New Zealand

Abstract

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is a term used to denote positive changes that arise due to one's struggle with traumatic experiences. Despite growing interest in this field since the 1980s, PTG among individuals who have experienced trauma in childhood has been relatively under-examined, and the process by which it occurs requires further examination. The testimonials of 51 elderly Polish people who narrated their experiences of WWII and migration to New Zealand as refugee children were analyzed by thematic content analysis. PTG was identified using the 5 dimensions of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI), and is presented first specific to each subject, and second with gender differences and relation to context specific to each dimension. The most commonly mentioned PTG category overall and among women was changes in relationships, a category that reflects an interpersonal change that includes feeling closer to others, improvements in getting along with others, and a better understanding of others. Men were reported to mention instances of changes in self more frequently, reflecting new possibilities and personal strength. The discussion focuses on what these results may reveal about this experience of childhood trauma, migration, and a country's welcome practices towards refugees, as well as how memories may transform over time.

Posttraumatic Growth in the aftermath of WWII:

Personal transformation in the narratives of elderly individuals who arrived as child

refugees to New Zealand

"As for [personal] transformation itself; how and why individuals grow, develop, and transform

is one of the great mysteries of human psychology. The truth is, nobody knows."

(Wilber, 2006, p. 87)

Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) is a term that was coined together by Tedeschi and Calhoun

(1996) to describe how one's struggles with traumatic events act as catalysts for positive growth

that may change one's relationships with others, perception of self, and philosophy of life.

Although there has been an increasing interest in examining PTG, most of the attention has been

given to subjects who have experienced trauma while adults. As a result, there are relatively few

studies examining PTG following a traumatic childhood experience as reported later in life

(Cryder, Kilmer, Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 2006; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). To the best of my

knowledge, this is the first study to examine the perception of personal transformation associated

with childhood trauma in the testimonials of elderly survivors of childhood migration-related

trauma. The purpose of this study is to offer insight into personal transformation associated with

childhood migration related to war as reflected in the narratives of the elderly individuals they

became. We examined PTG in the narratives of elderly Polish-New Zealanders who experienced

WWII and were exiled to the gulags as children, followed by migration to New Zealand as

refugees. The 21-item Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) was

applied in a thematic content analysis form to examine the testimonials of elderly Polish-New

Zealanders present in the text "New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children"

(Manterys & Zawada, 2014). This paper begins with an overview of the historical context and experience of this group of children as they moved from Poland to New Zealand. Next, literature is presented regarding the long-term consequences of childhood trauma and on research related to PTG and personal transformation. Results are presented by PTG dimension with notes on specific gender differences and relation to context. The discussion focuses on what these results may reveal about this experience of childhood trauma, migration, and a country's welcome practices towards refugees, as well as how memories may transform over time.

Historical context: From Poland to New Zealand (1939-1950)

The children who arrived in New Zealand had a somewhat unique end of their migration journey even for today's standards. In 1944, the government of New Zealand accepted Polish children who had lost one or both of their parents during or following time in the Soviet labour camps. Invited as New Zealand's first refugees, 733 children under the age of 15 were accepted in the camp of Pahiatua, a rural town 160km North East of Wellington (Antosiewicz & Kubalska-Sulkiewicz, 2004). They were accompanied by 105 adults who had travelled with them from Persia and had been similarly exiled to the Soviet labour camps. These adults provided teaching and care, with many also serving as administrative personnel. Three schools rapidly established themselves at Pahiatua; a nursery and two gender-separated primary schools. Most of the children who were sent to New Zealand settled across the country once the camp closed. The children were then sent to local schools or took on work and trade apprenticeships (Krolikowski, 2001; Antosiewicz & Kubalska-Sulkiewicz, 2004). The New Zealand government and the Polish caregivers were responsible for the children's well-being and proved to be very accommodating. They provided all the basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and education. The government offered the children the option to stay in New Zealand or to return to Poland when they reached the age of 18, and offered to subsidize their transportation costs if they did decide to go back to

Poland. Many New Zealanders were also welcoming, warmly greeting them upon their arrival and offering these children to stay in their homes during school holidays. Most of these children then became permanent citizens of New Zealand.

As the children disembarked at the Wellington wharf, they were greeted by cheering crowds, heartfelt speeches, a band, cameras and a film crew. "Upon arrival in New Zealand, we were greeted by a huge crowd of people who were giving out small gifts," recalls Ryszard[2], one of the individuals whose testimonial is included in "New Zealand's First Refugees".

As we were shepherded to the train for the journey to Pahiatua, someone in the crowd handed me some candy. [...] As I recall, it was shaped in the form of small biscuits in different colours and tasted heavenly. This was my first taste of candy. (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 97)

Well-wishers thronged as they boarded the train set North for Pahiatua where a temporary camp had been established for them by the New Zealand Government. All along their journey, they were welcomed with friendly waves from small towns, from farms, and along country roads. Regina remembers the train journey from Wellington to the Polish Children's Camp in Pahiatua.

At all the stops we were greeted by people and school children waving New Zealand and Polish flags and banners. They gave us ice cream and small change. We saw beautiful colourful houses on hills, so different to those in Iran. And in Pahiatua we had a great reception, with the army band playing and photos taken with smiling, friendly people. Happiness was everywhere and we felt very welcome. (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 186)

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[2] All names in Chapter 2 are originals as they appear in the book "New Zealand' First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014).

This hospitality lasted well beyond the children's initial arrival. The Children's Camp in Pahiatua may have provided the necessary environment for healing and a social context to facilitate PTG. Ryszard reminisces that for "a young kid [it] was a paradise. We made our own toys and our surroundings were a magic land – a river, native bush and the surrounding farms which we raided for turnips and were often chased away by the farmers" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 97). Many testimonials suggest that the children were well cared for, were invited to perform their traditional folk dances, plays, and songs, and were invited to stay in the homes of families from across the country during the holidays. Ryszard continues that:

> On our holidays, we were billeted out to New Zealand families and I was sent to a
>
> farm. The experience was unforgettable – animals, orchards and the general smell
>
> of the farm. The farmer was very kind, and he took me and [my friend] to the town
>
> in his car and bought us ice creams in a cone. I thought I was in heaven. The farm
>
> was such a fun place. (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 97).

His story is reflective of a collective memory and history of those who experienced a similar migration journey and time in the Pahiatua refugee camp. Today, the Poles of New Zealand have a thriving community, which includes the Polish Heritage Trust Museum of Auckland, various dance ensembles, educational organizations, and social clubs, as well as recently marking the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Pahiatua Children, which was recognized in conjunction with the "Celebrating Everything Polish" festival in Wellington.

The testimonials presented in "New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014) reflect an overall positive collective narrative. They offer a contrast to much of modern welcome practices and assumptions about the well-being of present refugees. Do these experiences, which are largely recounted in a positive manner by the Polish-New Zealanders, reflect an avoidance of personal hurt, or rather do they converge with narratives

of personal transformation? In order to examine these issues, the following details research on the
long-term consequences of childhood trauma, as well as work regarding PTG and
gerotranscendence.

Lasting effects of childhood trauma

The extent to which traumatic events affect children in the long-term may depend on their
level of exposure. Negative effects resulting from trauma may differ between learning about the
occurrence of a traumatic event and witnessing or being part of the event (Pine & Cohen, 2002).
According to Robinson and colleagues, (1994), child survivors of the Holocaust continued to
experience symptoms of survivor syndrome even after 50 years since the end of persecution.
Among them, those who were in death camps suffered severely from symptoms such as
depression and anhedonia significantly more than those who were in labour camps, were in
hiding, or were partisans. Traumatic experiences can leave long-lasting effects on children.
Children and adolescents who experience traumatic events may become cognitively and/or
intellectually impaired, and may display emotional responses such as anxiousness, depression,
anger, irritability, and guilt (Armsworth & Holaday, 1993; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Despite numerous findings of negative outcomes due to the aftermath of trauma, there is
increasing evidence that the role of resilience has been overlooked (Giberovitch, 2014). Some of
the elements that helped traumatized individuals overcome adverse circumstances, such as
sexually abused children (Valentine & Feinauer, 1993), patients with PTSD (Connor, 2006), and
refugees of war (Peddle, 2007), include the ability to seek and obtain positive social support,
spiritual or religious affiliation, high self-regard, optimism, and competence (Masten, Best, &
Garmezy, 1990). As adults, individuals who experienced trauma as children may indeed become
well-functioning adults. In a study by Sigal and Weinfeld (2001) involving a group of Holocaust
survivors living in Montreal 40 years after the trauma, those who were children in 1945

expressed less paranoia and depressive/masochistic symptoms than those who were adolescents or young adults at the time. A possible explanation for this difference and greater long-term resilience among the child survivors is their social and cognitive development, psychodynamics, endowment and caretakers following the war. In general, the more access to resources available, the better the outcomes for adapting and coping with difficult situations (Zimrin, 1986).While resiliency is related to the ability to defend the self from the negative events affecting one's normal functioning, a PTG framework offers particular attention to the possibility that people may experience growth, and even thrive despite adverse situations. The role of their environment in this process remains to be determined and better understood.

Effects of post-migratory context

Post-migratory contexts are known to relate to the well-being of children. Dispersal and detention related immigration policies are associated with negative effects on children (Silove, Steel, & Watters, 2000), while a range of psychological problems have been associated with insecure asylum (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekow, & Spinhoven, 2007). These may cause further damage as pre-migration stress is compounded when children perceive their post-migration situation as an even more adverse environment than previous ones (Mares, Newman, Dudley, & Gale, 2002). Once in the host country, negative psychological outcomes may result if this post-migratory environment exposes youth directly or indirectly to potentially traumatic events (Montgomery, 2010; Sujoldzic, Peternel, Kulenovic, & Terzic, 2006). In a longitudinal study of refugee children in Denmark, psychological stress in the host country was more predictive of psychological problems than stress during pre-migration (Montgomery, 2008). Important activities and priorities for refugee children in host countries are to reunite them with family or other caregivers, to provide a school setting, and to promote community-building activities (Ager, Stark, Akesson, & Boothby, 2010).

Posttraumatic changes: Relationships, self, and philosophy of life

There is a general notion that the more traumatic an event, the more impaired an individual will become and thus, the more difficulty they will have recuperating (Robinson, Rapaport-Bar-Sever & Rapaport, 1994). However, contradicting these observations, Calhoun and Tedeschi (1999) note that as many as 70% of people reported positive aspects of having gone through traumatic experiences, including changes in relationships with others, perception of the self, and philosophy of life. For instance, although Holocaust survivors may be viewed as severely traumatized, some studies have shown that they reported more favourable resolutions than unfavourable ones, and had "very positive views about their lives, accomplishments, and goals" (Suedfeld, Soriano, McMurtry, Paterson, Weiszbeck, & Krell, 2005, p. 240). Furthermore, it has been reported that some individuals have even derived a higher subjective sense of benefit when the experience was harsher. Additional results suggest that the more traumatic the experience, the more growth individuals report (Sledge, Boydstun, & Rabe, 1980; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). In the psychotherapeutic approach of logotherapy, Frankl (1984) has suggested that the attitude taken towards suffering that is unavoidable promotes to process of meaning-making. In order to further investigate these phenomena, Tedeschi and Calhoun distributed 21-item questionnaires and asked the respondents who experienced traumatic events, such as bereavement, separation or divorce of parents, and criminal victimization, to rate the changes they experienced using a 6-point Likert scale. From their responses, they identified three categories with five dimensions and labeled them as changes in relationships (relating to others), changes in self (new possibilities, personal strength), and changes in philosophy of life (spiritual change, appreciation of life).

The dimension of changes in relationships, relating to others, reflects interpersonal changes, such as feeling closer to others, improvements in getting along with others, and a better

human understanding. These kinds of changes have been noted by patients with cancer (Barakat, Alderfer, & Kazak, 2006), POWs (Sledge, Boydstun, & Rabe, 1980), and people with severe burn injuries (Rosenbach & Renneberg, 2008). The first dimension of changes in self, new possibilities, reflects how personal goals change after trauma. For example, those who were consistently confronted with mortality shifted their goals to more intrinsic ones (Lykins, Segerstrom, Averill, Evans, & Kemeny, 2007). The second dimension of changes in self is personal strength. Among POWs, favourable changes in self-concept, such as becoming more optimistic and having more insight into their selves, have been reported (Sledge, Boydstun, & Rabe, 1980). Spiritual change and appreciation of life, as dimensions of changes in philosophy of life, indicate transformations in the belief system. For example, although children who experienced various forms of abuse were found to have difficulty maintaining their religious and spiritual beliefs (Walker, Reese, Hughes, & Troskie, 2010), those with positive religious and spiritual coping methods not only displayed lower anxiety and depression, but also felt a sense of satisfaction. Some reported PTG changes, such as having become more altruistic and empathetic towards others.

Both PTSD and PTG can occur after trauma. Similar to how Lazarus and Folkman (1987) emphasize the importance of one's cognitive appraisal over stressors, further study is necessary to examine how children appraise the situations under specific conditions, and how those affect their adjustment and development over time. Doing so would be a contrast but necessary area of investigation rather than focusing on PTSD symptoms, which has tended to dominate the literature (Ziaian, de Anstiss, Antoniou, Baghurst, & Sawyer, 2013).

Personal transformation across the lifespan: PTG and gerotranscendence

Given that this study specifically analyzed the reflections of elderly individuals who experienced childhood trauma, it is relevant to review the concept of gerotranscendence as it

relates to PTG. While PTG is a model of positive changes that follow traumatic events, gerotranscendence theory describes positive changes that relate to the aging process. The three aspects of PTG and gerotranscendence, respectively, are: perception of self/self, relationships with others/social relationships, and one's philosophy of life/worldview (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tornstam, 2005). While these two paths to personal transformation overlap in some ways (such as common areas of growth, both salutogenic and phenomenological bases, a recognition of social contexts in facilitating growth, and this growth's connection to well-being, wisdom, and life satisfaction), the key difference between the two is what triggers growth. Their similarities suggest that gerotranscendence may be accelerated by PTG, and that both stressful losses and existential suffering may fuel transformation in normative development (Weiss, 2014).

Although the trauma, crisis, and aging literature have separately been addressing the concept of personal transformation and psychosocial well-being, their similarities are just beginning to be empirically analyzed (Weiss, 2014). Doing so allows for an increased understanding of how personal transformation takes place across the lifespan. Such transformation s are defined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2012) as the changes that occur in mental structures and worldviews, that then result in increased well-being, wisdom, and life satisfaction.

Research questions

Although the idea that negative experiences can stimulate positive changes has not been unfamiliar throughout history, it was only in the 1980s and 90s, with the development of scales that systematically measured positive growth, such as the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) and the Stress Related Growth Scale (SRGS; Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996), that scholars shifted their interests to measuring positive outcomes of traumatic events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). However, a developmental perspective of PTG has been

lacking in the literature (Aldwin & Levenson, 2004) and calls have been made for more consideration to be given to long-term outcomes (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). Studies have focused mostly on adults, leaving children or those who experienced trauma during childhood relatively under-examined (Schwarz, Perry, 1994; Cryder, Kilmer, Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 2006; Ziaian, de Anstiss, Antoniou, Baghurst, & Sawyer, 2013). Moreover, the literature available on these topics is heavily focuses on examining PTSD, therefore leading to a shortage of studies that examine the processes by which individuals experience growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Ziaian, et al., 2013).

This study addresses the following research questions: (1) What are the different personal transformations which coincide with dimensions of posttraumatic growth in the collective narratives of elderly Polish-New Zealaders who experienced migration-related trauma during WWII? and (2) What were some of the conditions that appear to have encouraged posttraumatic growth? The objective of these research questions is to use historical material to document reactions to stress, as well as to analyze what factors may have helped to buffer traumatic experiences in children and possibly lead to positive growth. This study takes advantage of individual testimonials written to showcase a collective experience, as a unique window on understanding these understudied phenomena.

Method

Theoretical framework

The PTG model conceptualizes how positive changes follow trauma and stressful events through three areas of change: relationships with others, perception of self, and one's philosophy of life (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The salutogenic orientation allows the human condition to be better understood by shifting a deficit-based approach that focuses on trauma resulting in pathology and misery, to a strengths-based approach that

understands trauma as an opportunity for potential growth and demonstration of human strength (Antonovsky, 1987; Weiss, 2014). With this in mind, a phenomenological lens gives precedence to the individual voice and subjective experience of trauma. This lens is integral to the development of the PTG model by Tedeschi and Calhoun, who are both clinicians, and which arose from the reports of individuals who experienced traumatic events (Weiss, 2014). As an ecological model, it identifies events, individuals, and social contexts as the functions of positively coping with trauma. Growth may be triggered if one or several of these three characteristics are considered as a challenge to basic beliefs and goals, thereby serving as a "turning point" with a "before" and "after" identified in the life narrative. The potential resulting cognitive-emotional process facilitates the reassessment and/or reconstruction of goals, beliefs, life narratives, and basic schemas. Especially relevant for this study is that PTG is associated with the degree to which the events or context provide positive models of change, support, and change that is consistent with cultural themes (Calhoun, Cann, & Tedeschi, 2010; Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004)

Overall design

The value of a qualitative design for these research questions is found in conducting an in-depth analysis of data and identifying their meanings (Green & Thorogood, 2009). The advantage of testimonials is that the writers have had the freedom to provide rich, detailed accounts of experiences that are not potentially constrained by guiding questions. In narrating their life stories, it becomes the subjects not the researchers, who report what has been a significant part of their lives. Especially relevant for this study is that testimonials are in line with a phenomenological lens that allows the portrayal of subjective experiences in the author's own voice. Given the uniqueness of the particular migration experience for this group, analysis of

testimonials allowed common, recurrent PTG dimensions to be identified, and the contexts in which these items emerged were examined.

Data collection

The book "New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014) from which the testimonials are derived was "developed from a wish to record for posterity a unique episode in New Zealand's history – the arrival of the first refugee group in 1944 and its successful integration into New Zealand society". It was written published, and produced by the refugees themselves and their descendants as part of the 60th anniversary of their arrival, in order to commemorate their history with the purpose of dissemination. The preface of the book reads that:

> Their integration is a success story. It is the success of an unintentional experiment
> by New Zealand's wartime Government to accept refugees into a then very insular
> society. It is the success of the refugee children who made this country their home
> and positively contributed to it. It is a success made even more remarkable by the
> odds stacked against them – a childhood defined by wartime exile, horror and
> refuge. New Zealand's wartime Prime Minister Peter Fraser believed that Poland's
> loss was New Zealand's gain. His humanitarian gesture was instrumental in giving
> the children shelter in a society that was strange to them and not always
> welcoming. […] It presents the subject from their own perspective, and is open to
> further research from archival materials and sources shown in this book.
> (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 4).

Fifty one testimonials from the book were analyzed for PTG. Those that were coded to have at least one PTG item were further analyzed for additional instances of PTG and the context involving this PTG. The final sample for this analysis was comprised of 29 testimonials. The

subjects were 16 women and 13 men who were at the Polish Pahiatua Children's Camp in New

Zealand between 1944 and 1949. They are a representative sample in terms of length of

testimonial and gender balance. The excluded testimonials contained no instances of PTG.

Data analysis

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) developed the posttraumatic growth inventory (PTGI; see

Table 1) which allows PTG to be identified and evaluated. From their responses, they identified

three categories with five dimensions and labeled them as changes in relationships (relating to

others), changes in self (new possibilities, personal strength), and changes in philosophy of life

(spiritual change, and appreciation of life).

First, thematic content analysis was conducted by reading through the testimonials and

identifying words, groups of words, or sentences that fit under the PTG items included in the

PTGI. Because testimonials were used, reports of positive aspects had to be looked at in

conjunction with other parts of the testimonials to ascertain that there were changes involved. In

order to increase the reliability of the scoring, PTG items were identified together with another

rater trained in PTGI rating and scoring. Scores were finalized following discussions and once an

agreement for the rating was reached. After PTG items were identified, the data was analyzed to

compare the reports of each of the dimensions according to gender. Excerpts surrounding the

identified items were analyzed to better understand the context in which those dimensions arose.

This process allowed for the identification of the common personal transformations the elderly

Polish-New Zealanders noted to have experienced throughout their lives.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

The results are divided into the sections congruent with each of the PTG dimensions:

relating to others, new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, and appreciation of life.

Table 2 outlines the frequency of PTG dimensions overall and by gender. Overall and among

women, the most reported PTG dimension in this sample was relating to others (changes in relationships). Among men, the most reported PTG dimension was new possibilities. When combined with personal strength, the category of changes in self was most reported by men, at an equal frequency as women for changes in relationships (13 for each group).

Changes in relationships: Relating to others

Although all 7 subcategories are represented in the narratives, the most frequent ones are subcategories 1 ("knowing that I can count on people in times of trouble), 2 ("a sense of closeness with others"), 6 (I learned a great deal about how wonderful people are") and 7 (I accept needing others").

The context of these reports was a supportive, caring, and welcoming environment, both in Pahiatua and in New Zealand's broader society. The narratives suggest that the children were cared for and looked after exceptionally well when they were in the Pahiatua Camp. As Janina K. expressed upon her arrival: "What we found was a heart-warming welcome. The beds were beautifully made and there were flowers in the rooms. I almost felt the love of the people who had prepared it all. I finally felt safe again" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 129). With respect to interactions with the new country, Irena notes that: "[New Zealanders] treated us to new clothes, shows and outings, as if we were their own. Meeting New Zealand families formed a valuable link to human goodness in people everywhere, and we formed lasting and enduring friendships" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 86). These sentiments are further expressed with relevance on a broader scale by Ryszard who writes: "I could hardly believe that strangers could be so kind. I think this restored my faith in humanity" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 97).

Despite a relatively short stay in the safe space of Pahiatua, there were both immediate and long-term lasting positive impacts in terms of changes in relations. The orphans appear to

have created family-like bonds during this experience. This development is expressed by Janina S. who writes:

> My stay in the camp was only for two years, as I left to attend college in Christchurch, but it was long enough for me to make lifelong family-type bonds among these special people in my life, to care for each other and to call ourselves 'one of us'. (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 181).

Furthering the notion of family-type bonds that developed in the Pahiatua setting, Boguslaw brings refers to the previous lack of family and close ties:

> For more than five years, we were without parents and the camp life created a feeling of belonging and comradeship. This created the atmosphere of an extended family, which has been retained to varying degrees by most of us for the rest of our lives. (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 113).

The New Zealand government not only invited the children, but also approximately 100 staff members to accompany them. These children were therefore surrounded by a community of other Polish children and staff with similar migration experiences and who would have been sources of social support, instilling a sense of belonging during their time at the camp. In addition, the New Zealanders gave these children a warm welcome by greeting them upon their arrival and inviting them to stay with their families during school holidays, which may have eased their adjustment to a foreign country and also helped them to see the good in people.

Changes in self: New possibilities and personal strength

In this new warm and welcoming environment, changes in self through new possibilities and personal strength are present. The PTG items of the Changes in Self dimension tended to cluster around subcategory 11 (New Possibilities: New opportunities are available which wouldn't have been otherwise"), 13 (Personal Strength: A feeling of self-reliance"), 14 (Personal

Strength: "Knowing I can handle difficulties"), and 15 ("Personal Strength: "Being able to accept the way things work out").

New possibilities and a full life provided by time in Pahiatua, relative to the traumas they had experienced, become evident when Boguslaw states:

> The usual routine at camp life comprised church, meals, school classes, sports activities, general cleaning, hygiene and sleep. But during our free time on weekends a whole new range of opportunities became available. Exploring the camp's surroundings and the adjacent farms, forests and river was one of the most thrilling facets of camp life. (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 111).

These new possibilities go beyond the individual. Testimonials also reflect the new possibilities that were made available for children and grandchildren. As Julian reflects: "New Zealand has provided me with the chance to bring up a family in a safe environment with many opportunities for them to become educated and realise their potential" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 154). Felicja furthers this idea: "Throughout my life, I encouraged my children to study and work hard. I believe that knowledge of the world and its people makes us more tolerant towards each other, and thus we become better citizens of this world" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 124). Moving towards personal strength, she then states "I have had a good life and I am proud of what I have achieved." Accepting the way things turned out as she reflects on her life, Janina D. notes that: "Sixty years later at the age of 80, I am leading a quiet life. I am grateful for my life – the good and the bad of it, the happy moments and the sad" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 90).

The context of changes in self appears to revolve around new possibilities in New Zealand in terms of work, education, activities, and potential for children and grandchildren. Given that returning to a Poland under the political system that had resulted in their traumas and

orphan-status was difficult both emotionally and logistically, the opportunity to create a new life and family (both biological and fraternal) where they could realize their potential was likely welcomed. Feelings of self-reliance, ability to handle difficulties, and accepting the way things work out may have been means to also move forward and make the most of the opportunities that New Zealand provided.

Changes in philosophy of life: Spiritual change and appreciation of life

In contrast to changes in relationships and changes in self, there are few examples of changes in philosophy of life that are explicitly documented in this sample, and those that do emerge are varied. They are all in the dimension of appreciation of life and none in spiritual change. They include subcategory 19 ("My priorities about what is important in life"), 20 ("An appreciation for the value of my life"), and 21 ("Appreciating each day"). Upon arrival in Pahiatua, Irena reflects: "The joy of simply being alive filled my whole body. It was lovely to be, to live and to experience. Life was worth living" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 85). Antoni continues that: "After that journey to New Zealand, we settled down to a stable and what seemed like a carefree life at the Polish Children's Camp in Pahiatua" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p.168). As a result of the various experiences that he had, Stanislaw notes that even today: "I never take wellbeing and security for granted" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 150). Similarly to the previous two dimensions of change, the arrival in New Zealand is regarded as positive and associated with a place of safety that restored a will and ability to "live", which in some testimonials manifests itself as increased appreciation of life.

Overall context

New Zealanders and their government appear to have provided resources, care, and sincere acceptance to children living with the trauma of war and displacement. Doing so may have eased the children's adjustment to a foreign country while helping them to see the good in

people. Thus, for these children, rather than migration to New Zealand having been construed as yet another negative experience, stressor, or setback, it may have been perceived as an opportunity that offered them a chance to build a new life. Irena further reflects that:

> As I look back on the planning and thought that the New Zealand authorities put into our reception, housing and programme of recovery for us at the camp, I am profoundly thankful for the wonderful welcome and recovery programme that enabled us to begin a new life in this country (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 150).

The children were in a safe and playful environment while their basic needs were satisfied. She continues that:

> The effect of eating regular meals began to change my body, I began to want to run and jump with my friends. We started to play games and we started to laugh. I don't think I had ever laughed before. The joy of simply being alive filled my whole body. It was lovely to be, to live and to experience. Life was worth living! Many spaces around the camp were used for games of hide and seek, daring jumps over huge puddles of water after the rain or negotiating the nearby river. […] In Pahiatua, I came to appreciate the features of the country – its lush green landscape. Life in New Zealand for me had magic about it and a quality of excitement that I had never experienced before" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 85-86).

While it may not have been experienced in such an idyllic way for everyone (and further work is needed to fully understand the diversity of experiences), her reflections strongly resonate with most of the testimonials, regardless of the explicit presence of PTG.

Discussion

The analysis of individual narratives written to represent a collective experience in a host country has provided important insight into their post-migration experience and the role of the host country environment on the perception of this experience. In reviewing narratives written 60 years following the migration experience, this analysis has also offered room to consider how memories of their experiences may have changed over time, as well as how they are recalled during their elderly stage of life and across gender.

PTG and post migratory environments

The most positive factor that emerges across testimonials is the impact of New Zealand and a receiving society that provided a social context of welcome and well-being, as well as important caregivers following various traumatic events. This context manifests itself across the dimensions of PTG. Much of the literature has focused on the negative aspects of traumatic life events, such as declines in physical and mental health. Thus, it has mostly emphasized how these experiences have become obstacles which ultimately damaged people's lives. However, individuals who went through traumatic experiences also reported several positive aspects of having gone through such difficulties, which eventually caught the attention of researchers.

War is traumatic. It can lead to many deaths, which children may witness, loss of or separations from their close ones, place them in an environment fraught with uncertainty, and induce fear. In previous studies, among migrants, unaccompanied refugee minors were identified as a risk group, as they are missing the influence of caregivers who may help them be resilient to stressful circumstances, and who are also integral to their development. Aspects specifically related to life in exile are important relative to the recovery of children from early traumatization (Montgomery, 2010).

It has been found that the number of traumatic events experienced before migration is an important factor that predicts the development of PTSD. Stressful events experienced in the post-migration environment increased the likelihood of displaying depressive symptoms (Heptinstall, Sethna, & Taylor, 2004; Sack, Clarke, & Seeley, 1996). These Polish children who were sent to New Zealand as refugees experienced a variety of distressing events, from the outbreak of war to loss of one or more parents and/or siblings, to being exiled to forced-labour camps and moving to a new country as refugee children, all of which arguably could have combined to make them vulnerable targets to developing PTSD and depression according to what the earlier studies suggested. However, the samples of subjects in this study are an exemplary case which clearly demonstrates that despite a number of traumatic events experienced, positive growth may occurr. In fact, numerous positive growth factors, and a wide array of them too, were reported in their testimonials. One potential explanation for the PTG finding in this study is that these children were cared for and looked after exceptionally well when they were in New Zealand. These children were surrounded by a community of other Polish children and staff who would have been sources of social support and who would have instilled a sense of belonging. Most of the children and caregivers who lived in the Pahiatua camp had experienced a similar migration journey. Protection from psychological morbidity has been associated with living and socializing with individuals of the same ethnic origin (Geltman, Grant-Knight, Mehta, et al., 2005; Porte & Torney-Purta, 1987).

The sociocultural context has been identified as having a critical role in personal transformation (Weiss, 2014). Interactions with individuals in the immediate social environment relate to perceptions of growth. Evidence suggests that, across cultures, PTG correlates with social support in the forms of emotional comfort of growth modeling following adversity (Weiss & Berger, 2010). Self-disclosure and dialogue are some means by which PTG is facilitated

among individuals affected by trauma, therefore a responsive proximate social context should be considered as emotional support where role models may be provided. These influence affect regulation and schema change, respectively (Calhoun et al., 2010; Weiss, 2014).

These children were welcomed as refugees, meaning that upon arrival in New Zealand their migration documents were handled accordingly. Beyond the lack of administrative waiting, the local society and communities also warmly welcomed the children. New traumatic experiences in the host country may reawaken past traumas, creating further adversity while diminishing potential positive adaptation (Pynoos, Steinberg, & Piacentin, 1999). One of the challenges faced by migrant youth is the social, cultural, and linguistic differences that may exist between the place of origin and the new setting (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). In terms of social acceptance and relations, both the Pahiatua Camp setting and the New Zealand society appear to have been positive experiences. These may be relevant for the post-migratory environment for well-being promotion, as improved psychological functioning has been associated with high perceived peer support (Kovacev, 2004), while perceived discrimination has been found in some studies to be an important prediction of depression and PTSD (Ellis, MacDonal, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008) but not in other studies (Liebkind, 1996).

Elderly people reflecting on childhood: Is this just gerotranscendence?

The changes that present themselves in this study appear to be different from simple gerotranscendence. These changes are noted as having occurred in childhood rather than in their later years. Furthermore, these changes are largely described as having occurred following the traumatic migratory experiences of forced exile to gulags and eventual arrival in New Zealand as orphans. The possibility exists that, in their old age, they are remembering their childhood experiences differently than they had actually occurred, possibly due to gerotranscendence. However, it is worth noting that especially for those individuals whose testimonials describe their

lives up to the present, it appears as though some of these beneficial PTG changes had positive

impacts on how they continued to live their lives following their childhood experiences.

Sociocultural contexts and environments facilitate growth, being important for trauma

survivors and the elderly alike. Narratives of positive transformation may occur when

opportunities for reflection and contemplation in a supportive setting are present (Weiss, 2014).

While age and gerotranscendence are theoretically connected, growth and positive changes as a

result from adversity may occur across the lifespan. Although empirical findings are inconsistent,

some interesting results have emerged regarding PTG and older age. Notably, only Kurtz and

colleagues (1995) reported a positive connection between age and PTG when surveying a broad

age range (22-92). Regarding gerotranscendence, as expected, evidence exists that reporting of all

three dimensions increase with age beginning in adulthood, at different rates based on gender and

specific dimension (Tornstam, 2005). Interestingly, positive changes in philosophical/spiritual

views were the highest rated changes among individuals in the 50-79 year age range in a study by

Kurtz et al. (1995), which would have been the upper age-range at which many of the narrative

authors were when they wrote their testimonials. However, the subjects in my study had a

negligible mention of this sort of positive change (which maps onto the Changes in Philosophy of

Life PTG dimension). Weiss (2014) calls on additional empirical exploration of how PTG and

gerotrascendence are related, and proposes that PTG as a precursor for gerotranscendence

requires longitudinal work. From this data and analysis, it is difficult to specifically distinguish

PTG and gerotranscendence. In this sample, it is a likely a combination of both requiring further

work to distinguish. Thus, this paper is a call for continued exploration of the diverse and

overlapping pathways to personal transformation.

Spiritual change was the only dimension that was not reported by any of the subjects. This

result could be explained by the fact that the majority of Polish people were Christians and that

religion was present before, during and following their migration in various ways. In addition, a finding by McCready and Greeley (1976) suggests that in painful situations, "Catholics of Polish (and Spanish) background were more likely to be religious optimists or hopeful than Catholics of other ethnic origin" (Pargament, 2001, p. 192). Although the reasons underlying the finding by McCready and Greeley have not been identified, already having possibly had positive religious coping styles, stressful circumstances may have been more an opportunity to employ their positive religious coping strategies than an impetus for deepening their understanding or growing in faith. For example, one subject who noted having felt intensely lonely and insecure after both of her parents passed away explained to have figured that she could share her problems with God: "When I was on my own, I would say a short prayer and then would talk to Him pretending He was in front of me. But just when I decided to give up my conversations to the friend above as I called Him, I noticed that my mood had changed for the better" (Manterys & Zawada, 2014, p. 64). From these sentences, one can observe that she already had an established rapport with God, as she refers to Him as her "friend above." She appears to have coped with the difficult situation by substituting social support from people with religious belief, connection, and support, thereby decreasing her sense of loneliness. Likewise, although growth in terms of religiosity or spirituality was not found among these testimonials as a result of their trauma, many of the testimonials, whether included in this study or not, contained a few short words or sentences attributing their survival and blessings to God.

Gender effect

The 31 narratives that were found to have at least one instance of PTG were almost equally divided between women and men, with 17 women and 14 men contributing their testimonials. Gender is not conceptually connected with either gerotranscendence or PTG. However, there is some empirical evidence to suggest certain gender-based growth patterns. As

was found in this study, overall growth scores tend to be higher among women, according to a recent meta-analysis of published and unpublished studies (Vishnevsky, Cann, Calhoun, Tedeschi, and Demakis, 2010). A possible explanation for the higher frequency of reports by women is the difference in the way that women and men cope with stressful situations. While men have an inclination towards focusing more on the problem at hand and thus, searching for solutions by confronting the problem, women tend to be more oriented towards emotions and thus, are likely to seek social support (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). Correspondingly, there are findings which support that social support is helpful and necessary for women. According to Dalgard and colleagues (2006), both genders are equally vulnerable to negative life events. However, differences in vulnerability to depression arose depending on the availability of social support. Although the level of vulnerability was not significantly different between men and women when given social support, women were twice more likely than men to develop depression when without social support. In another study of war veterans, a lack of social support predicted the development of PTSD symptoms in women, whereas this effect was not found in men (King, King, Foy, Keane, & Fairbank, 1999). As a result, women may have been in greater need of social support to cope with the distress, and upon its provision, may have found it more reassuring and taken more note of it than the men did.

Limitations and future directions

  Self-selection and small sample size. The 51 testimonials that are included in the original source text were done on a volunteer and individual interest basis. Therefore, there is a degree of self-selection that took place, where those individuals interested in discussing and sharing their experiences in a public form came forward to share their stories. More individuals may have participated or revealed different stories if there was a greater degree of confidentiality. With a greater diversity of testimonials may emerge different levels and types of PTG. Therefore,

increasing the sample size by adding more testimonials to the analysis will be necessary to gain

an insight into more diverse experiences and contexts. Also, as this study was limited to those

children who were sent to New Zealand, an analysis of samples of children who had similar

experiences in gulags but went to different refugee camps (especially in Africa) could be done to

identify similarities and differences among the subjects, thereby increasing the generalizability of

results. Future research will examine specific cultural responses relevant to this group, as cultural

differences have been found to exist regarding responses to distressing events (Bean, Eurelings-

Bontekow, & Spinhoven, 2007).

  Use of testimonials for understanding trauma. Some difficulty emerged in the scoring

of testimonials. In some of the testimonials, changes that occurred among the subjects could not

be accurately captured by the PTGI. This limitation may have been due to the wording of the

items. For instance, an item under personal strength dimension includes "I discovered that I'm

stronger than I thought I was" as a PTG factor. There were instances when PTG was implied, but

the testimonial does not provide enough information about their history and background to be

able to ascertain whether what they were indicating was a change or not. When uncertain, these

instances were not included as examples of PTG. Thus, whether to include certain statements as

PTG or not was debated, and it would have been helpful if the subjects elaborated more on their

experience so that certain parts could be clarified to provide a more complete understanding of

their experiences. A future direction and method for consideration is to follow-up testimonials

with interviews to clarify particular sections. Alternatively, semi-structured interviews that allow

a high amount of liberty in how the interviews take place should also be considered. Another

consideration is the language of the testimonial. Although many appear to have acquired a strong

mastery of the English language, some who chose not to write their story may have done so

because their English was not strong enough, which may be associated with other elements of

their life experiences. Their testimonials may have also been written differently with certain elements receiving more or less attention if they were written in Polish rather than English. The investigation of a standardized and validated Polish version of the PTGI would be a potentially fruitful endeavor for samples beyond this one. Finally, the particular purpose of the book may have influenced the areas of emphasis that the individuals chose to discuss.

Conclusion

In 2015, we still have a lot to learn from the example of New Zealand's treatment of the Polish Children of Pahiatua. What was initially temporary refuge offered by New Zealand became a permanent home in which many of the survivors flourished. Many grew up to be happy, active citizens with an enduring love for their adopted country. These children went through several distressing experiences such as war, exile, loss of their family member(s), and migration. Individual testimonials in this study demonstrated that, rather than an overwhelming setback caused by their trauma experiences, there was a range of positive growth, the most frequent ones being changes in relating to others and changes in self. The kindness and care of many New Zealanders appears to have added to their positive growth. Also, they were given access to resources that may otherwise not have been available to children during and post wartime. Thus, rather than migration to New Zealand having been construed as yet another negative experience, despite the difficulties it may have been perceived more as a land of opportunity that offered them a chance for life reconstruction following their trauma experiences. While there is uniqueness to their story and experience, there is also an important common and relevant thread to be understood. Childhood migration is not uncommon today. In recent years, increasing attention has been placed on the treatment of children who are asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants during their various stages of migration. Following the traumas that they experience, there appears to be a period when stress may be encouraged, or when growth

along with positive memories and experiences that continue into old age may be facilitated.

"Even today, when the stresses of life get too much," Ryszard confides, "I transport myself

mentally [to Pahiatua and the farm,] and this helps me to handle life" (Manteryz & Zawada,

2004, p. 85).

Table 1
Post Traumatic Growth Inventory

Post Traumatic Growth

A. Relating to Others
1. Knowing that I can count on people in times of trouble.
2. A sense of closeness with others.
3. A willingness to express my emotions.
4. Having compassion for others.
5. Putting effort into my relationships.
6. I learned a great deal about how wonderful people are.
7. I accept needing others

B. New Possibilities
8. I developed new interests.
9. I established a new path in life.
10. I'm able to do better things with my life.
11. New opportunities are available which wouldn't have been otherwise.
12. I'm more likely to try to change things which need changing.

C. Personal Strength
13. A feeling of self-reliance.
14. Knowing I can handle difficulties.
15. Being able to accept the way things work out.
16. I discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was.

D. Spiritual Change
17. A better understanding of spiritual matters.
18. I have stronger religious faith.

E. Appreciation of Life
19. My priorities about what is important in life
20. An appreciation for the value of my life.
21. Appreciating each day.

Table 2
Dimensions of PTG Reported by Women, Men, and Total Combined

Dimension	Women	Men	Total
Relating to Others	13	6	19
New Possibilities	4	8	12
Personal Strength	7	5	12
Spiritual Change	0	1	1
Appreciation of Life	1	4	5

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the individual and collective memories of the Sybiracy, as intended for three different audiences: a 3rd generation in-group member, each other, and broader out-group society. Various themes emerged in each case, through qualitative analysis of interviews, reunion material, and a published book, respectively.

The results of Chapter 1 revealed that individual representations of Africa in semi-structured interviews offer a complete portrayal of daily life that acknowledge hardships, often told through the gaze of a child. Collective memories as portrayed in reunion material appear to take the voice of elderly friends describing both their timeless friendships and idealized pasts. Both lenses allow for certain memories to be celebrated and avoided. The process of resilience was further explored in Chapter 2, which applied posttraumatic growth as a theoretical framework to explore life in welcoming New Zealand in testimonial form. Changes in relationships and changes in self emerged in this post-trauma context, leaving further questions regarding life reconstruction, personal transformation, memory and ageing post-migration. The results presented in this thesis are only some of the voices in the remembering process related to these events and experiences. The literature on testimonies and traumatic experiences often portrays mainly the negative outcomes. My results offer alternative, and possibly often ignored, ways of remembering. The developmental literature supports that human development is enhanced when cognitively enriching environments, ties to community organizations, and close relationships with caregiving adults are made available (Evans, 2004). Resilience among individuals in groups that face adversity may result from social support and access to more resources and people (Saegert, Thomson, & Warren, 2001). It has also been suggested by Lepore and Revenson (2011) that resilience-enhancing environments promote (1) physical and mental health; (2) normative development; and (3) social cohesion and social capital development. Both

the Pahiatua camp and the African refugee camps appear to have been environments in which all three of these facets were present. They may therefore be said to have contributed to the cognitive development and resilience of these individuals.

This thesis has three major points of conclusion. The first is that elderly populations have much to offer individuals and researchers alike in terms of teaching and learning potential. Through such work, it is arguable that life trajectory research is the ultimate longitudinal design for the study of trauma outcomes. Through such approaches, different aspects of the migratory trajectory can reveal themselves as being key to the life reconstruction and resilience process. Second, in terms of methodology, the many voices and perspectives that were analyzed highlight the importance of looking through the diversity of lenses. Individual, collective, and testimonial allow a more complete understanding of the various strategies used when coping with trauma, when creating and revisiting memory, in commemoration practices, and in the transmission of experiences. Third, respecting and celebrating the transmission of such stories is a precious legacy that may prove to be healing for both the storyteller and the listener, as it has been for me.

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