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"THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT VIETNAM IS!": The production of space through hybrid place-making and performativity in an urban public elementary school

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"THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT VIETNAM IS!":

The production of space through hybrid place-making and performativity in

an urban public elementary school

by

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Dedication

To Grandpa, Võ Văn Đủ,

whose serenity and humor in the face of adversity continue to inspire me.

&

To my parents,

Nguyễn Trọng Hiền & Võ Thị Lệ Thu,

who demonstrate every day what amazing feats formidable resolve and love may

accomplish.

Acknowledgements

My parents wished for me an uncomplicated and easy life; one that would not cause their youngest daughter heartache and pain. It is no doubt a common sentiment parents hold. However, I am no exception in this world; my life has not been without heartache or pain. The poet and writer Samuel Hazo (1968) wrote in his *To a Commencement of Scoundrels*, "I wish you what I wish/ myself: hard questions/ and the nights to answer them,/ the grace of disappointment/ and the right to seem the fool/ for justice. Cowards might ask for more./ Heroes have died for less." It is my great fortune that I have been allowed the space and time to ask hard questions, questions that stem from the heartache of negotiating a space of neither here nor there, that stem from an acute sense of homelessness and dispersion and the desire to belong. During this sojourn when confronted by hard questions and graced by disappointment, I have been blessed with mentors, colleagues, and friends who have offered encouragement and laughter when there seemed little to be encouraged about, guidance when doubt consumed me, and who have also pushed my thinking and writing around issues of ethics and responsibility, of difference and democracy, of our treatment of one another.

First, I must acknowledge and thank my friend and mentor, Dr. Jay D. Scribner, whose constancy and unwavering faith have illuminated for me what it is to be a kind and exceptional mentor and who in many ways embodies the humanity and treatment of difference that this dissertation hopes to encourage. Dr. Douglas Foley, whose theoretical prowess, critical reflexivity, and down to earth humor pushed my own theoretical

development and helped to instill a humble grace of disappointment critical to a fledgling scholar. Providing both academic and financial support, Dr. Pedro Reyes made it possible for me to finance my education and to devote the time and thought necessary to the completion of this endeavor. Dr. Norma Cantu, whose humor, spirit, generosity of support and unfailing smile whenever I appeared at her door were invaluable during this grueling process. Lastly, but by no means least of my committee members, Dr. Lisa J. Cary, whose Postmodern Analytic Methods class was an important catalyst to the emergence and development of this study. I am indebted to all of you for your support, time, and commitment to seeing this project through successfully. A special thanks goes to Dr. Sofia Villenas, who firmly but gently said to me at the beginning of this project "Now is the time for me to listen." For the arguably dutiful and obedient daughter of Vietnamese parents, listening and learning from my elders was the expectation I brought to graduate school, not the converse. This was the first of many instances where Dr. Villenas's conscientious efforts at valuing and legitimating my voice shown clearly. And when criticism did come, it was delivered with an extraordinary kindness and gentleness I'd not witnessed before in academe and affirmed for me that there are indeed crannies and crevices in the academic architecture where unreflective treatment of one another may be resisted.

Other faculty members both at The University of Texas at Austin and elsewhere provided encouragement and critical feedback during this process through encounters at conferences, the Clark Seminar, via e-mail conversations including Dr. Gary Anderson, Dr. Eugene Edgar, Dr. Margaret Grogan, Dr. Hanne Mawhinney, Dr. Darleen Opfer, Dr. Martha Ovando, Dr. Alicia Scribner, Dr. Manka Varghese, and Dr. Michelle Young.

This dissertation may not have come to fruition were it not for the many long and demanding discussions of method, theory, and practice with my colleague and "partner in crime" Brendan D. Maxcy. You offered invaluable insights and perspective, endless encouragement and support, and a provincialism that helped me to recognize and practice the kind of love James Baldwin (1962) wrote of that "takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word 'love' here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace—not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth." I look forward to the quest, daring, and growth we will share in for a long time to come. You have my unending gratitude.

During my doctoral studies, numerous friends and colleagues helped to make this experience a joyful challenge: Ann Allen, Curtis Brewer, Shangmin Choi, Jenefred Davies, Joe Dinan, Jessica Geier, and Robin Kapavik to name but a few. Thank you. I would also like to thank my research participants at "Pecan Springs Elementary School" who generously gave of their precious little time and allowed me to hang out, ask questions, participate in celebrations, invited me into their community, and revealed to me a third space of political opportunity and choice; one that is not unproblematic, but one where radical possibilities for more just and loving education may emerge.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the deep devotion and love of my extended family, Bà Ngoại, Cậu Ba, Mợ Ba, Dì Tư, Dượng Tư, Cậu Năm, Mợ Năm, Dì Sáu, Dượng Sáu, Vũ, Milynne, Tăm, Khang, Thủy Tien, and Bão Trân, my siblings, Thu Trăm and Hiếu, and especially that of my parents, Lệ Thu Thị Nguyễn and Hiền Trọng Nguyễn. Exiled from their homeland, for over thirty years my parents have courageously

and tirelessly struggled to establish a new home and life in a foreign country. Their refugee story, our subsequent struggles around foreignness and nationalism, and the joy and pain we share in while striving to maintain Vietnamese heritage culture and language in a Western country have enlivened my social consciousness and buttressed my own resolve and commitment to scholarship and research that may help to resist our unreflective treatment of one another.

"THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT VIETNAM IS!": The production of space through hybrid place-making and performativity in an urban public elementary school

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The politics of place has been overlooked as an area of study in the social sciences generally and especially within the field of educational policy. This study seeks to provide an opening toward further studies in this area that may allow us to more closely examine the lived experiences of those within schools and how policies may be appropriated within these spaces. Toward this end, this study examines hybrid place-making within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program at Pecan Springs Elementary School. In exploring the practices of a small vulnerable population, this study hopes to illuminate the ways in which subaltern groups may transgress pseudo-natural boundaries.

Drawing from the work of Henri Lefebvre and Dwight Conquergood, this study employs analytic tools novel to the field of educational policy and leadership. In particular, this study employs Lefebvre's three dimensional theory of spatial production

and Conquergood's terminals of performance to examine the everyday practices of hybrid place-making of those within a Vietnamese Language and Culture program. In doing so, it is hoped that new ways of knowing and understanding may be opened up and, ultimately, spaces where critical subjectivities may emerge where the treatment of difference is not an unreflective practice. This is integral to projects of radical democracy where we supplant the question of how to solve problems of difference with those that ask what problems difference might solve for us.

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PROEM: IN SEARCH OF GREAT COMPASSION

…names penetrate the core of our being and are a form of poetry, storytelling, magic and compressed history.

> Justin Kaplan and Anne Bernays (1997), *The language of names: What we call ourselves and why it matters*

Carefully considering a child's name is part of Vietnamese tradition. A name bears the hopes of parents and ancestors for that child and her lineage; it helps to guide a child to her place in the world. Often it will describe desirable traits such as courage, harmony, clarity with which parents hope their child will be endowed. The significance of a child's name is revealed to her once she is able to understand abstractions. My name is Thu Sương. Literally translated, *Thu* means autumn and *Sương* means morning dew. I was twenty-seven when my mother revealed the meaning of my name to me. She told me that my name was meant to evoke the image of a Buddhist bodhisattva—Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva or embodiment of great compassion and mercy. Avalokiteshvara is portrayed in many different forms including a bodhisattva with eleven heads and a thousand hands with an eye in the palm of each so that he may see the suffering of all sentient beings and reach out to each with compassion. In Vietnam, Avalokiteshvara is known as *Bồ Tát Quán Thế Âm* and is represented in female form holding a willow branch in one hand and a vase in the other. The vase she holds contains the dew of compassion, *nước cam lộ*. She uses her willow branch to disperse the dew of compassion that it might heal the suffering of the world. I have by no means lived up to what my name inspires, but I nevertheless aspire to it, to being worthy of it.

Perhaps my mother did not reveal the significance of my name to me until I was in my late twenties because she believed that I could not yet understand abstractions. I hope this is not so. I suspect that my name, the thing that would guide me in finding my place in the world, became insignificant because I came shortly after Saigon fell forcing my parents to flee their country and struggle to establish a new life in the United States. I suspect it became less significant as my family realized we had to loosen our hold on some Vietnamese traditions in order to function as a Vietnamese-American family living as hybrids within this new hyphen. I suspect that the strange Anglicized perversion of my name that facilitated my entry into school and relations with teachers and classmates dissuaded my parents' desire to retain a tradition that might have kept me from eased access into this new context. I suspect that, even given all this, my name has done what it was meant to do—it has illuminated an understanding of my place in the world.

Public schools are often the initial and primary place where Vietnamese American children have significant and prolonged interactions with non-Vietnamese children and adults. Their Vietnamese names are frequently perceived as barriers to inclusion in American school culture. Consequently, Vietnamese-American communities commonly give children both Vietnamese and Anglo names. In part, the practice is motivated by parents who want to avoid embarrassment for their children as well as non-Vietnamese individuals with whom they interact, particularly teachers, who are unable to pronounce Vietnamese names[1]. The majority of the children in the Vietnamese program that this study focuses on use their Anglo names. In many instances, Vietnamese children are

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[1] Tran (Tran, 1998) gives an example of the Vietnamese name Dung meaning beautiful countenance for girls and courage for boys. The 'd' is pronounces as a 'z' and yet this becomes 'manure' when spoken by an unknowing individual.

christened with a Western name at the time they are enrolled into American schools. At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, one Vietnamese teacher recounted a humorous incident of trying to learn her pre-kindergarten students' names. As she called out names for students to respond to, a number of them made no response at all. Her students had not yet learned their Western names. For these children, learning their own names becomes a part of the school curriculum. In one class, name tags are made, hung around each child's neck, and name games are played so that the children learn each others' names but also so that they learn their own new Western name. This is indicative of a deeper dissonance. For these children of linguistic minority immigrants, finding their place in the world involves (re)learning one's name, (re)constructing what was once taken for granted, (re)considering one's place.

A well-meaning classmate asked me how my parents viewed Americans and the United States. My parents feel acutely the contradictions of being exiled from their homeland while being asked to become good citizens of a country that played a prominent role in a war that tore their country and families apart. This surprised him as he assumed the Vietnamese simply wanted to escape lives of misery and oppression, that the U. S. and its helicopters and naval ships had rescued the Vietnamese from Communism. His surprise reveals the predominance of discourses that allow forgetting. The Vietnamese diaspora is reduced to a simple story of refugees who have resettled and made a new life, a better life, in the First World. Through this project, I hope to resist this forgetting, to complicate the reductionist tales we tell to assuage our guilt, to illuminate the continued struggle to survive, adapt, and establish futures, and to perhaps facilitate the opening of spaces in which critical subjectivities can emerge.

As so many others, my parents too wish to forget. Years of trying to pry our refugee story from my parents were fruitless. It was not until their fears of my becoming too Americanized converged with my interest in studying a Vietnamese program that they were compelled to tell me their story. The following account presents my mother's recollections of leaving her homeland at the fall of Saigon. This retelling of one diasporic moment helps to situate this research study, adds dimensions of the personal and historical, and resists forgetting.

My mother says that my dad tricked her into leaving Vietnam. He was a soldier in the southern army of Vietnam. Toward the end of the war, as American troops were being pulled out of the country, Vietnamese soldiers were reassigned to these now unoccupied military posts. My father was one of these replacements. At the time, the U.S. government had announced its intention to allow Vietnamese refugees into the states. However, my mother knew that she and her family would not be among those fortunate numbers as our family had no money and no social connections. She told me of her conflicted feelings around staying or fleeing as she desired to remain close to her family, my grandparents, uncles and aunts, but she also knew that my father would likely be imprisoned, put in a reeducation camp or worse if they did not leave.

My father comes from a family of meager means and is the second of thirteen children. This family of fifteen shared a one room home. As a boy, he tended water buffalo and as a young man he learned mechanical skills and joined the army. Shortly before Saigon fell, he was presented with an opportunity to flee the country. A wealthy Vietnamese man had purchased a small boat in order to escape the country. He had room enough for one more family, but needed someone with mechanical skills in case the boat

was not sound. My father abandoned his post and took the man up on his offer. Knowing that my mother was unwilling to leave her parents and siblings behind, my father convinced her to board the boat with my sister and brother telling her that they would simply stay out at sea until the fighting was over. When the chaos settled, they would return to shore. After a week at sea, it was announced over the radio that Saigon had surrendered. The boat began to move. My mother, unaware of her surroundings due to severe sea sickness, believed they were returning home. It was not until she saw a U.S. Naval ship that she knew the boat had traveled out into international waters and that she would not see her home and family for a long time to come.

Upon their arrival, my parents and siblings were taken to Camp Pendleton where numerous refugee families lived together underneath large tents and awaited their fates. For the Vietnamese refugees, there were three courses which they could follow: (1) find sponsorship through organizations and individuals to resettle in the U.S.; (2) find family members already in the states with the financial means to assist in resettlement efforts; and (3) return to Vietnam. The vast majority of refugees in this first wave of immigrants had no family members already living in the states as before 1975, there were only 15,000 Vietnamese in the U.S. Most refugees were unwilling to return to Vietnam and the small number who did return were soldiers who had been separated from families who remained in Vietnam. My family awaited sponsorship from some generous organization or individual.

After spending several months in Kern County under the sponsorship of a man whose intentions were suspect, my family managed to return to Camp Pendleton where they once again awaited sponsorship from some kindly soul. An Episcopal Church

answered the call. Once again, my parents and siblings were put on a bus and shipped off. They arrived in Texas shortly before Thanksgiving and were provided with shared housing. My father took a job planting trees at a local university while my mother worked from home as a seamstress for a local businesswoman. Eventually, my parents saved enough of their earnings to move and buy their own home. I remember only one home growing up. It is the house where my parents still reside.

I am a first-generation born Vietnamese-American. Growing up, I was the only Vietnamese kid in my classes through middle school and often, the only Asian kid. In high school, I knew there were other Vietnamese students on campus, but they were rarely ever in the classes that I took. They were recent immigrant students who were in English as a Second Language classes and classes housed in the portables. Among my Vietnamese peers, I often felt the outsider speaking my Texas accented Vietnamese. Among my "mainstream" peers, I was perceived to be a well adjusted student and voted "Most likely to succeed" at the end of my four years there. My intentions, and what my parents expected of me, were to attend medical school and through medicine, give back to and help uplift our community. I did not succeed in this endeavor. Instead, I pursue a better understanding my precarious place and that of other displaced peoples.

Growing up in a Vietnamese household and in the public school system and context of the United States compelled me to learn numerous contradictory ways of behaving, speaking, being. A good Vietnamese daughter does not weep. A good Vietnamese daughter is quiet and obedient. A good Vietnamese daughter marries a good Vietnamese boy. A good Vietnamese daughter remains close to home and does not stray far. In schools, I learned that my demeanor was stoic, passive, and nonparticipatory, that

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there weren't any 'good Vietnamese boys' or that they would not have much to do with me, and that people thought I would go places because my academic achievements indicated that it should be so.

Balancing and moving between two cultures, traditions, and sets of expectations enhances one's sensitivities toward how one composes a life. Discussing a book she had written, Bateson (1994) writes,

> I imagined the cover as a classic still life that would defy the concept of separate spheres: maybe a mandolin, and some apples, and drafting tools, arranged apparently casually but actually very artfully on a table. That is the kind of combining and arranging we do in our lives. The mandolin and the fruit may come from different aspects of life, but the art is in the composition that brings them together. (p. 109)

This project attempts to describe and present an understanding of how one community is struggling over the composition of the lives of Vietnamese American students. Central to the interpretation of this study is the concept of place. Conventionally seen as static, neutral, and transparent, place is readily relegated to that which is taken for granted rather than a powerful force that circumscribes and inscribes our bodies. One Vietnamese student I observed explained the importance of maintaining Vietnamese cultural mores and traditions, saying of herself and her classmates in unaccented English, "We belong to Vietnam." When one 'belongs' to Vietnam in America, how then does one compose a life? What practices are closed off or made possible by this place of belonging to Vietnam in America? What kinds of alternate places of possibility may be produced by such postcolonial hybridity?

CHAPTER ONE

DRAGON CHILDREN, MYTH MAKING, DIASPORA, & SCHOOL

Of Dragon Children and Myth Making

The Vietnamese story of creation tells of how the Vietnamese people are descendents of a great dragon king and an immortal goddess. The following is a recounting of this story as told by *Thích Nhất Hạnh* (1993) in *A Taste of Earth*.

After the earth and sky were created, a beautiful immortal goddess named *Âu Cơ* persuaded her sisters to join her in exploring the new planet. The sisters transformed into white *Lạc* birds and descended from the thirty-sixth heaven. When they reached the earth they returned to their goddess forms. Enchanted by the beauty of the water, the sky, and the land, *Âu Cơ* scooped up a small handful of earth to smell its sweetness. Wondering if the earth tasted as sweet as it smelled, *Âu Cơ* put the handful of dirt up to her mouth. Her sister yelled out to her to stop, but it was too late. *Âu Cơ* had already swallowed the tiny handful of earth. As the light faded, it was time to return to the heavens. The sisters transformed themselves back into the white *Lạc* birds and ascended. But *Âu Cơ* could not ascend to the thirty-sixth heaven with her sisters. The earth she had swallowed made her wings heavy and she could not fly any higher no matter how hard she tried. She descended to the earth, resumed her goddess form, and wept through the night. Her tears became a long river that wound down the mountain and emptied into the sea.

Beneath the sea, the new current of water perfumed with earth was discerned by the creatures there. This was reported to the Dragon Prince, *Lạc Long Quân,* who turned himself into a fish to follow this current to its source. When the prince finally reached

shore, he jumped out of the water and transformed himself into a handsome young man. *Lạc Long Quân* followed the river up a mountain and discovered that beautiful beds of green moss, brilliantly colored flowers and soft grasses grew near the river, and delicate butterflies flitted in and among the flowers and brush. He believed it must be the sweet water from the river that produced such delicate growth as nothing like this grew beyond the river's reach. *Lạc Long Quân* arrived at the river's source—a beautiful woman whose long black hair swirled in the river's waters. Softly, he asked the goddess why she cried. *Âu Cơ* explained to the prince all that had occurred and he tried to console her. After talking for a time, *Âu Cơ* began to laugh with the prince and share in his wonder of this beautiful place. Hand in hand, they walked down the mountainside. Soon, though, the prince saw that the river had begun to dry up and the plants were withering under their feet. It was only *Âu Cơ's* tears that could nourish the grass and flowers. So, *Lạc Long Quân* took three sips of the river water and told *Âu Cơ* not to worry, that he would make rain from her tears to replenish the river. *Lạc Long Quân* returned to the sea and soon enough, there was rain. When the rain subsided, not only was the river replenished, but many new rivers and streams were formed and the land appeared to be blanketed in soft grass and flowers. *Lạc Long Quân* returned to *Âu Cơ's* side. The two had fallen in love.

Not long after, *Âu Cơ* gave birth to a great sack of eggs, the product of a union between an immortal goddess and a Dragon prince. One day, the one hundred eggs in the sack hatched open and each egg produced a little girl or little boy. As the children grew, *Âu Cơ* and *Lạc Long Quân* taught their children to live off the land and the sea. Many generations came and went in this way and one day, *Lạc Long Quân* had a strange sensation and knew that it was time to return to the sea, that his father was beckoning him

home to take the throne. So it was that *Âu Cơ* took fifty of their children into the mountains and lived off the land while the remaining fifty followed their father to the sea. It would only be in times of need that *Lạc Long Quân* and *Âu Cơ* would meet. Although she could not live in the sea and he could not abandon his duties, the children of the dragon were dependent on both their mother's sweet tears and their father's power to bring rain to the rice paddies and rivers[2].

In the translator's introduction to *A Taste of Earth*, Mobi Warren recounted a conversation between two flood relief workers discussing *Nhất Hạnh's* addition of a new character to this otherwise traditional creation tale. One wonders if the newly created character will be allowed into the "pantheon of Vietnamese gods" while the other responds that "Myth was created to explain the universe and humanity's place in it. Myths are not simply creations of the imagination with no relation to reality" (p. viii). Explanations of our place in the universe extend beyond creation myths. We build monuments and memorials to inscribe our place in the world, we colonize the territories of "Others" to narrate the social order we create, literary and philosophical canons are established to distinguish those with "high culture" from those without, the built environment tells us where miscreants, deviants, and undesirables may lurk, the school curriculum reveals who and what may be immortalized in history. In part, we produce our place in the world through the naming of others and ourselves, through the delineation of

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[2] For the Vietnamese, the dragon is a powerful symbol, one of strength and courage endowed with supernatural powers. It is often used in architecture, furniture, fabric, and ceramics. The physical landscape of the country often uses the imagery of the dragon as well. *Hạ Long* Bay, located in the Gulf of Tonkin, includes almost two thousand islands, islets, and a seascape of limestone pillars. Legend says that the dragon protector of the Vietnamese created these formations in order to protect the Vietnamese from raiding enemies. *Hạ Long* translates to "descending dragon." In the Mekong Delta region, the dragon is seen as embedded in the land with the Mekong river dividing into nine branches. This region is referred to as *Cửu Long*, or nine dragons. The whole of the country too, with its S-shape, recalls the dragon.

apparently fixed boundaries. We categorize, create hierarchies, and naturalize these relations. Naming arises from our conceived accounts of the world, that is, through abstractions. This study hopes to illuminate the perennial question of how we make sense of our place in the world and how this impinges upon the ways in which we may move in the world. I aim to demonstrate the need to understand the production of space as equally significant in and necessary to processes of social ordering, in determinations of inclusion and exclusion, and in examining the relations between particulars and universals in striving toward more democratic education.

In many ways, writing the accounts provided here was challenging as lived experience cannot be captured by any media and our well-intended representations are untamable. Though I hope to pin down a telling that is believable, that may accomplish the verisimilitude that may resonate with my research participants and with others, in reading the word and the world, we know that representations are unstable and unfixed. The limits of writing, of my ability and imagination that make impossible the telling of tales that are nonlinear, fragmented, contradictory—the stuff of life and experience—and yet are still comprehensible too impinges upon these efforts. Hence, what follows is a partial and provisional account of spatio-cultural production in both *material* and *social* space—*lived* space—within a Vietnamese language and culture program at an urban public elementary school. These narratives are told from reconstructions of field notes, semi-structured interviews, numerous informal conversations with teachers and parents between class periods, over lunch, during planning periods, observations of team meetings, campus advisory committee meetings, celebrations, review of public

documents, records, and newspaper articles gathered over the course of two years. I begin by providing the backdrop to this study of *Chương Trình Song Ngữ Việt Mỹ³,* a Vietnamese Language and Culture program, through a brief historical portrait of a displaced peoples and how some of us are attempting to inscribe our lives otherwise through place-making and performance.

The Vietnamese Diaspora

For a thousand years the Vietnamese were ruled by their northern neighbors, China. By 939 the Chinese forces were defeated and Vietnam won its independence until the mid-19th century when the country was colonized by France. Following French colonization, Vietnam was then occupied by Japanese forces during World War II and subsequently split into northern and southern regions by loyalties to the Soviet Union and China and to the United States during the Cold War, respectively. The division into North and South Vietnam was formalized through the Paris Peace Accords in 1973. Finally reunified under the North Vietnamese government as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976, the fighting continued. Supported by the Chinese, Cambodia demanded that tracts of land be returned that had been captured centuries earlier by the Vietnamese. With the support of the Soviet Union, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia quelling the Khmer Rouge forces. Vietnam went to war once again. In mid-February of 1979, the Sino-Vietnamese war ensued. By early March of that same year, the Chinese troops had withdrawn; however, both sides claimed victories.

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[3] This literally translates to Vietnamese-English bilingual program; however, I will refer to the program as the Vietnamese Language and Culture program throughout.

The Vietnamese are a resilient people who pride themselves on surviving great military threats throughout their history. Among their heroines are *Hai Bà Trưng,* the Trung Sisters, *Trưng Trắc* and *Trưng Nhị,* often portrayed leading warriors into battle charging atop two great elephants, defeating Chinese forces in an especially gruesome period of forced Sinocization. Another distinction the Vietnamese pride themselves on is that Vietnamese warriors were among the very few to subdue multiple Mongolian invasions during a time when even China was under Mongol rule. Despite its long history and its many stories of struggle and survival, Gettleman et al. argued,

> For many Americans, Vietnam is the name of a war, not a country. The Vietnamese themselves seem shadowy figures, nameless and faceless, helpless victims or heartless aggressors. Their history begins only when Americans appear on the scene" (1995, p. xiii).

As is reflected in the abundance of popular literature around Vietnam and as Rutledge(1992) and Lowe(1996) might suggest, the Vietnam War—or what the Vietnamese refer to as the American War[4]—is often where this story begins and ends. This study hopes to show that despite the portraits of well-being in the literature, the landscape of Vietnamese experience in the United States is uneven and the past reverberates in these hybrid lives even as the 1.5 and second generation Vietnamese American often knows naught of Vietnam.

In 1964, there were only 603 Vietnamese living in the United States (Takaki, 1998); they were students, language teachers, and diplomats. By 1975, that number would increase by over two hundred times. Unlike other Asian groups who emigrated to the U.S. before this time, refugees of the Vietnam/American War had little choice in their transmigration and largely had no support from coethnics who could help ease the

transition. The Vietnamese are commonly characterized as arriving in the United States in several waves. The first wave was comprised of refugees who fled Vietnam in 1975, they were mostly from urban areas, more Westernized than the general population, and typically, better educated. Many refugees from this first wave included employees and military personnel associated with the South Vietnamese government, those who had been employed by Americans in Vietnam, and members of the middle class. The second wave to enter the United States between 1975 and 1978 were mainly immediate family members of first wave refugees. Often referred to as "boat people," the third wave ensued between 1978 and 1980. Those in the third wave fled on make-shift boats risking their lives at sea as they faced threats of violent storms and piracy. Takaki (1998) reported that two thirds of these boats were attacked by pirates, each boat an average of more than two times. This third wave was comprised of individuals with backgrounds ranging from educated professionals to fishermen and farmers from small coastal villages and rural areas. The fourth wave arrived between 1980 and 1990. Through the Orderly Departure Program, these Amerasian children and those who had been released from reeducation camps were able to join their families in the United States (Tran, 1998).

Since World War II, approximately 2.6 million Vietnamese have left Vietnam to resettle overseas. About half now live in the United States while the rest have scattered to over sixty different countries, including France (400,000), China (300,000), Australia (200,000), Canada (200,000), and Thailand (120,000) (Dorais, 2001). When Saigon fell over thirty years ago, the United States responded to the influx of Vietnamese refugees through a politically, economically, and socially efficient Refugee Dispersion Policy.

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4 Hereafter referred to as the Vietnam/American War.

This policy served a number of purposes: (1) to relocate Vietnamese refugees as quickly as possible and to facilitate financial independence; (2) to ease the economic impact and competition for jobs; (3) to facilitate the logistics of finding sponsors; and (4) to prevent the development of an ethnic ghetto (Do, 1999). The relocation of Vietnamese refugees within the U. S. depended largely on sponsorship through individuals and organizations capable of temporarily providing clothing, shelter, food, assistance in finding employment, job training, enrolling children in schools, and providing medical care. Because of a hostile political and social climate the dispersion policy was influenced primarily by political and financial expedience. Thus, social needs were treated as secondary and extended Vietnamese families were broken up and scattered across the country to facilitate sponsorship. Commenting on this period and the Vietnamese people, Rutledge (1992) wrote,

> At the time, their stories and the horrible reality of their desperate situation took the world stage by storm. Most forms of video and print media highlighted the mass exodus. The verbal and pictorial accounts that came out of South Vietnam mesmerized the world with unfathomable images of human misery and suffering. The struggle for freedom and survival was front page news.
> Fifteen years later, Vietnamese refugees continue their struggle to survive, adapt, and establish futures for new generations of Vietnamese-Americans, but the spotlight of public attention has dimmed considerably. (p. ix)

This dimming of public attention is reflected in Lowe's (1996) view of the United States' determination to forget. She suggested that because of the troubled history between the United States and Vietnam the subsequent resettlement of hundreds of thousands of refugees created contradictions around national identity.

> Once here, the demand that Asian immigrants identify as U.S. national subjects simultaneously produces alienations and disidentifications out of

which critical subjectivities emerge. These immigrants retain precisely the memories of imperialism that the U.S. nation seeks to forget. (pp, 16-17)

This forgetting contributes to the gaping silences around the education of Southeast Asians generally and Vietnamese immigrant students in particular. Since the dispersion policy and with a growth in economic stability within Vietnamese communities, the Vietnamese population in the U. S. has undergone a secondary migration such that three-quarters of Vietnamese immigrants now live in seven states. Although many from the first wave retain and perpetuate ideals of returning to Vietnam and conquering communism, the recognition that we must somehow build new lives in this host country has spurred the growth of ethnic enclaves insistent on creating social networks to facilitate ease of movement within this foreign land. There is an uneasiness that marks this movement though. The uneasiness is one that I experience and one that the students, teachers, and parents described here also appear to experience as new critical subjectivities emerge.

The Initial Encounter and Entree

In the winter of 1996, a long time friend invited me to attend a *Tết,* Lunar New Year, celebration with performances by students in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program at Pecan Springs Elementary School[5] where she did volunteer work. I remember arriving at the school and watching as the students greeted my friend with the traditional

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[5] To protect the anonymity of the participants, Pecan Springs Elementary School, names of places and people, as well as writers for and names of local newspapers used in this study are pseudonyms.

Vietnamese, *"Thưa Cô Hoà[6]."* I remember thinking then, as now, that few people had accorded me that respect as I was always among the youngest at Vietnamese gatherings. We made our way into the school. I followed *Hoà*, stunned at the many little bodies all with Asian faces and features clothed in bright multicolored costumes from different regions of Vietnam. I spent that evening helping the elementary students get into costume and ushered them to where they needed to be even in my own confusion and unfamiliarity with the place and the disorder of the occasion.

I don't remember the songs or the dances; I don't remember the people I met that day. My memory of it stems primarily from feelings of distance and familiarity, of longing and confusion, of comfort and unease. The distance of not knowing those around me, of being located far from home was coupled with the familiarity of everyone there having physical features similar to my own, of everyone speaking the language I spoke in my own home. The longing for such familiarity while I attended a school of affluent college students of mostly European-American backgrounds and descents was coupled with the confusion of understanding the language that surrounded me but not having used it enough to speak without faltering. The comfort that called my family to mind was paired with an unease that recognized my otherness and outsider status.

I had not experienced anything like this before. Although there was a Vietnamese community in the city in which I grew up, the gatherings I remember always were held in the privacy of the Vietnamese Buddhist temple, never the grounds of a public school. Because we were of varying ages and grew up in different areas of the city, the children

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[6] *Thưa* is the formal greeting that Vietnamese children learn early on that they must use in greeting their elders. It literally translates to "report." Thus, the children report to their elders that they have arrived or that they are leaving.

knew each other primarily through encounters at the Asian market or at the homes of our parents' acquaintances and friends, not because we saw each other daily at school as these children did through this Vietnamese Language and Culture program. I revisited this experience on occasion still in awe of the hundreds of Vietnamese students I saw that night singing in Vietnamese and performing to traditional Vietnamese music, at the enormous numbers of Vietnamese parents who had come to school to support the students and the program. This, though, was set aside to study the hard sciences to hopefully attend medical school. In this way, I would reassure my parents that their sacrifices and exile from the motherland wouldn't be for naught.

During my doctoral studies in the spring of 2004, I encountered this Vietnamese Language and Culture program for a second time. Stemming from my own experiences of place and placelessness both within and outside of schools, I determined to revisit the Vietnamese program. After working in the corporate world for a number of years, another close friend, *Trang,* decided to return to school to receive teacher certification in elementary education. She would turn out to be my primary informant for this study. The spring of that year was her first semester as a teacher in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. During that time I volunteered with the Vietnamese after school program tutoring students. Words my mother told me as I left for graduate school resurfaced in this space and my "Vietnamese consciousness" heightened. My mother implored me to remember that as I went out into the world that I was a Vietnamese girl. Here, in the presence of *Dr. Tộc*, a grandmotherly figure who wore wide silk trousers and traditional Vietnamese blouses, I could not help but to remember that there were ways of being in this place that would recommend me to her, that would raise me in her esteem. I

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often dressed in long skirts and blouses, my waist length black hair I would wear in a practical bun. I stayed out of the way as much as possible, but was observant and helpful when opportunities arose to be so. I made sure to greet her whenever I arrived and to inform her of when I departed. The following fall, after asking for *Dr. Tộc's* and the other teachers' permission, I began observations of regular instruction, Friday culture days, after school tutoring, celebrations and school meetings.

Texas Independent School District

Texas Independent School District is a large urban school district of 50,000+ students, 10,000+ employees, and over 100 campuses. The city in which this district is located is divided by a major highway ostensibly by haves and have-nots. Inequities in social and economic access are reflected in maps of the city which show significant degrees of overlap in communities of linguistic isolation, low-income housing, and ethnic minorities (see Appendices A, B, C, D, and E). Over the years, property values have increased and the city has begun to experience differing degrees of gentrification. Student school enrollment is either flat or declining at schools in the central regions of the district while enrollments above school capacity are experienced in campuses at the outer fringes of the district where housing is more affordable.

While the overall number of students enrolled in the district has increased by almost 18% in the last fifteen years, enrollment by ethnicity has shifted dramatically. In the 1990-1991 school year, the White student population accounted for nearly 44% of the total district enrollment while in the 2004-2005 school year, they made up 29% of the district population. For this same time period, the Hispanic student population grew from

nearly 35% to about 55% of the total student population. The percentage of students considered economically disadvantaged[7] in the district grew from about 45% to 59%, and students identified as limited English proficient grew almost threefold during this time from 8.7% to 22.8% (See Charts 1.1 & 1.2)[8].

Chart 1.1 Percentage Change in Ethnicity for Texas ISD: 1990-2005

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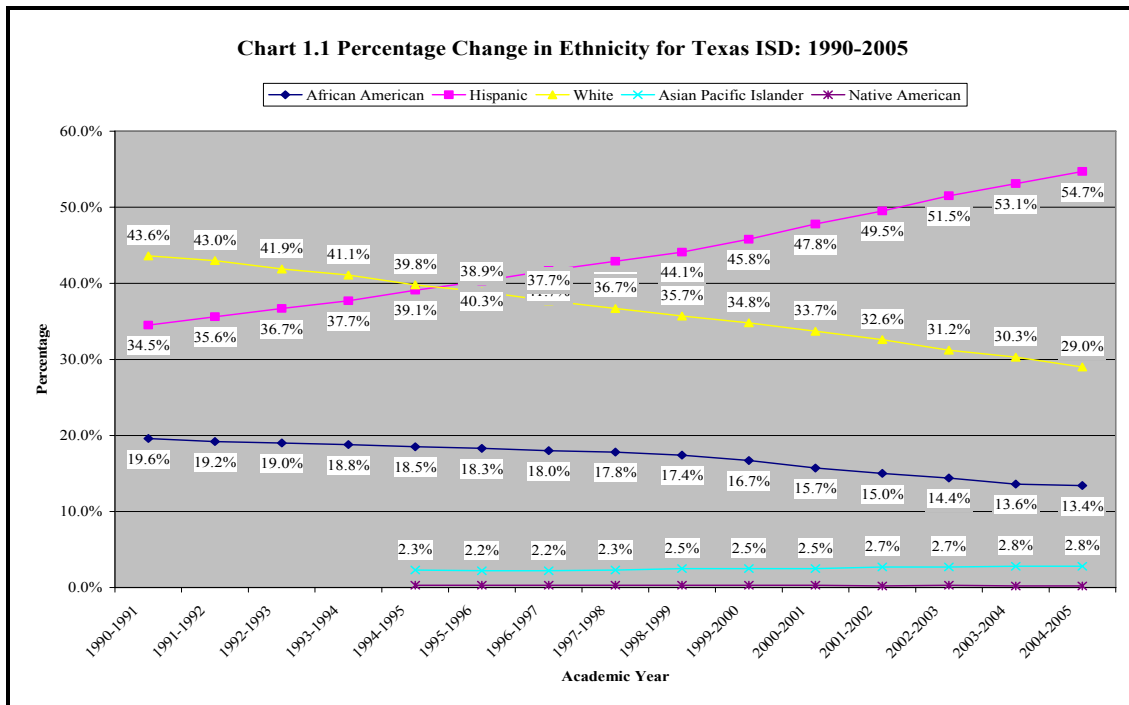
[7] According to the state education agency, a student is considered economically disadvantaged when he/she falls into one or more of the following categories: (1)Eligible For Free Meals (code 01) – Eligible for free meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program; (2) Eligible for Reduced Meals (code 02) – Eligible for reduced-priced meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program; and (3) Other Economically Disadvantaged (code 99) (this category includes (a) students from a family with an annual income at or below the official poverty line; (b) students eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or other public assistance; (c) students that received a Pell Grant or comparable state program of need-based financial assistance; (d) students eligible for programs assisted under Title II of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA); and (e) students eligible for benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977.

[8] The data for these charts (1.1-1.4) come from the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).

Chart 1.2 Percentage Change in SocioEconomic Indicators for Texas ISD: 1990-2005

Legend: Econ Dis — LEP — BE/ESL

Econ Dis values: 44.8%, 44.1%, 47.9%, 48.8%, 49.8%, 49.8%, 50.6%, 50.2%, 49.0%, 46.8%, 48.0%, 50.1%, 53.0%, 55.6%, 58.7%

LEP values: 8.7%, 9.5%, 10.7%, 11.3%, 12.5%, 13.8%, 15.0%, 12.6%, 13.5%, 16.8%, 17.8%, 19.9%, 20.7%, 21.8%, 22.8%

BE/ESL values: 7.7%, 8.5%, 8.8%, 9.5%, 10.4%, 11.8%, 12.4%, 11.9%, 13.5%, 15.2%, 16.3%, 19.1%, 19.7%, 20.7%, 21.7%

Y-axis: Percentage. X-axis: Academic Year (1990-1991 through 2004-2005)

The Superintendent of Schools has been with this majority-minority district[9] for six years. He was the seventh Superintendent to come to the district in ten years. The district had been criminally indicted for tampering with school data at that time and he was met with demands from the community to better serve its children of color. An examination of standardized exam scores by student ethnicity revealed large gaps in performance when comparing those of White students to almost all other subgroups across the district. Compounding these tensions, a local newspaper described the demands of a grassroots community organization thusly, "Discontinue a legacy of racist and unequal public education, say [the grassroots community organizer] and his

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[9] 72% of the student population is composed of students from African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American backgrounds while the remaining 28% are from European American descent. These numbers were taken from data reported to the Public Education Information Management System for the 2004-2005 school year.

community allies, or suffer the public, political, and financial consequences" (S. Staff, 2001, paragraph 5)

Hundreds of families from minority and low-income neighborhoods threatened to pull their children out of the public schools due to the deplorable educational achievement gaps and the substandard services provided these students. In an open letter to district officials, this group decried the disproportionate numbers of minority children placed in special education, the disproportionate numbers of minority students with discipline referrals, the under-representation of minority students in gifted and Advanced Placement classes, and the ethnic make-up of teachers[10] that did not reflect the ethnic make-up of the district. Impetus for change came not only from a call to examine the district's racialized practices though.

Perhaps more pressing were the prevailing social conditions described by Maxcy (2006) in his critical examination of the district's operating environment. He characterized the district's practices as aligned with broader demands on public service sectors to reinvent themselves along more entrepreneurial lines. This would help to mitigate the "bureau-pathologies" of "old-style" bureaucratic "management of public service delivery as ineffective, inefficient, unresponsive to clients and prone to mission expansion rather than service improvement" (p. 10). The operating environment into which the Superintendent was brought was one in which performance pressures were compounded by an expansion of school district audits by the state comptroller, the publicizing of performance comparisons by an education research group, a tightening of

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[10] Percentages of teachers in the district by ethnicity have increased slightly in the Asian and Pacific Islander[10] (from 0.7% in 1994-1995 to 1.3% in 2004-2005) and Hispanic[10] (from 18.6% in 1992-1993 to

the district budget, and an increase in the enrollment of low-income and limited English proficient students.

Coming with a background in educational data analysis, the new Superintendent was to bring rigor and accountability to the district. In response to the increasingly trenchant call for accountability and efficient use of funds, a number of measures were taken and initiatives implemented. Over the course of a few years, a new state exam was introduced and a battery of district level exams (see Appendix F) was added to the district test calendar in order to assess student progress throughout the year. Additionally, the central administration was restructured, daily instructional guides (DIG) were introduced to every grade level and every class room to counter the high degree of student mobility in the district, a tiered system of accountability tied to increasingly intensified interventions was installed, "blueprint" schools were instituted where chronically low-performing schools were completely reconstituted, task force groups were constituted to examine achievement gaps between White[11] students and other subgroups in the district. More recently, initiatives to restructure the district's high schools have been implemented and a proposal to develop three pre-kindergarten centers to serve as professional development laboratories is currently being considered by the district board of trustees[12].

In a presentation given at a national conference, the Superintendent described the current predicament of the district as follows:

23.9% in 2004-2005) categories while decreasing in the African American (from 10% in 1992-1993 to 7.1% in 2004-2005) and White (from 70.9% in 1992-1993 to 67.6% in 2004-2005) populations.

[11] I use the subgroup designations provided by the district and state throughout.

[12] As of this writing, the vote on this measure was postponed for further discussions. In an earlier meeting with a high ranking district official, the Vietnamese program teachers and parents were told that the proposal had been modified to exempt the Vietnamese pre-kindergarten students from participating and that only one or two of the centers would be proposed, not all three. In the original plan, the pre-kindergarten

> The problem we face as an urban district is that we continually feel ourselves to be caught in the *vortex of what may come together as a perfect storm*. We face rising standards and accountability measures at the state and federal levels but receive diminishing revenues to meet them. We have all the social ills created by poverty, mental illness, addiction and violence arriving at our doorstep without community social agencies to address them adequately. We have the safety concerns endemic to most urban and suburban districts. We have strapped taxpayers, rising costs for utilities and maintenance, and a dire need for continuing professional development to carry our teachers from the novice level to mastery. (2003b, emphasis added)

However, within the context of this "perfect storm," the Superintendent of Texas ISD also pointed to the steady improvement experienced across the district (Superintendent, 2003a, paragraph 7). The number of schools designated as Exemplary and Recognized as assigned by state accountability rankings had increased. In particular, he noted that these schools were located on both sides of the district including low-income as well as affluent schools. The achievement gap between White students and minority subgroups had been narrowing, the numbers of students graduating on time had increased, 94% of third graders passed the new state accountability exam, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading exam in the first two tries, for every grade level and student group, the percentages of students passing all TAKS tests increased relative to prior years. Yet, alongside these improvements, the Superintendent emphasized new challenges with which the district is confronted. Five issues consistently raised as challenges for the coming years included: (1) high school achievement, (2) English Language Learners, (3) student safety, (4) teacher and staff compensation, and (5) the district's relationships with community organizations. Of particular interest to this study is the focus on English Language Learners. The Superintendent reported on several

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center that would have affected Pecan Springs Elementary School would have enrolled approximately 400

occasions that one of the most pressing challenges revolved around the recent immigrant population in Texas ISD which had tripled over the last five years. In an overview of the district's strategic plan for 2005-2010 school years, topping the list of overarching goals is an objective to "ensure that the district meets the needs of all student groups, with emphasis on high priority student populations, including African American adolescents and recent immigrant English Language Learners."[13]

Pecan Springs Elementary School

Pecan Springs Elementary School (ES) serves over one thousand students from Early Childhood Education to a class of sixth grade magnet program students. It is located on a primary arterial road just off a major highway. The immediate surrounding area is zoned for residential use as well as commercial buildings. Churches sit on either side of the school, one a Korean Baptist church and the other Methodist. The main building and grounds are well-kept and the parking lot is usually overcrowded. Pecan Springs ES served just over five hundred students in 1990 but has since then expanded its capacity through the installment of numerous prefabricated portables sitting atop what used to be part of the school's playground. It is one of the many schools in the district

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students.

[13] The remaining overarching objectives are to: (1) promote the value of teachers to society and esteem for the teaching profession; (2) take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to preventing and solving problems; (3) establish strong expectations for organizational excellence and the accountability of district leadership; (4) support flexibility, innovation, and positive risk-taking, and reward success; (5) develop and nurture a professional culture of leadership, motivation, creativity, and collaboration at each campus dedicated to student learning to fully meet the needs of al students; (6) raise the awareness, expectations, and preparation of all students for meeting the demands of postsecondary education and the job market; (7) become more responsive as a district to the needs and expectations of our customers to promote and maintain our position in the region as a leading provider of quality education; and (8) fundamentally restructure our resource allocation from the long-standing system based on equity in inputs (dollars per pupil) to equity in outcomes and excellence for all.

that has experienced over-enrollment with the shifting population and housing trends noted earlier.

The community that this school serves is a majority minority population (86.4% non-White students). As Chart 1.3 shows, there has been great growth in the Hispanic population. In the 1990-1991 school year, Hispanic students made up 41% of the school population. This percentage has grown to almost 61% in the 2004-2005 academic year. During the same period, the percentage of White students decreased from one-third of the population to less than half that. The African American population showed a very small decrease overall while the Native American and Asian and Pacific Islander populations have remained fairly stable[14]. The school has traditionally served large numbers of economically disadvantaged students—78.8% in the 1990-1991 school year and 88.3% in the 2004-2005 school year—and has seen considerable increases in the numbers of English Language Learners over the last fifteen years (15.5% in 1990-1991 and 56.0% in 2004-2005) (See Chart 1.4 below).

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[14] Data originally categorized as "Other" was further disaggregated into the Native American and the Asian and Pacific Islander categories in the 1994-1995 school year.

Chart 1.3 Percentage Change in Ethnicity Groups at Pecan Springs Elementary School: 1990-2005

Legend: African American — Hispanic — White — Asian Pacific Islander — Native American

Y-axis: Percentage of Ethnic Subgroups (0.0% – 70.0%)
X-axis: Academic Year

Academic Years: 1990-1991, 1991-1992, 1992-1993, 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1997-1996, 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005

Hispanic: 41.0%, 38.6%, 35.7%, 37.4%, 40.7%, 40.6%, 42.0%, 47.2%, 46.9%, 48.5%, 54.2%, 49.5%, 54.1%, 57.6%, 60.7%

White: 33.3%, 31.2%, 30.1%, 24.8%, 19.8%, 18.5%, 18.1%, 16.4%, 14.6%, 11.8%, 10.6%, 10.1%, 8.6%, 7.5%, 6.1%

African American: 21.8%, 20.4%, 19.9%, 19.0%, 20.8%/18.2%, 19.0%, 18.8%, 17.4%, 17.6%, 16.7%, 12.7%, 17.2%, 14.6%, 13.6%, 13.6%

Asian Pacific Islander: 19.8%, 21.3%, 21.1%, 20.5%, 22.4%, 21.7%, 22.1%, 21.7%, 21.3%, 19.2%

Native American: 0.5%, 0.6%, 0.4%, 0.2%, 0.3%, 0.6%, 0.8%, 1.1%, 1.0%, 0.0%, 0.1%

Chart 1.4 Percentage Change in SocioEconomic Indicators at Pecan Springs Elementary School: 1990-2005

Legend: Econ Dis — LEP — BE/ESL — Mobility

Y-axis: Percentage (0.0% – 100.0%)
X-axis: Academic Year

Academic Years: 1990-1991, 1991-1992, 1992-1993, 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1996-1997, 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005

Econ Dis: 78.8%, 68.4%, 78.3%, 77.9%, 81.5%, 82.9%, 80.9%, 82.5%, 82.0%, 77.9%, 78.1%, 80.4%, 83.3%, 86.4%, 88.3%

LEP: 15.5%, 24.2%, 25.1%, 31.4%, 34.9%, 41.2%, 41.1%, 43.4%, 40.9%, 46.4%, 42.6%, 45.7%, 54.1%, 50.1%, 56.0%

BE/ESL: 13.0%, 21.8%, 21.3%, 28.1%, 31.0%, 39.7%, 39.9%, 43.4%, 40.9%, 45.6%, 42.2%, 45.5%, 54.1%, 49.2%, 55.1%

Mobility: 24.1%, 30.0%, 31.6%, 28.3%, 29.6%, 26.0%, 27.2%, 24.9%, 23.6%, 22.9%, 22.7%

Nearly 600 of the students enrolled at this school are served in either an English as a Second Language program or a bilingual program. While most of these English Language Learners are Spanish-English speakers, a notable aspect of this school is that it houses a Vietnamese Language and Culture program as well. Pecan Springs ES is the magnet campus for this program and so serves students from across the district. The nearly 20% Asian and Pacific Islander population in attendance at the school is almost completely comprised of Vietnamese[15] students. Approximately half of these students were born in the United States while the other half were born in Vietnam but emigrated at very early ages. Only a handful of the Vietnamese students are considered "newcomers."

Artifacts of the school's diversity are displayed across the campus. Notices in English, Spanish and Vietnamese are posted on the doors leading into the main building asking that visitors sign in with the front office for the safety and security of the children. Just inside the main entrance there is a table with stacks of colored paper. These are copies of the school calendar and monthly newsletters made available to parents and visitors again in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Throughout the hallways, student work is posted on bulletin boards, their surnames too reflecting the diverse backgrounds from which these students come. The school's motto is presented in the three languages on a large banner hanging from the cafeteria ceiling and a colorful mural in one hallway accentuates the diversity of the school with a dancing dragon as a central piece.

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[15] The teachers and students in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program refer to themselves as *người Việt*, or Vietnamese, so I will adhere to this practice.
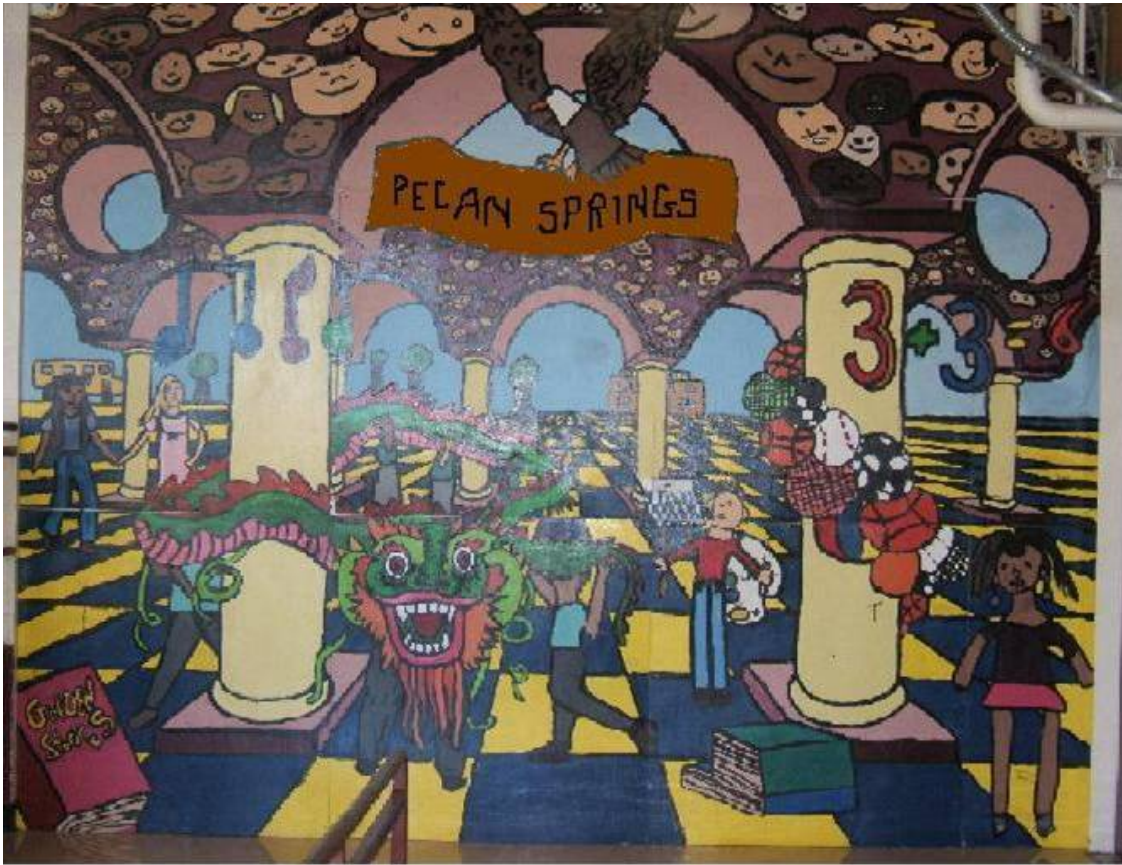
Figure 1: Diversity at Pecan Springs Elementary School

The Vietnamese Language and Culture Program

Pursuing masters and doctoral level studies in Romance languages, *Dr. Tộc* left Vietnam with her family in the early 1960s. She was one of an estimated 600 Vietnamese residing in the United States at that time. Her intention was to return to Vietnam upon completion of the degree in order to teach at the university level. Sadly, before she was able to return home, the Vietnam/American War ended with the communist North as victor. So, she remained in the U.S. assisting as she could with the resettlement of newly arrived Vietnamese refugees. Several years later, *Dr. Tộc,* was informed that the Texas Independent School District was in need of a Vietnamese-English speaking teacher. As a

result, the Vietnamese Language and Culture (VLC) program began in 1983 with one teacher, *Dr. Tộc*, and a handful of Vietnamese students. Over the years, this program has grown substantially and *Dr. Tộc* has come to be known as the program director. Today the VLC program serves approximately two hundred students and the Vietnamese team is comprised of four full time teachers, two teaching assistants, and one community liaison all of whom are fluent in Vietnamese and English.

According to *Dr. Tộc*,

They [the school and school district] did not have a guideline for the program because it so new to them. So, they just give to me the whole program as I have to start it by myself. There's no guidelines, no restrictions, no nothing. So, I ask the parents, what do they want. And they said that they want for the children to speak English well enough and learn it fast enough to get into the regular classroom. In the meantime, retain the Vietnamese. So, that's what I designed the program for. And then, by the end, like in May, I start to have 17 students, from seven to 17, which is not too bad, you know. And then [TISD] say, 'Well, we don't know how the program go. You might not have a job this coming fall.' I said, 'fine.' So, I start looking for another job. But then they called me back and they just signed me, like a contract every year. Each year because they don't know how the program will go. But now, you know, I am here for 23 years already, so. (Interview Transcript,11.05.04)

Other teachers also commented on the program's longevity and whether or not there would be a need for the program in the future. Given the working conditions and changing contexts of the teachers' lives as well as linguistic and cultural shifts within the Vietnamese community where more and more, younger generations were growing up not speaking or hearing much Vietnamese at all, it seemed questionable. One Vietnamese teacher suggested that she didn't know if she would have the kind of energy required to stay with a program that demanded a commitment of so much additional time. She wondered whether she would want to make that commitment should she start a family of her own. Another teacher suggested that not only did this commitment of time and energy

limit the program's ability to find teachers (particularly since the extra time commitments were made without monetary compensation), but that as time passed, it might be less likely that the pool of applicants would include those who were literate and fluent in both Vietnamese and English. Additionally, she suggested that as the Vietnamese community matures and assimilates, there may not be the demand for the "social services" the teachers also attempt to provide. Another teacher expressed similar sentiments,

> I thought maybe, you know, the program might not last that long, because that time still have refugee come from Vietnam and the newcomer, the parents still learning English, don't know English. And the students still learning their English. So, I thought just maybe a few years that the program might die out. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

However, he went on to say more optimistically, "But then the program keep growing and growing. So, then I stay here (laughs). So, so here I am to this day. I'm still here and it's going stronger."

The Vietnamese Language and Culture program is structured much as it was in the early years of its development although the enrollment numbers have increased substantially. Of that growth, *Dr. Tộc* said,

> The families that are here were saying that there's something good with the program. Then those who hear, because of those who like the program, the people who don't know where to send their children, they bring them here. So, the numbers increase steadily because of that. Many people say, 'I heard your name many times before, but I never knew you.' People go out and when they want something, they say, 'Ask *Dr. Tộc*.' So, that is the bond within the community. That makes the program grow and the program is strong. (Interview Transcript, 11.05.04)

Although the VLC program is considered to be a "bilingual education" program, with the exception of *Dr. Tộc*, the remaining teachers are not bilingually certified as the state of Texas has no such provision for Vietnamese-English bilingual teachers. Instead, the VLC

program teachers are certified to teach English as a Second Language (ESL)[16]. Students in the VLC program generally are assigned to regular homeroom teachers, who are also ESL certified, and are then pulled out for one period of the day to spend with the VLC program teachers. Consequently, they spend most of the day with their homeroom teachers and from forty-five minutes to an hour and a half with the VLC teachers. Additionally, the majority of the Vietnamese students also participate in after school tutorials with the VLC program teachers as well as extracurricular activities at the upper grade levels.

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[16] Although ESL certified, the Vietnamese teachers have recently been given an annual stipend of $2,000 that bilingual education teachers receive in Texas.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE PROGRAM: AN

ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

Of Marginal Places

The Vietnamese Language and Culture program is housed at the very outskirts of the school campus backed up against the schoolyard fence in prefabricated portables. The fence opens up onto a small parking lot that belongs to a neighboring church. From the parking lot extends a back alleyway that leads out to the main road. Consequently, the VLC program teachers, the parents of those in the program, and volunteers from a nearby high school and university rarely, if ever, had to use the main entrance to the school grounds. They simply made use of the empty church parking lot during the weekdays and evenings. During my observations, parents and friends came and went freely within this space. If one attempted, however, to visit the Vietnamese Language and Culture program portables through the official channels—that is, by first checking in with the front office where the administrative personnel were often too busy to look up, signing in, and adhering a "visitor" sticker to one's person—the maze of portables passed by to reach the Vietnamese program portables were extensive and of multiple bright colors, blue, red, green, pink, yellow, purple, orange. Upon reaching the Vietnamese portables, one would find that these are the only two like-colored portables standing one next to the other; curiously enough, they are yellow.

Figure 2: The Multi-Colored Portables
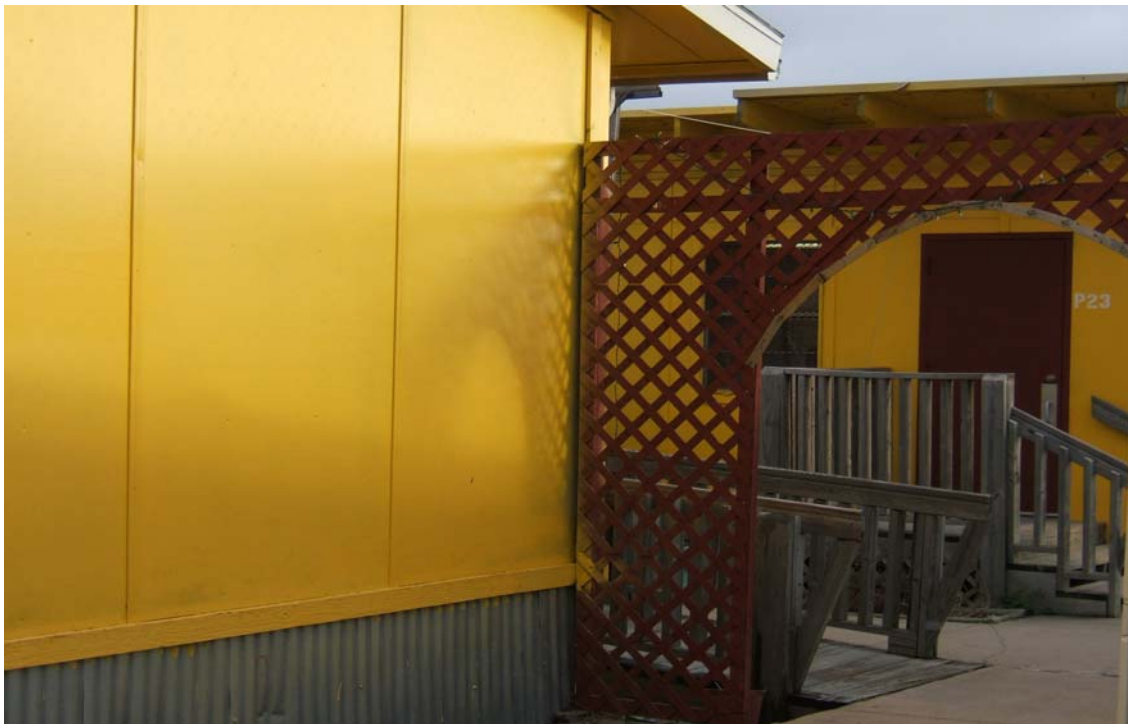
Figure 3: The Yellow Vietnamese Portables

My parents fled Vietnam at the fall of Saigon in 1975. The decision to leave their home and the process of reconstructing a life in the United States, even after thirty years, continues to be a heart-wrenching struggle. I remember my mother often asking me why I had no Vietnamese friends. Growing up I was typically the only Vietnamese student in my classes and often, the only Asian kid. In high school, I knew there were other Vietnamese students on campus and I would occasionally see them at lunch. But it was not until I took my required semester of health with the girls' basketball coach out in the portables that I encountered these other Vietnamese students. It was easier to reason with my mother, "There just aren't any other Vietnamese students in my classes." It was and still is difficult for me to admit that I felt embarrassed whenever I'd run into the other Vietnamese students on my way to health class. The narrow path that led to these prefabricated mobile units precluded any attempts to avoid the awkwardness of my broken Texas-accented Vietnamese and their heavily accented English. For me, the portables were a place of transience and deviance. This was the place to which recent immigrant students and academic failures were relegated.

In questioning the VLC teachers about this marginal placement of the program, the responses were varied but seemed to reinforce images of otherness and outsider. Not surprisingly, the teachers informed me that the other classes housed in the portable classrooms were largely "non-essential" or "enrichment" based classes. That is, classes including art, music, physical education, reading remediation, and special education. One teacher responded to a question about this placement saying,

> It's okay to be out here. Um, I don't have to be in the classroom, but I'd rather be in a classroom where I'm closer to the school. Out here I feel more segregated. I feel like we pull out the kids already and we, they're gonna seem like we're just taking them. So, it's already feeling like

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segregation and being out here in the portable, *all* the way out here, away from the school, makes it worse. So if we were closer to the school, you know, being out in the portable is okay, but if we were closer to the school, not so much way out here and maybe like, you know, have more, you know, being closer to the classrooms would be, I think would be better, but, *somebody* has to be out here. (Interview transcript, 01.18.06)

Explaining her frustration with this out-of-the-way location, another teacher talked about the littlest students, pre-kindergartners with their very short legs. When it was time for these students to come to the portables for their time with the VLC teachers, they were picked up by either the Vietnamese teacher or teaching assistant from the regular classrooms. Because the school serves so many students, there are multiple classes at each grade level. The lower grade levels were particularly large. Thus, the children participating in the VLC program must first be picked up from numerous classrooms. Once all the students had been gathered in one area, they formed two single file lines, one line of boys and one line of girls. They walked with their hands clasped behind their backs and were asked to show the teacher their "bubbles." So, with their cheeks puffed up and lips in tight buds, they made their way to the portables. By the time their short legs carried them all the way out to the portables and allowing for time to return to the main building, there was typically only thirty minutes of the forty-five allocated left for instructional time with these students. While some of the other VLC program teachers did express some desire to be in the regular classrooms in the main brick building where they would have more space and access to different school resources, they also saw challenges that precluded such a move.

One teacher suggested, with a hint of disapproval, that "we are just too loud." She described incidents of parents who caused disturbances whenever they were in the main building yelling down hallways in conversation with other parents that happened to be

there or disrupting classes as they looked for their children. Including the teachers themselves in this assessment, the teacher indicated that the disciplinary practices of some of the VLC program teachers too reached levels that were uncomfortably loud for her. Another laughingly replied in the same manner with regard to the community's undisciplined social etiquette. A number of the teachers also suggested that they were simply tired of being moved around from classroom to classroom every year. So, being housed in this less desirable place allowed more stability in some ways.

Place-Making on the Margin

My own initial reaction to the placement of the Vietnamese program portables was one of outrage as I recalled my own experiences of such places. It was not until subsequent visits that my anger receded and I came to a different understanding of this place. Over time practices enacted in this space that countered the uneven development of social relations and the effects of being othered were revealed. Upon closer examination of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program portables, evidence of place-making abounded. The space was enclosed by fencing handmade out of natural fibers with arched wooden trellises framing each entryway. These were decorated with strands of white light. Additionally, small gardens were planted, where a water fountain and pond had been installed there was a great growth of jasmine vines that perfumed the air, make-shift tents covered the walkway between the two portables to provide shade and cover, and brick was laid down to create an outdoor area with picnic tables.

On several occasions during my visits to the portables, passers-by expressed admiration and appreciation for this space. Because the majority of the pre-kindergarten

students came to school speaking only Vietnamese, I offered to assist one afternoon with classes of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students while *Dr. Tộc* was out of town. The Anglo substitute teacher commented, "This is a neat area you have here," indicating the exterior arrangement and decoration. On another occasion, while conducting an interview with one of the VLC program teachers at a table just outside the portables, we noticed construction management folks from the district offices walking quickly towards us checking off portable room numbers from their list. Upon reaching the VLC program portables, they lingered. The teacher I was with informed them, "these are the Vietnamese portables." One replied that she could see the Asian influence and that she thought it was charming. On a third occasion, during a meeting with Vietnamese parents and the VLC program teachers, a high ranking district official who had visited the campus on a learning walk earlier in the week too complimented the Vietnamese teachers on the communal space they had created there.

Figure 4: Asian Architectural Influences

Figure 5: Jasmine Vine and Pond

Further evidence of place-making was found within the portable classrooms. Posters on the walls recalled rural Vietnam. They featured scenes of Vietnamese peasant farmers attending to water buffalo, workers harvesting sea salt, and fishermen dragging large nets. Multicolored pastel paper lanterns painted with spring blossoms and dragons hung from the ceiling of another classroom and miniature replicas of instruments from Southeast Asia decorated the space.

Figure 6: Tending Waterbuffalo

Figure 7: Harvesting Sea Salt

Figure 8: Fishing

Handmade charts and posters of Vietnamese diacritic marks and common Vietnamese exhortations of character development also adorned the walls and emphasized such things as respect for elders and self-discipline. For example, one laminated drawing depicted a child bowing to an adult with the following phrase beneath it: *Đi phải thưa, về phải trình*—that is, every time you depart and return, you must respectfully report it to your elder—while another discusses the virtue of self-control in all areas of one's life including eating, speaking, smiling, and playing. Such exhortations exemplify what the program director has promised the parents is the aim of this program: *Tiên học lễ, hậu học văn*, that is, "First above everything we learn the ceremony and ritual of respectful

and   virtuous   living,   and   then   we   learn   letters."

Figure 9: Practicing Respect

Figure 10: Practicing Self-Control

Enacted Spaces

Place-making entails more than simple aesthetic and material arrangements though. For these students, teachers, and parents, this place is imbued with a strong sense of community that draws students back to this place over the years, attracts new families into the community, fosters constant engagement between parents and teachers, and maintains mutually beneficial relations with local businesses and professionals within the community. In explaining why they teach in this program many of the teachers spoke of their keen sense of empathy with the students as a result of their own experiences as English Language Learners.

Cô Trang is a novice teacher who came to the United States when she was a child. This is her second year teaching pre-kindergarten through second grade in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. She too became acquainted with this program through a mutual friend mentioned earlier, *Cô Hoà,* and began volunteering with the after school program while attending school to become teacher certified. She is an extremely soft-spoken lady who stands only inches taller than her tallest second grade student. Recounting her own experience and frustration as an English Language Learner with very little language support *Cô Trang* said:

> I just remember a lot of looking up in dictionaries and because I, my parents didn't speak English, I was pretty much on my own once I'm at home. Just looking up words after words. And, um, I remember in middle school where I had to take a history class. There were so many words. And then, even after I looked up this whole paragraph, I still couldn't understand it because I didn't know which one's a verb, which one's an adjective to go with which and so I got so frustrated. I just tore the textbook! I tore it, I was so mad (laughs). It was because I couldn't understand it. Like, after, imagine like, you sat there after an hour of translating this paragraph and you try to, no, looking up words and put it on top of each word (motions with her hands repeatedly in the air in front of her moving from dictionary to text) and trying to put it together in

Vietnamese and it still doesn't make any sense (laughs). Awwwww! (exasperated) That was tough. (Interview Transcript, 12.20.05)

In another interview she spoke of knowing the kinds of challenges and difficulties that newcomers and second language learners faced. She recounted an incident with one newcomer enrolled at the school.

> When they [newcomers] come down to us, that's their comfort zone. They able to express and speak in a foreign, uh, in their native tongue. We have a kid this year who is a first grader, newcomer. He's an extreme case where he still experiences a lot of culture shock. At the beginning of the year, he literally would run out to the parking lot on bare foot, cause he, he just didn't want to be at school, he just wanted to go home and eventually, he, he, a little bit calmer, but he wants to stay with us [the Vietnamese teachers]. He didn't want to go to the classroom with the classroom teacher and the other kids at all. He just want to stay down here because that's where he feel comfortable…. So, for newcomers, I think it's a big refuge. (Interview Transcript, 12.20.05)

Because she spoke Vietnamese and was familiar with the culture, *Cô Trang* thought she could use her knowledge and experience to help Vietnamese children. Other teachers expressed similar feelings of being able to relate and empathize with the experience and difficulties of learning a new language. One teacher, *Cô Tiên,* described having to learn not one, but two new languages as an adult as a result of first leaving Vietnam to live in the United States and then later moving to Canada. She too suggested that these experiences provided a window into understanding how to teach language learners. *Thầy Phúc,* an upper grade level teacher who arrived in the United States in his early twenties as a part of the first wave of Vietnamese refugees, has taught in the VLC program for ten years and is fondly called "Daddy" by many of his students. He too drew upon his own language learning experience to relate to and encourage his students:

> I came here without knowing English and the first year went to college, it was hard but I make it. So, you know, I always example to them, you

know. It doesn't matter how smart, whoever you are, but you try hard, you will succeeded. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

At the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year, *Dr. Tộc* and *Cô Tiên,* both half time teachers, had retired from their teaching positions. As a result, a former student and a long time volunteer with the program filled the vacancy. *Cô Oanh* had just completed a degree in elementary education and had also worked as a teaching assistant with the program for a number of years. She explained how her experiences as a second language learner influenced the way she approached teaching the Vietnamese students now. She said:

> Going back to the mainstream classroom, the English classroom, it was only, you might get a couple of words and then you miss out cause you're trying to understand, you know. If the teacher's teaching about fish, you might understand two three words out of the whole lesson and you're trying, you know, to comprehend that much, just the words. So, it was hard. Reading was hard because we would sit. I remember we'd sit and just read and I, I hated reading aloud and that's why I don't make my students read aloud. I hated it because I didn't know how. It was hard, it was very hard. But in the Vietnamese program, I felt more comfortable. (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06)

She went on to describe how this, the Vietnamese program, was the place where she felt confident and where she wasn't afraid to learn. "I wasn't scared to learn English because I knew that there were some people there to help me. I wasn't scared to learn English. Whereas if I didn't have the Vietnamese, I would struggle" (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06). The remaining participants did not express these particular feelings of empathy, but did speak to the importance of the cultural aspects of the program. Although *Thầy Nghĩa*, a new teaching assistant, was born in Vietnam, he arrived in the United States as an infant. He said:

> …growing up in N—, I never learned Vietnamese, I never learned much about my culture, I never learned anything. Um, I knew, the only thing I

learned was to stay in school, to respect elders, and uh, not talk back, you know. But I never learned like the history of Vietnam or anything about Vietnam…. Sometimes I see these students, I compare how they, you know, how they were and how I was when I was little and these, I, I was jealous. I was like, 'Man, I wish I had something like this growing up' and having uh, uh, I guess someone of my own culture know more and teach me more about growing up, how to respect, *thưa đàng hoang* [speak appropriately], you know, *kính chào* [respectfully greet others], and you know, when you give something, give with two hands not with one hand. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

Out of these conversations, the teachers' sentiments largely suggested that "this is where I belong. This is where my heart is." (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06). *Cô Oanh* says, "…there's so many, I see that there're so many Vietnamese kids that need this support." (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06). Because the majority of the students in this program are assessed and determined to have limited English proficiency, they have at least one marker associated with being treated as "at-risk" students.

In addition to being English Language Learners, the students served by the Vietnamese Language and Culture program come from mostly low-income families and linguistically isolated homes. Of the nearly 200 students, 72% were designated English Language Learners and 75% were eligible for free and reduced lunch during the 2004-2005 school year[17]. In collecting local newspaper articles related to the Vietnamese community in the area and listening to the Vietnamese teachers talk, a portrait of a young community striving to establish itself is painted; some through further education, many through creating opportunities for their children. Yet, for these immigrant parents, opportunities are limited. Most of these parents "work in restaurants, as assembly line

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[17] These figures were shared with the VLC program teachers at their request by the school principal. They were used to write a proposal to the school district requesting the creation of an additional position to assist with written and spoken translation so as to better serve the school's Vietnamese community. The proposal is attached in the appendix (see Appendix G).

workers, jobs where English is not necessary" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.01.04). A local newspaper article reported that the Texas Cosmetology Commission has offered its manicurist licensing test in Vietnamese now for sixteen years and that more than two out of every three persons who passed the test was of Vietnamese descent in 2002 (Staff, 2002, paragraph 40). A woman who had recently received her manicurist license was the focus of this article; she was married to an engineer and held a degree in English from a university in Vietnam. A couple of articles addressed the concerns of local officials who perceived a lack of cooperation from Vietnamese communities due to a long standing distrust of a corrupt government in their own country. Other articles tell stories of Vietnamese immigrants arriving in the U.S. not knowing anyone, not speaking the language, not knowing how to turn the heater on to keep warm, not possessing the cultural capital that might facilitate transitioning into an American way of life. They tell stories of the trials Vietnamese refugees from earlier waves suffered and who now attend to the needs of more recently arrived immigrants as their life's work.

More recent newspaper accounts look at how families are attempting to raise their children to be successful in American society and to keep cultural traditions alive. In one of these articles, a Vietnamese community leader said "we learned a lesson from people who came here 20 years ago. People taught their kids English and they forgot Vietnamese." He suggested that Vietnamese identity means more than knowing the language though, "it means learning cultural history, like the trau cau legend. The legend is so poetic. These two words recall a whole history. If you don't know the story, they're

just words" (Staff, 2002)[18]. Most of these articles were framed as stories of acculturation and challenges of achieving the "classic melting pot." In some, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program was featured as contributing to this American melting pot.

Information provided on the school's website regarding the Vietnamese Language and Culture program states that:

> The goal of the program is to mainstream the students in a time frame of 2-3 years. Students spend from 45 minutes to 90 minutes in the Vietnamese classroom. The length of time depends on the student's needs.

Friday is reserved as Vietnamese Culture Day in which the children and teachers speak only Vietnamese and subjects such as history and cultural activities take place during the day such as singing, dancing, drawing, and other arts and crafts related to the culture. The purpose of this day is to instill appreciation for their heritage.

For the teachers and teaching assistants involved in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, this program is often spoken of as a "bridge between the school and the community." Beyond teaching the students, these teachers are involved in many other aspects of the community. One teacher says, "I think the Vietnamese program in some way is providing a social service not just to the kid but to the community as a whole" (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04). The following sections look at a typical day of English language instruction, Vietnamese Culture Day, and the activities of the after school program.

During my initial visits to this space at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, I was confronted by a jarring dissonance. My own experience of classrooms were

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[18] The legend of trau cau recounts the story of two brothers and the wife of the elder brother. It is a tragic story ending with all three turned in symbols of great attachment and loyalty. These symbols include the

informed by an orchestrated order structured by teachers, enclosed spaces that were untroubled by outsiders, the quiet of busy minds occupied by tasks of laboring to get it right only occasionally interrupted by an announcement over the intercom or an infrequent fire drill or disciplinary actions taken by the teacher to correct an errant child. The next sections, though, highlight the ways in which the Vietnamese Language and Culture program operates that make it more akin to a community center rather than a traditional school instructional program.

A Typical Day of English Instruction

The first classes I observed were classes of first and second graders. The Vietnamese teacher for these classes was *Cô Tiên*, a successful businesswoman who has a background in sociolinguistics. She worked part time teaching in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program and half-jokingly informed me that with the money she made from teaching she was able to have her lawn mown. She taught though, in part, as a favor to the program director and because she "fell in love with the little ones." In the morning, she taught classes and spent her afternoons attending to her business. During the 2004-2005 school year, she taught the "low students."[19]

The classroom was organized so that there was a large open carpeted space for the students to participate in different activities. The small child-sized tables were located

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betel leaf, areca nut, and a sliver of lime. Individuals partake in these three at the celebration of a young couple's engagement and marriage.

[19] At the end of each school year, the VLC teachers divide the students in rising grade levels into "low" and "high" students according to their perceived abilities in reading and writing. According to a lower grade level teacher, they strive to keep the class of "low students" as small as possible so that students receive more individualized attention.

toward the back of the room each with three small chairs. There were two larger half-circle tables, one in the very back of the room, the other near the doorway. This second half-circle table was occupied by the program director. There was a dry erase board in the front of the classroom indicating that the students would be handing in their daily homework and taking a spelling test. In the far corner of the room was a reading center and along one wall computer stations. The opposite wall was lined with bookshelves. Various instructional posters often found in elementary school classrooms showcasing the alphabet, punctuation marks, sight words, appropriate behavior, etc. hung from the walls. There were also handmade laminated posters of Vietnamese diacritic marks, scenes from Vietnam, and pictures of the previous year's Lunar New Year celebration.

When I arrived that morning, *Cô Tiên* was busy setting up the classroom, taking chairs off of tabletops and rearranging the tables to create more space in which to maneuver. *Dr. Tộc* was meeting with a parent at her table where she had spread out her planning book and various other papers. While *Cô Tiên* was arranging and putting items away, we exchanged pleasantries, "*Chào Cô Tiên. Cô Tiên khỏe không?*" "*Khỏe, Sương.*" The morning bell rung, the pledge of allegiance and the Texas pledge were recited, a moment of silence observed, and announcements were made over the school intercom. Another parent entered the portable to drop off a form regarding her student's dental health and was directed by the teaching assistant to bring it to the nurse or the front office. *Cô Tiên* then informed me that she had to leave early to take care of business and asked if I would mind reading to the students and checking their comprehension when she left. I agreed to do so. The second grade students arrived shortly thereafter with the teaching assistant, *Cô Lan.*

There were nine students, two girls and seven boys. Each child greeted their teacher and *Dr. Tộc* as they arrived, *"Thưa Cô Tiên con mới tới." "Thưa Cô Tộc con mới tới."*[20] *Cô Tiên* prompted the students in both Vietnamese and English to take out their homework. They were to have written in their journals and brought them back to be checked over for proper grammar and spelling. As she checked each one, the students were rewarded with a string of compliments, "very good job," "excellent," "awesome" and some were allowed to choose stickers from a tin for a job well done. After all the journals were looked over, the students took their spelling test. Paper rustled as students flipped to a clean sheet in their spelling notebooks. *Cô Tiên* stood in the center of the room waiting for the silence of readiness. She began the spelling test by giving the students a word, using it in a sentence, then repeated the word several times, over-exaggerating consonants and vowels. She reminded the students to sound out the words as they attempted to write them down. The telephone near the doorway rang. *Dr. Tộc* answered and informed the person on the other end of how lunch was conducted at the school, that they were to purchase lunch tickets for the students ahead of time and that there was paperwork to be filled out to determine if the child was to receive free, reduced or regular lunches. This conversation took place in Vietnamese and rather loudly. I was to find out later on that *Dr. Tộc,* who is in her early seventies had some hearing loss. Another parent walked in at that moment carrying a large brown paper bag. Parents with students in the Vietnamese program are asked to purchase a second set of school supplies for their children to use during their time with the Vietnamese program teachers. This parent brought supplies for her child as well as dropped off supplies for the child of a

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[20] These translate to, "teacher Tien, I have arrived" and "teacher Toc, I have arrived."

friend. Some of the students took notice of the commotion, others were lost in their own thoughts. One student, a newcomer, was distracted and his teacher reprimanded him in Vietnamese. *Cô Tiên* threatened to call the child's grandfather. She then directed the students to write sentences using their spelling words. The phone rang again, *Cô Lan* answered it and informed the teacher that the office needed someone to attend to a Vietnamese kindergartener in a regular classroom as the homeroom teacher was having difficulties with the child. So, she left to attend to the matter as *Cô Tiên* wrote new spelling words on the dry erase board for the students to copy. She told the students that they must hurry because "we don't want to lose time because time is very precious." Definitions of the new words were given in Vietnamese at the newcomer's request. *Cô Lan* returned with another woman, *Cô Liễu*, who also works with the program though her duties are largely limited to monitoring the cafeteria and caring for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students after school until their parents arrive. *Cô Lan* and *Cô Liễu* sat with *Dr. Tộc* and talked softly. When the students finished copying the new spelling words, *Cô Tiên* placed a book in front of each student. Students volunteered to read. *Cô Tiên* reprimanded a couple of boys in Vietnamese for not paying attention and following along with their fingers as she asked them to, pointing to each word as it was read. After they had read aloud, *Cô Tiên* introduced me to the class, "This is *Cô Thu Sương*, she is going to read a story to you. I want you to listen carefully because *Cô Thu Sương* reads *beautifully*. She reads English *very* well." Somehow, these same sentiments that sounded provincial and off-putting when expressed by others who were surprised that I lacked an Asian accent, instead embarrassed me when spoken by this Vietnamese woman whose own spoken English was marked by a thick Vietnamese accent. She left and I read. When

it was time for the students to leave, they formed two lines according to their homeroom teachers. As they filed out, they all ceremoniously said their goodbyes to *Dr. Tộc, "Thưa Dr. Tộc con đi về" "Thưa Cô Tộc con đi về"* some referring to her as doctor others as teacher. She called back to them that they must show me the same respect. They didn't remember my name and one child asked *Dr. Tộc* to remind them of it. She did. Calling out in unison in their childish voices they reported to me that they would be leaving now, *"Thưa Cô Thu Sương con đi về!"*

Dr. Tộc taught the next group of first grade students. They arrived with *Cô Lan* who had slipped out earlier to pick up the students and bring them back to the portables. There were fourteen, eleven boys and three girls. When the students were seated, *Dr. Tộc* began by explaining the procedures for those who attended the after school program with the Vietnamese program teachers. She told them that she would be keeping track of their behavior by placing a star on a chart next to their name. If by the end of the week students had a certain number of stars, then they would be allowed to pick out a treasure from the treasure chest. All of this she explained in English. She then shifted into Vietnamese and explained what would happen if they could not find a way to behave. She would not have anything to do with sending students to the principal's office. She would not be sending them **anywhere**. Instead, she told them, she would be taking the yard stick she held in her hands to their bottoms as she brought the stick crashing down on a nearby tabletop. She went on to tell the students that if they continued to behave as "animals," she did not want to see their faces in the classrooms, that she would put a brown paper bag over their heads and they would be made to *quỳ gối,* kneel in the corner of the room with their arms folded and their faces to the wall. We, the students and I,

were convinced that this little woman who stood no taller than four feet eight inches was serious. The rest of the lesson went fairly smoothly.

After these first two classes, I stayed and joined the Vietnamese team for lunch which doubled as their half hour long team meeting time. My friend and primary informant, *Cô Trang*, had been asked by the team to act as their team leader for the year and these meetings were held in her classroom. The teachers busied themselves with heating up their lunches. One teacher had brought enough food to share with the others. They often shared their meals. Many times these were Vietnamese vegetarian dishes as *Dr. Tộc* does not consume meat as a part of her Buddhist practice. As they were preparing lunches, *Dr. Tộc* recounted for the other teachers what I had witnessed not too long ago. She laughingly told them of how she had threatened the first graders and how terrified they were. Giving us all a look of exaggerated innocence she said, "But *I* would never do such a thing."

We sat at a child sized semi-circular table and the team discussed issues that had arisen during the previous several days. *Cô Trang* informed the team that there would be no faculty meeting that month. The newcomer I had seen earlier in *Cô Tiên's* class came up during the team meeting. He had been sent home on a school bus the previous day because, although he protested, he was unable to tell the teacher ushering him onto the bus that he was supposed to stay after school with the Vietnamese teachers. On another occasion, one of the Vietnamese teachers called home after this same student did not come to school and discovered that the grandfather he didn't believe the child needed to go to school that day as he had no homework the previous evening. *Cô Trang* added to the levity of this discussion relaying how many of her pre-kindergarten students, newly

christened with Western names, did not know or respond to these names. Even though all teachers on the campus were provided with lists of students regarding who was to go home on the bus, who was to be picked up by a parent, or who was to attend the afterschool program, there was still utter confusion and chaos in attempting to identify these students by their official "school name." *Cô Trang* spent weeks explaining to the students "this is the name you use at school" and "this is the name you use at home." One child stubbornly refused to use her "school name" and corrected her Vietnamese teacher over and again explaining that she did not want to be called by this Anglo name, that her name was *Mai.*

Dr. Tộc then raised issues of her hurt feelings that Vietnamese community leaders had recently confronted and chastised her because they suspected that she reported a Vietnamese family to "American" authorities about potentially harmful practices conducted in a student's home. She told us that she had suspected it, but that she had not reported any such thing. She assured us that she would not concern herself with these issues any longer and that none of the other Vietnamese teachers should either, that they should just leave such matters to *"mấy Cô Mỹ"*—that is, the American teachers. Still venting and to demonstrate her tireless work for the parents and community, she recounted the number of parents who kept calling and showing up in the class that morning to ask for help. Others joined in the tirade exasperated at how "Vietnamese parents don't read" and "Vietnamese parents don't listen" even though these teachers spend vast amounts of time translating school documents and letters into Vietnamese so that parents are included and knowledgeable of activities and meetings. Even so, the Vietnamese program teachers spent the rest of their lunch discussing how they might find

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a full time translator so they could focus on teaching[21]. On many occasions thereafter, I was to hear the teachers express their feelings that the program would not work without the support of the parents.

Responding to my query about the seemingly constant interruptions throughout the day, *Dr. Tộc* explained:

> {It has always been like that, that's why we asked for *Cô Tiên* to be there now and now it's less pressure on the teachers so that they can teach better and because *Cô Tiên* is there to take off a lot of those problems. That's why we were able to ask for that person extra. The extra position is for that.}[22] For the twenty-three years I was there, I have been doing the same thing all the time. Parents come, parents call, all the time, during class time, during my lunch time. I never have lunch. I don't mind, because I don't gain weight (laughs). (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

Of course, the account of a typical day provided here cannot simply be superimposed or projected onto the other classrooms and practices or even these same teachers and classes from day to day. In the lower grades, the students sang songs, learned to recognize letters and words, read, learned punctuation, constructed and sequenced sentences, played word games, and wrote stories and drew accompanying pictures. These activities were conducted as a whole class and individually and, in one class, at different learning centers in small groups. The daily agendas at the upper grade levels reflected a strict adherence to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) guidelines that corresponded with the objectives to be mastered for the new state exams,

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[21] Out of this conversation, I offered to write a proposal (see Appendix G) that was sent to the school district's superintendent, an associate superintendent, and the district director for bilingual education requesting the addition of a half-time position for just this purpose. *Cô Trang* and I discussed strategies for making this a strong case and out of these conversations parents were tapped to support the proposal. They wrote their own letter to the school district officials which were translated into English by the Vietnamese teachers. This position was approved and funded as a full time position for this school year. After *Cô Tiên* retired from teaching as a part time teacher with the program, she was rehired in this position as a community liaison and translator.

the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Differing styles of teaching and discipline came across clearly in my observations. *Dr. Tộc* seemed to rule her classes through fear, *Cô Trang* through clear structures and objectives, *Thầy Phúc* through positive reinforcement and careful consideration of relations, *Cô Oanh* through the promise of fun, *Cô Thi* through strict discipline, and *Thầy Nghĩa* through negotiation. Along with these various teaching methods, disciplinary preferences, personalities, the time of day, the weather, the curricular content, the time of year, occasions when the need for unplanned class discussions around bullying or abuse arose, the revolving door of "drop in" parents, etc. all served to produce unpredictable scenes in every classroom every day.

As mentioned earlier though, the school district had instituted measures thought helpful in standardizing curricula and teaching practices across the district and subject areas in the form of daily instructional guides (DIGs). These determined at every grade level what would be taught every day, what supplementary materials should be used, and how many minutes ought to be allocated to each subject area. The Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers all expressed frustration with these guides as they did not allow time for the individualization of instruction for which they too were accountable. Additionally, Friday Culture days had to be taken into consideration for the Vietnamese program. Since one day of the week was devoted to instruction in Vietnamese around Vietnamese culture and tradition, designated objectives and goals required of "regular" instruction as detailed by the DIGs had to be packed in to four days instead of five. These particularly significant to the upper grade level teachers who expressed a greater degree

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[22] Here as elsewhere, large portions of transcripts in brackets were translated from the Vietnamese by the

of anxiety regarding this squeeze of curriculum into a shorter timeframe as their students had to be prepared for the state standardized exams.

A Typical Vietnamese Culture Day

I arrived at the school just as the VLC program teachers were to have lunch and their team meeting. During that half hour, the telephone in *Cô Trang's* classroom rang four times. Each time, she answered and took care of the matter at hand. One of these calls concerned a four year old child from a neighboring school district whose grandfather had attempted to enroll her at Pecan Springs that morning. Because the grandfather did not know that she could have been enrolled in school as a three-year old so long as she turned four by a designated date—stipulations under which this particular child qualified—he did not take her to register with her home school until she had turned four. By this time, her home school would not enroll another child in order to be in compliance with state laws regarding student teacher ratios and class size. Having explained this in broken English to the school administrators at Pecan Springs, he was turned away. Sensing that this man did not understand the situation, the administrators telephoned the Vietnamese teachers during this time so that they might speak with him. They needed the teachers to explain to him that because the child lived outside the school district, she could not attend this school.

Cô Trang returned to the table and relayed what had transpired. She expressed regret that the grandparent had not been referred to the Vietnamese teachers first so that they could explain district transfer policies to him. Now, the child would miss a whole

researcher.

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year of school. The lower grade level teachers, of whom *Cô Trang* is one, suggested that even though their pre-kindergarten numbers were already swollen, they would have taken the child anyhow. But, because the man had already revealed that he came from another district, they had no recourse. One of the teachers noted that with the arrival of their new school principal, who at that time had served in this capacity for one year, there seemed to be greater scrutiny around the authenticity of students' home addresses. He suggested that the school administration had even attempted to recruit him as a "spy" in order to decipher between the "legal" and "illegal" transfer students.

Following the team meeting, I observed a class of fifth graders. The teacher, *Thầy Phúc*, is a man of slight build in his late forties. He came to the United States when Saigon fell and became a teacher somewhat by accident. Family circumstances demanded that he return to Texas. Not knowing how long he'd be there and what he would do, he began to volunteer with the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Shortly thereafter, a teaching position with the program became available and he was asked to join the Vietnamese team. He said,

> …the Vietnamese kids, they very well-behaved, they well obedience and the parents, they support us and [I] said 'Well, it's really fun,' so, I try it. And I thought maybe, you know, the program might not last that long because that time still have refugee come from Vietnam and the newcomer, the parents still learning English, don't know English and the students still learning their English. So, I thought just maybe a few years the program might die out. So, then, then I can go back to practice to be [designer]. But then the program keep growing and growing, so, then I stay here (laughs). So, so here I am to this day. I'm still staying here and it's going stronger. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

He has taught in this program for over ten years and many of the students call him Daddy. His classroom is neat and orderly with a row of bookshelves against one wall, a dry erase board hanging from an adjacent wall, and computers lined up against a third

wall. While the classrooms for the lower grades were brightly decorated, this classroom tended toward minimalist with a map of Texas on one wall, the Declaration of Independence adhered to the refrigerator door, and posters of procedural instructions. Over the course of this study though, there were new additions to the classroom including a foosball and ping pong table. There were five round tables arranged such that one was in the center of the room and the others constituted the corners of a square surrounding it. Atop each table was a copy of that day's newspaper.

Unlike the lower grade level students, the upper grade level students were not accompanied by an adult and so did not arrive at the portables all together. Instead, they arrived in small staggering groups. As the students arrived they greeted their teacher with arms folded across their chests, bowing slightly, *"Thưa Thầy Phúc con mới tới."* There were seventeen students, nine girls and eight boys. For days on which the students are provided with English language instruction, the students are divided into two classes. But for Vietnamese Culture Day, the two fifth grade classes are combined as *Thầy Phúc* is more proficient in Vietnamese than the other upper grade level teacher. He began that day's lesson by reminding the students that they were going to take a spelling test and that they should take out a sheet of paper. He did so in Vietnamese. During their Friday lessons with the VLC program teachers, the students are expected to speak in Vietnamese, the teachers do likewise.

The list of spelling words was taken from a piece of poetry, *Đêm Mùa Hạ*, describing a summer night in Vietnam: sad, scatter, slight movement, mosquito, summer, hurry, cricket, humid, scenery, insistent were some of the words they'd studied. The students exchanged papers and checked the words against those *Thầy Phúc* had projected

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on a wall. Because most of the students failed the test, *Thầy Phúc* asked that they share reasons why they had performed so poorly so that they could discuss ways of helping each other. Some answered that they had simply forgotten about the test while others said that it was difficult to remember which diacritic marks to use and where to place them. In discussing this, *Thầy Phúc* reminded the students of a proverb they had talked about the Friday before about how the Vietnamese are respectful and that respect comes before everything else. In their approach to school, the students needed to respect their teachers, what their parents do for them so that they have better futures, that they needed to respect education and learning by taking their responsibilities as a student seriously. The test scores would not be held against them this time. The class moved on to a new set of vocabulary words also drawn from a poem. These were discussed and then it was story time. Students enthusiastically thrust their hands in the air waving them wildly to be picked. *Thầy Phúc* chose an Amerasian student who promptly went over to the teacher's stool, sat, and began to tell his story in Vietnamese. He told the class about a car accident he witnessed earlier in the month. Once he'd finished telling his story, *Thầy Phúc* told the class a popular Vietnamese tale about a hard working boy who worked for a dubious man with a beautiful daughter. It was the story of the hundred-eyed bamboo. The beautiful daughter was promised to the boy if he was able to accomplish what the dubious man believed to be an impossible task; to find one bamboo stem so tall it contained a hundred knots and to split it into pairs of chopsticks for the wedding feast. But because he was hardworking and honest, a mystical being with magical powers was revealed to him and helped him to accomplish this task and marry the beautiful girl.

Vietnamese Culture day at the upper and lower grade levels was very differently enacted. Over the course of a school year, I watched the lower grade level students learn numbers, letters, simple words, the days of the week in Vietnamese during the first month and a half of school. They were read stories in Vietnamese about Vietnamese immigrant children as well as popular Western stories translated to Vietnamese. They also learned Vietnamese proverbs and songs and discussed their meanings. I remember one day walking toward the Vietnamese portables with the pre-kindergarten students. We stopped in front of the community garden and *Cô Trang* pointed out flitting yellow butterflies. She led the students in a song that even I knew—*Kìa Con Bướm Vàng* [There is a yellow butterfly]—they sang and flitted their arms up and down.

Kìa con bướm vàng	Here is the yellow butterfly
Kìa con bướm vàng	Here is the yellow butterfly
Xòe đôi cánh	Spreading her wings
Xòe đôi cánh	Spreading her wings
Tung cánh bay lên trên trời	To fly up in the sky
Tung cánh bay lên trên trời	To fly up in the sky
Ta ngồi xem, ta ngồi xem	We sit and watch, we sit and watch[23]

In preparation for the upcoming celebrations, the pre-kindergarten through second grade students practiced dances for *Tết Trung Thu,* the Mid-Autumn Festival, and *Tết,* the Lunar New Year performances for the next several months during these Friday classes. I spent these days helping to record on paper what the dance steps were for the lower grade levels and helping to sort out great plastic tubs of colorful fabric, clothes, and accessories.

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[23] (Nguyen & Yoon, 1998)

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During these Friday lessons, the desks in the classroom were all pushed up against the walls to create a large enough area so that students could practice their dances. The Vietnamese teachers and I would sit on the ground in this space before the students arrived and fold fabric into neat piles that would be considered later on for possible uses. I would sit and fold, do as told, and listen to the teachers talk about what else needed to be done, where to look for good deals on cloth, other school business that needed to be taken care of, talk about the students, and share news with one another. When at last the clothing available had been sorted through, the teachers measured each child to assign outfits for each. When they were short a number of outfits, the teachers would either purchase additional outfits or sew them themselves.

As students arrived, they were combined together on one side of the portables to learn the dance routines. Teachers conferred with one another and videotapes of Vietnamese musical performances in order to choreograph the dances. Meanwhile, the students sat cross-legged on the carpet their heads tilted back, some way back, to see the television screen. Those who recognized songs from the recordings would sing along and bob their heads from side to side or sit quietly mouthing the words. At the pre-kindergarten level, approximately forty little ones were given directions in the choreography of simple dances. No easy task to say the least. They would eventually learn, some of them through cues in the music, others through staring at their neighbor and never looking out into the pretend audiences, others through the vigorous gesticulations of their teacher at the side-stage, when to form a circle, when to walk in which direction, when to wave their arms in the air. The dances increased in degree of difficulty with each grade level. After the *Tết* celebration, the students continued in their

study of Vietnamese. But, during those days when the students practiced their dances for the New Year's celebration, I observed parents who arrived to pick up their children stand just outside the door looking in and watching the children. On these days, I could see a change in demeanor as parents who typically ushered their children quickly home, hung back to enjoy the music and the children dancing.

At the upper grade levels, students were informed that over the course of the first several months, the teachers would be watching for the students with the greatest literacy abilities in Vietnamese. Those students would be chosen to assist in narrating the New Year's show. As the New Year's celebration approached, the students also participated in creating the decorations for the show including posters of the Chinese Zodiac. These students too participated in the dances and other performances, but were expected to work with university student volunteers in choreographing and practicing these outside of the school day. Thus, for the most part, these students continued in their studies of Vietnamese through poetry and prose during class.

Thầy Phúc described his teaching on Friday Vietnamese Culture Days for the different grade levels:

> Like third grade, I teach them all the short poems, Vietnamese poems. But it teach about, about in the family, how you love your mom, your dad, brother, sister, about that and on the vocabulary. It's like the basic word, maybe two letters, words with two letters, simple one then slowly go to three letters, to short words. And in fourth grade, the poem, it's a little bit longer and it's, because usually I choose most of them, poems, poems it rhyme together, so easy for the kids to remember. And for fourth grade, it's about, because fourth grade they have to do writing for the TAKS, so one, the poems, it use a lot of details and most of it about the countryside, but Vietnamese countryside, all of that. So, they can use, and they have to interpret that and they have to draw that, so they can use their imagination and the vocabularies is a little bit longer. And in, for fifth grade, fifth grade, that's when their hormones kick in (chuckles), have more problems, you know. So, I teach more about, more about Vietnamese morality, the

value, all of that. It's about compassion, caring, caring for another human being, caring for the countries, and it's more, like vocabularies also more bigger words. Yea, so, and some year, I taught sixth grade too. Yea, but now because the schedule conflict, the sixth grade teacher doesn't send them down anymore. But I thought that with the sixth grade, since they like in middle school, so I want to give them knowledge. I taught them about Vietnamese history, how did we start and who was the first founder or the first king, so basically the history for them. But in Vietnamese. And besides that, we keep emphasize on the Vietnamese value, moral, to be proud about their heritage, all of that. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

When I observed these Friday classes at the upper grade levels, I saw lessons describing *cách cư xử đối với cha mẹ*, or appropriate conduct toward one's parents. During the discussion, questions arose around the differences in treatment of parents in the Vietnamese tradition as compared to those in American culture. Students were asked which behaviors they preferred and one answered that she preferred Vietnamese custom because "we belong to Vietnam." Others suggested that American children were very independent and do not have the same degree of familial attachments. Attempting to illustrate the difference, one student said that his family journeys to Vietnam every year to demonstrate the importance of family. Another lesson revolved around a poem, *Thờ Phụng Tổ Tiên,* celebrating ancestors and admonishing children to live in a manner that does not betray the sacrifices our ancestors have made for us and their faith in us. It speaks to the importance of recognizing that just as trees have roots and rivers have an originating source, so do we and that we must not forget this.

When I asked about the degree to which students learn Vietnamese culture in the program, most of the teachers indicated that although Fridays were reserved for Vietnamese language instruction and study of history and customs, the teachers continually encouraged students to practice customs and to adhere to Vietnamese mores and values. One teacher gave an example of how culture is taught not just on Friday, but

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in teaching the students how to conduct themselves every day and how this impinges on his daily teaching:

> …there were the incident, uh, one of the girl, upper grade, fifth grade, she got bullied by the whole group of kids and one of them, one of the boy involved is, he was a Vietnamese student. So, I, and that was on weekday, that wasn't a Friday, so, I stop whatever we teach for that day and even the incident happen in fifth grade, but I know that kids, rumors just spread out fast. I want to stop that, I want to teach them also. So, for third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade, I combine, usually I teach half of the third grade, half the fourth grade, and half the fifth and [the other upper grade teacher] teaches the other half. But when that happen, we combine the two class together. So, we, I start teaching them about the moral Vietnamese, like, like, you have to learn how to behave on first, the most, the first thing that you have to learn is how to respect, behaving, all of that and you can be, you know, it doesn't matter if you are straight A student, but you don't have that respect, all of that, nobody can respect you and you won't be a good person. That how I, I been brought up with, and I also teach them that, you know, they are, the only Vietnamese here, in the program here and I expecting them that they have to take care each other like a big family. So, that's really sad to see that happen. So, we lecture them, make sure that they think back, you know, they are Vietnamese and we have to take care each other and respecting and learn the value of that. So, that is one incident I can remember. And, and during the new year on this, then we can do more on culture, like on dance, like on the art show, like Chinese zodiac or all of that. Then we do extra on weekday. But, but the challenge in there, because we have the [DIG] to follow, so we not sure we, you know, we follow on the [DIG] plus on top to teach, you know, on our culture too. So, we do basically double doses. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

Other teachers echoed similar sentiments:

> *Giống như là nó đi, đi ở ngoài* hallway, *mà*, I see them because I know all of them. So, if they don't say hello or they don't *cúi đầu* or *chào đồ này kia*, okay, I will say, okay, so *mình nhắc nó lại nữa, phải không? Rồi xong cứ mình nhắc nó, rồi mình bắt qua cái chỗ mà*, okay, *con đi về nhà rồi cha mẹ con 'bộ con đi vô con đi học rồi con về rồi con vô rồi con không thưa ba không mẹ hả?' Phải không? Trước khi đi học bộ không* say goodbye to *ba mẹ hả? Bằng cách nào? Phải không? Với lại mà có khách khứa đồ này kia vô nhà chơi bộ đưa cái mặt vậy dòm hả? Thì nghĩa là mình* incorporate anything anytime. We see something, we catch it, and we teach them a lesson. *Rồi còn cái* formal lesson *á, là* Friday. *Giả tỷ nhu* Friday *a, mình mới nói rằng là công cha như núi thái sơn cái mình cho nó học khi bài*

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công cha như núi thái sơn... Your duty as a person. *Bổn phận của con người.* (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

{For example, if they go out in the hallway and I see them because I know all of them. So, if they don't say hello, or they don't bow their heads, or greet me, or do this or that, okay, I will say, okay, so we remind them once again, right? And then when we've reminded them, then we point out to them, okay, when you go home and your father and mother say, 'so when you go to school to learn and then you come home and you come in, you don't greet your father and your mother?' Is that right? So it means that we incorporate anything anytime. We see something, we catch it, and we teach them a lesson. Then there is the formal lesson on Friday. For instance, on Friday, this is when we teach things such as 'the work of our father is like the highest mountains' we let them learn passages like this one…. Your duty as a person. Your duty as a person}. (Interview Transcript translated from the Vietnamese, 11.15.05)

After School and Beyond

Most of the Vietnamese students remained after school with the Vietnamese program teachers. In addition, there were also middle and high school students who participated in the program. During this time, the students were provided with additional academic support and guidance. University volunteers often assisted with homework and entertained the students as each finished. At the lower grade levels, *Cô Trang* allowed the second grade students fifteen minutes to snack before they began after school tutoring. I observed students retrieve rice crackers and packages of ramen noodles from their backpacks while others munched on chips or cookies. During this time, *Cô Trang* also played music to which the children would sing. Many of these songs were traditional Vietnamese songs which students' parents and their parents' parents grew up learning and singing in Vietnam. One song that the students were particularly enthusiastic about was one about a baby toad. They would sing along as some squatted on the ground pretending they too were baby toads.

Ra mà xem cái gì nó ngồi trong góc	Come and see who is sitting in the cave
Nó đưa cái lưng ra ngoài	He shows his back to us
Đó là con cóc	That is Mr. Toad
Con cóc nó ngồi trong góc	Mr. Toad is sitting in the cave
Nó đưa cái lưng ra ngoài	He shows his back to us
Đó là cóc con	It's a baby toad!

When it was time to put snacks away, *Cô Trang* played classical music for relaxation. The students knew that if they needed help, they were to ask two friends before asking their teacher. If the teacher was busy with another student, that student also knew to stand and wait at a particular spot in the room until the teacher was available. There was a quiet orderliness in the room with students occupied by homework their heads bent over their desks. In the other half of the portable, the first grade students were threatened before settling down to their work. *Dr. Tộc* passed out cookies from a large tin to students who had not brought snacks with them. They were to eat quietly and work on their homework. Most parents picked up these students by five thirty. As parents picked up their children, they often stopped in to chat with the teachers as well.

During the afterschool program, I often helped students with their homework or with their reading. Because *Dr. Tộc* was employed as a half-time teacher and was going to retire at the end of the 2004-2005 school year and because she had accumulated hundreds of hours of vacation and sick days, she would take a week off at a time each month. During these weeks when she was absent, the VLC program teachers were able to rely on a substitute teacher who often worked at the school. Substitute teachers though are only paid for a certain number of hours every day and so it became difficult to find

anyone who would stay through the after school program hours. Throughout the 2004-2005 school year, I was called upon on a number of occasions to help watch the students when teachers either had doctor's appointments or when they had to rely on a substitute teacher with whom none of the teachers were acquainted. On the days when *Dr. Tộc* was out of town, I made efforts to help with the after school program and to assist with homework, to help keep order, and to answer questions as I could. Consequently, during the after school hours, it was difficult to track the comings and goings of parents. However, once the majority of the students were picked up, we would often sit and unwind. Parents would come in and sit with us as their kids prepared to leave or refused to leave as was the case on many an occasion. During team meetings on subsequent days, I would hear the teachers recount what parents had discussed with them. Often parents asked for guidance in different matters from the purchase of a computer for their child to marital problems. One family asked to meet regularly with *Dr. Tộc* to help parent and child work out their differences. Other parents wrestled with being able to find jobs that would allow them to drop off and pick up their children. A parent shared his joy at finding a job in a restaurant kitchen which would allow him to pick up his child shortly after school let out allowing him to meet with the teachers and to help his son. This job was in the next town over many miles away and lesser paying than his previous job which was located near to his home. Another parent asked a teacher if she had any knowledge of rumors surrounding health problems related to employment as nail technicians at salons. Her husband had lost his job and she needed to find employment but was concerned for the health of her children and any future children she might have.

There were a sizable number of students who stayed even after the daily tutorials.

Thầy Phúc suggested that the portables are like "their second home" and that:

> …this program it requires more than just teaching only. Because when I first start in here, we didn't have any, like, night activities, after school activity. So, but after I involve in and I got more support from the [University] volunteers, so they come in and they, they want to extend the program to have more martial arts and dragon dance after school. And most of the [University] students, they have to have school during the day so the only time they have left is night time. So, I say, 'Okay, I will stay here to host them' and the students, they cannot, with their parents' work schedule, they cannot go home after school and then come back here on night time. So, I stay here and host them also. So, that how my day…. My every day is from seven thirty to eight thirty or nine o'clock, every day and sometimes on Saturday put on the fieldtrips and the performances all around the town for dragon dancers, so, almost daily. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

Over the years, this aferschool program has relied on the volunteer service hours of university students, especially those involved in a university organization for Vietnamese students. These volunteers offered support in helping to tutor the students, in teaching martial arts, in organizing soccer and football practices and games. At the lower grade levels, the volunteers read with the students, helped with vocabulary and math, and entertained the students while they waited for their parents' arrival. Once all the students had been picked up, many of the volunteers remained at the school to play basketball and entertain themselves until *Thầy Phúc* was ready to leave. They often left for dinner together.

On one occasion, I was informed that *Thầy Phúc* typically drove a small convertible but that when he became a teacher, he bought a van in order to take students on fieldtrips and to take them home when they spent long evenings at school with him. Later, he would buy a recreational vehicle to take students camping. Of the after school program, *Thầy Phúc* said:

…the [VLC] program, it grow bigger and my part is one of the biggest part of the program. Put on the after school program, communicate with volunteers and if I step out, I don't think anybody can take over because it take a lot of times and commitment. And for many volunteers, they're just like any human, you know. They have their own problems too. So, very often, when they come here to teach, they get the children, and after the children gone, they always sit and share with me their problems. So, I more like a counselor at the same time too. So, I sit there and talk with them to comfort them and it takes time. So, a lot of time, that time, I want to do my lesson plan, grade homework, but I couldn't. I want to treat everybody special. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

Thầy Nghĩa, who was a volunteer with the program while in college, was completing his second year working as a teaching assistant in the VLC program during the 2005-2006 school year. He works closely with *Thầy Phúc* and appeared to be following in this tradition of spending a great deal of time with students, taking them places, and motivating the students to learn through practices of "authentic caring" (Valenzuela, 1999). In one conversation, *Thầy Phúc* talked about a book he recently read, Gloria Ladson-Billings' *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.* He said,

…when I first got the book, my reaction was 'Wow, this book, the title is successful teachers of African American children.' I said, 'Well, I'm teaching Vietnamese kids, why should I read that?' But as educator, I was curious to see what's going on out there. So, I read that and basically, you know, I think the children, everybody is the same. And, actually, this book more applicable to like, uh, children with problems, stuff like that and a lot of thing they're doing there, and I say, 'Well, I've been doing that.' Like, make them feel like connect with them, invite them to your house, uh, take them to camping, take them to go see movies, you know. And a lot of troublemakers, and they feel the connect after that and once you make the connection, then they want to please you and they try harder. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

He went on to say, "You know, sometimes I don't feel like, I don't feel like I teaching somebody else kids. I feel like I teach my own children, like home-schooling in a way" (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05). *Thầy Nghĩa* shared with me that he thought that *Thầy*

Phúc "would die a happy man" if one of his former students returned to volunteer with the program.

For this community, the after school program appears to be an integral part of the community. During two meetings with district officials regarding the expansion of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program to the middle and high school levels, parents expressed concerns regarding whether or not an afterschool program would be provided at these levels like the one at Pecan Springs ES. They explained that the after-school program was of great importance because many of them felt as though they were unable to provide the academic support that their children needed and benefited from greatly as a result of the extra time spent with these teachers. Additionally, many of the parents were paid working wages and were not able to be home for their children after school. One parent suggested that the after school program was a very important time for parents as this is a time that is more relaxed and comfortable so that parents may talk freely with the teachers. *Thầy Phúc* explained further that as a teacher, he was required to have two mandatory meetings with parents a year, but that the Vietnamese teachers have daily meetings with parents through the after school program and that this is one reason why the community is so close and supportive. It was not until several other parents voiced this same sentiment and the district bilingual education director conveyed her sense of empathy at also coming from a family of immigrants where her parents too were unable to help with her academic work that the parents were satisfied and convinced that she understood the importance of this aspect of the program.

Beyond this extended work day, the teachers of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program also provided formal classes for the parents and adults in the

community. These courses were offered based on demand from the community and included adult English as a Second Language, preparation courses for attaining General Equivalency Degrees and U. S. citizenship, courses to help parents access and navigate learning resources on the internet, and phonics instruction to encourage parents to read with their children. The strong relationships that the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers fostered within the community were apparent not only in the long hours spent with students and the provision of formal services to the adult community, but also in a myriad of other ways in which the teachers assisted parents and community members with everyday things.

The program director, *Dr. Tộc*, said of the relationship between the program teachers and the community,

> I think that we create a bond, like between the program, between us to the former students from Pecan Springs, so when they come out, go out of here, they still come back for, to need help, if they need help, you know. Or the parents need help, they will come back here. So, that is something that we think that it create a good relationship between the former students, the former families… (Interview Transcript, 11.05.04)

Other VLC program teachers elaborated on the help that *Dr. Tộc* referred to above. One teacher recounted stories of parents asking her if they could write her into their will to name her as their child's guardian and care-taker. *Thầy Phúc* told me of the relationships he has cultivated with the students and their parents. He said of this,

> …the kids love me and, I don't know, they just love me so much because I guess cause I spend so much time with them, sometimes even more than, with, more than with their parents. Their parents love them, but because of their economy reasons, they have to work long hours. Plus they are new in this country, they don't know where to go. And so, I know all the places by growing up here. So, I took the kids everywhere. So, they feel, feel bond with me just like I, you know, their family member. So they just, then slowly call in that. I didn't ask them (chuckles softly) to call me that way. So, anyway, I think with the parents here because they know that

they're too busy and they trust me because I love their children, so they accept me as a family member too…. So, a lot of time I have to be here to be like their counselor because many of them have problem, personal problem. So, they have to come here and talk with me and I have to listen to them and give them a few advice so they…So, I'm lucky that they trust me totally. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

A lower grade level teacher said the following in contrasting the work of the VLC program teachers, which extended into the community through the provision of "social services," with that of the regular homeroom teachers:

I guess in this program, we also have them [outside responsibilities] too. We definitely have them too, if not more. But it's different in the sense that we provide, I think the Vietnamese program in some way is providing a social service, not just to the kid but to the community as a whole. Whereas regular classroom teachers, a lot of the things they do are because of state requirements, district requirements, school requirements. It's just a lot of paperwork that they have to comply to. We have a lot of work in the Vietnamese program, but it's different work. It's helping the parents to help their kids become better students or helping the parents themselves. You know, as you're familiar with, every little thing, like translating documents for them, or teaching ESL classes or…parenting classes. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

She went on to describe the challenges of conducting all of this work within the confines of an instructional program:

Well, everyday challenges include, as you know, parents calling in and asking us to do things or translate or call the school or call the nurse for them. Helping parents fill out forms, even the little things like that, regular classroom teachers don't do that, but we help the parents out because it helps them a lot. You know, a form will take them a whole freaking hour and they still wouldn't know how to figure it out, it takes us fifteen, twenty minutes. But at the same time, that's fifteen, twenty minutes less that we have than, you know, otherwise. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

Because the boundaries of this professional space seemed more permeable and even stretched to include the community's needs, the traditional instructional duties of the teachers were impinged upon. Moreover, because the teachers attempted to be as responsive to community demands as they were able, sectors of the community appeared

not to recognize the challenges they might present to the VLC program teachers. Illustrating this, *Cô Trang* recounted how one parent called assuming the teachers would be available to her at her request:

> Well, mom called me first in the middle of my teaching and said (laughs), seriously, she was like, "*Cô* [*Trang*], can you come at eleven?" I was like, "uh, uh, can you reschedule because I have classes today during that time" "No, I can't reschedule, it's today." [I] said "why don't you give *Cô* [*Tiên*] a call and see how her schedule is" and so, that's how we work with things. Yeah. Yeah. Literally, she called me that day and asked me to show up in an hour. (Interview Transcript, 12.20.05)

But the VLC program teachers continue to attend to these demands with good humor and patience as they are well aware of the many obstacles with which this community must contend. When a place-dependent community comes into contact with communities which do not easily allow for the places desired that may support a community of linguistic and cultural difference along both social and economic dimensions, all must "make do somehow."

The most recent addition to the Vietnamese Language and Culture program faculty, *Cô Oanh*, recounted how the program was helpful for her as a child learning English as well as how it benefited her family. She recalled:

> It was helpful for my mom because she was a woman who had just came to the United States without any English. My dad knew a little English and it was because of the Vietnamese teachers that helped her get me through school or else we wouldn't know how to do the paperwork, we wouldn't know, you know, if I have problems in class, communication would not be as strong, cause my mom wouldn't understand. So, because of the program, and because me going through the program, um, it helped me grow and realize how important it is to keep both languages and you see it clearly now that I'm a Vietnamese teacher, it's very valuable to have both languages and that's what we want the kids to understand too. (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06)

The recognition and appreciation these teachers receive stems not only from the work they do with students at the school, but also from their commitment to serving needs within the community as they arise. Parents show their appreciation through purchasing meals and bringing the teachers homemade treats and vegetables from their gardens. When one teacher purchased a new home, community members offered to help with landscaping and to assist with maintenance of the house. During one interview with *Dr. Tộc*, I learned that she had asked a parent to pick her up after our interview and to take her to school. After a number of short telephone conversations with the parent, it was decided that I would take *Dr. Tộc* to school. I would learn later on from another VLC program teacher that the parent had called the program teachers in a panic because she had agreed to take *Dr. Tộc* to school even though at the time she was in another city three hours away. The parent had tremendous respect for *Dr. Tộc* and did not want to disappoint her.

Cô Trang and I met for lunches and dinners on several occasions. On every one of these occasions, we saw students and parents of the Vietnamese program. At one restaurant, a first grade student writing at a nearby table was urged by his parent to bring *Cô Trang* the sheet of math homework he was working on so that she could look it over. On other occasions, parents would guide their child over to us to greet their teacher and ask after her health. This happened so often that friends joked with her about her "celebrity status." The other teachers too talked about encounters with parents away from the school. One Vietnamese teacher talked about being seen in restaurants and when she asked for the bill finding that a parent had already taken care of it. During an interview, *Thầy Nghĩa* said:

…another positive thing working here is that the community knows you. Oh my goodness. I was like, I cannot go to [the Asian markets around town] and not have a parent run into me. I had, one time…I was at [a home improvement store] and a parent came up to me and asked me to do some shopping with her cause her husband gave her a list of supplies and she didn't know what to do and she couldn't speak English very well so I became a translator just shopping around with her. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

During my time at the school I saw instances of the teachers expanding their community beyond the students and families they served in the capacity of teacher. On two separate occasions, incidents at the school campus involving Vietnamese middle school students and young adult males revealed a sense of community and appropriate social arrangements that seemed not within the campus administrator's understanding of school community. On one occasion, the school principal saw middle school students "destroying campus property." A VLC program teacher explained that these kids were just messing around as they are apt to do. But, the principal called the police to have the students removed. On a second occasion, several Vietnamese men were seen smoking near the portables. The assistant principal reported this incident to the principal and a formal notice went out to teachers to watch out and report this unacceptable behavior. Both times, a number of the Vietnamese teachers were incensed that the principal did not bother to consult with the Vietnamese teachers so that they might handle the situation. Instead, the principal seemed only to acknowledge formally enrolled students as part of the school community and did not recognize that even these middle schoolers and smokers were considered part of the Vietnamese community by the VLC program teachers.

These formal separations defined by school attendance zones and student enrollment were not limited to this campus. The Vietnamese program teachers serve the

students on the campus as well as students around the district in the capacity of translators. In the 2005-2006 school year, *Cô Tiên* had stepped out of her role as teacher and became the parent liaison and translator for the program. At the beginning of the year, she was called on to translate at an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting at another school within the district. The student was a former Pecan Springs student who had been asked to leave the campus as a disciplinary measure. *Cô Tiên* discovered that the child had been, in her estimation, severely disciplined by the child's current campus administration and inquired into what she saw as extreme measures. She was not the child's teacher at Pecan Springs ES, but she knew the student's history and family and worked closely with the child's former teacher. She believed that what she knew of the child would be useful to the ARD committee in better dealing with the child. Instead, she was told that she was not there to ask questions. She was asked to be at the meeting merely to translate for the parent. One teacher recounted the story,

> …they told her it's none of her, basically, you know, that's not her place. She's just there to translate even though we've worked with the kids for years and we know the kid's history, we know the family history, but we have no saying in it. We're just there to translate. (Interview Transcript, 12.20.05)

CHAPTER THREE

ANY PORTABLE IN A STORM: APPROPRIATIONS OF A SUBALTERN

COUNTERPUBLIC

Appropriating Student Transfer Policies

Since the dispersion policy and with a growth in economic stability, the resulting secondary migration of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants finds three-quarters of this population now living in seven states. According to 2000 U. S. census data, the Asian population comprises five percent of the population within the city in which this study takes place. The Vietnamese made up just under one fifth of this number. As noted earlier, the percentage of Asian and Pacific Islanders served by Texas Independent School District is 2.8%. At a recent State Board of Education meeting centered on bilingual education, in particular on structured English immersion, a representative from a large urban school district in a city with at least six times the Vietnamese population than the city in which Pecan Springs ES is situated, reported an estimated 400 Vietnamese English Language Learners in that district and only one program to serve Vietnamese students at an elementary school. Given a history of deliberate dispersion of this small population this is not surprising; however, the percentage of Vietnamese students in attendance at Pecan Springs ES becomes of particular interest and is extremely striking, especially since small populations at local levels too suffer dispersion policies meant to facilitate efficient schooling practices.

Within this large urban district of approximately 50,000+ students, there is an open transfer policy that gives priority to transfers involving siblings, tracking, and a

move from majority to minority campuses. Other intra-district transfers available to the community are magnet, curriculum, and general transfers. In addition, inter-district transfer policies provide for transfer of students to districts where they intend to move to within 45 days[24]. Although the transfer policies intend to provide greater flexibility and choice, for a recent immigrant population, such choices are often exceedingly limited[25]. As schools are not required to provide transportation services to students who live outside the school's attendance zone, families who choose to utilize the transfer options must have the flexibility of schedule and means by which to get their children to and from school. Consequently, student enrollment in schools is largely dictated by efficiency based geographic boundaries and bus routes.

Highlighting these efficiency based practices, in 2004, according to federal measures, a number of schools in Texas ISD did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress standards. This meant that approximately 10,000 students would be eligible for transfers to schools with better performance ratings. In addition, the federal mandate requires that school districts provide transportation for these students as well. A local newspaper

[24] Sibling transfer requests are made for siblings of students who will be attending a school at the same time on an approved transfer; tracking transfers apply to students who have transferred to a school with a history of at least two unbroken years of attendance in the two highest grades offered at the school who want to transfer with their peers to the next level of schooling; majority-to-minority transfers occur when the student's ethnic group makes up over 50 percent of the school's population and is transferred to a school where the student's ethnic group is under 50 percent of the school's population. Interdistrict transfer policies apply to children of families who have established residency in the district and who move to another district. These children may continue as eligible students for the remainder of the semester; temporary transfers for a period of 45 days may be granted when a family who resides outside the district has a home under construction or is waiting to occupy a residence they have purchased or rented in the district; and children of nonresident district employees may transfer into the district school where the parent works or its feeder pattern, if space is available.

[25] Pang, Kiang, and Pak (Pang, Kiang, & Pak, 2004) reported that in 1997 the general U.S. poverty rate for all Americans was 10% while the rates for Southeast Asian Americans were substantially higher. Hmong Americans had a rate of 66%, Cambodians a rate of 47%, Laotian Americans 67%, and Vietnamese Americans 34%.

quoted the district superintendent as saying that for these transfers to occur, the district would have to reassign teachers, add portable classrooms to high-scoring schools that were already at or over capacity, and develop new bus routes. The superintendent estimated that this would cost at least $25,000 per route. He was quoted, "Parents are given a choice to stay in their home campuses, and I hope they will…. We believe students are better off *with their peers and their friends in neighborhood schools*" (Reporter, 2004, paragraph 4, emphasis added). However, the following school year, the school district proposed to its board of trustees that pre-kindergarten students from across the district be bused from their neighborhood schools to new professional development centers focused on early childhood learning. The school district parents and community were alarmed and outraged at this proposal. At the time of this writing, the proposal has stalled at the board level. From public accounts, the pre-kindergarten centers would help to alleviate over-enrollment in particular regions of the district and would be built using currently under-utilized facilities. These measures would provide more cost efficient delivery of services in accordance with district, state, and national level pressures aligned with public sector reform models based on private sector criteria and objectives.

For the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers and parents, these kinds of efficiency measures have posed critical threats to the survival of the program. Even so, through tremendous community commitment and means of 'creative non-compliance' (Fliegel, 1990) in appropriating school transfer and language policies, the Vietnamese community has established and sustained a place for its Vietnamese students at Pecan Springs ES. Because the program does not function solely as an instructional

program and has committed to serving the community according to its desires and needs, the teachers of the program maintain that it is not simply the navigation of formal structures and institutions that sustains the program. Over and above this, strong bonds have been created and nurtured such that the community will follow wherever the program is housed and similarly, the program teachers have promised to serve the students wherever they may be. Over the last couple of decades, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program has gained a reputation for serving not only students well, but also the community. As teachers have joined the Vietnamese team, some have come and departed, but those that remain have largely been inducted into the program first through volunteer work, some then as teaching interns and teaching assistants, and finally teachers with knowledge of all the work this program entails including service to the community. Thus, within the larger highly interdependent ethnic enclave, the program's reputation is well known. As noted earlier, most of the parents involved with this program are recent immigrants with an uncertain command of the English language. Many of these parents work in low wage jobs and are unable to afford housing close to the school and within the district. As is many times the case with place-dependent communities, tight social networks are formed and it is through these networks that new parents are introduced to the program and provided with information needed to navigate school and district attendance policies to their advantage.

Not only did district level practices threaten the program, but school level practices too were implicated in how the VLC teachers negotiated maintenance of their program. Through means of "creative non-compliance," this displaced and scattered Vietnamese community has made a place for its students at Pecan Springs Elementary

School. At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, the VLC program teachers arranged to have a meeting with the school principal regarding the after school program. Because most of the students remained for this year round after school service, the teachers were often unable to participate in campus level meetings held concurrently. In the first weeks of school, the principal demanded that the Vietnamese teachers attend the meetings and that they must serve on school committees. This particular meeting was arranged to discuss alternatives.

The principal arrived at *Cô Trang's* portable classroom at lunchtime to meet with the Vietnamese team during their team meeting. After a quick assessment of the number of students who participated in the after school program, the principal decided that there was no possible way that 200 students could be monitored safely after school without the teachers there. The Vietnamese teachers proposed rotating teachers for the meetings and that whoever attended would then report back to the group. The principal agreed and this issue was quickly settled. Later on that day, I would debrief with one of the teachers about this meeting and was told how this was another example of the principal's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" persona where one day she would behave in domineering and threatening ways and the next would smile and be agreeable.

After the discussion of the after school program and how the Vietnamese teachers would manage with committee duties and attending campus wide meetings, the principal raised the issue of the school's size. She informed the teachers that the school was at 125% capacity and that she had sent a letter to school district level administrators to petition them for relief. This would likely involve a redrawing of the school's attendance boundaries. She explained that as principal of the school, it was her responsibility to

consider the entire school population and, in particular, to look after the welfare of the "home school" population. She noted that the bulk of transfer students were Vietnamese and that "transfers were frozen because we have no space, but I still have to take the Vietnamese" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.24.04). One teacher interjected and said that this was because there were no other options for the Vietnamese students. In response, the principal gave an example of another school in the district where over fifty different languages were spoken. The students there were put into English as a Second Language classes. "So, there are choices," she chided. She went on, "This is a transfer school, but, if they don't live in [Texas] ISD, you have to say no. You can say I said so, that way I'm the bad guy instead of you" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.24.04).

This was the beginning of the principal's second year at the school and the teachers noted a marked intensification in the degree of scrutiny around and inquiries into the authenticity of the Vietnamese students' home addresses. *Cô Trang* overheard office staff talking about how obvious it was that the Vietnamese students' transfer papers were "fixed." In one exchange between a VLC program teacher and an office staff member, the Vietnamese teacher was told that the Vietnamese students caused her headaches because of their paperwork and questioned the teacher as to why they didn't just go to the schools to which they are assigned.

Throughout the 2004-2005 school year, the Vietnamese program teachers felt increasing tensions between themselves and the campus administration. The frequent and extended absences of the half-time program director, *Dr. Tộc*, made the smooth and efficient running of the school difficult for the principal. There were mechanisms in place so that teachers could not take leave of the school for extended periods of time. Although

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these processes were not enforceable, teachers could suffer the consequences for such non-compliance in their annual evaluations. However, *Dr. Tộc* was retiring and had no qualms regarding this and suggested that neither did the other teachers. Their conviction that they were doing what was best for their students sustained them. In talking about the school administrators' demands that all the teachers attend after school meetings, *Dr. Tộc* explained,

> At first, they want us all to be there. And we say 'No way!' you know. And then, some time I heard it could be going bad for us too in our, you know, um, annual evaluation, but we say 'Who cares?' especially me. I say 'I am like a *trâu già đây* [an old waterbuffalo],' I'm going out anyway, so, I don't care. So then, I think that because of our attitude, we pay attention more to the children, than even our career. (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

The other teachers too were in agreement that they were there for the students and that if it was best for the students to be at another school, the teachers would follow them.

As the year came to a close, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers were more and more frustrated by constraints the new principal imposed on the program and the school. Because the school was overenrolled and the majority of the transfer students were Vietnamese, it appeared that the principal was making increasingly frequent suggestions—one teacher used the term "threats"—that if the Vietnamese students could not behave, she would have to ask them to leave the school and return to their home schools[26]. This was within the purview of her authority as the campus administrator. Additionally, during a meeting with teacher team leaders including one of

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[26] During that school year, the principal conducted an audit of the schools disciplinary actions. This revealed the lack of a paper trail with regard to the Vietnamese students and disciplinary actions taken. I was informed that with a few exceptions, official disciplinary measures were never taken with the Vietnamese students. This confirms instances from my observations where Vietnamese students who had

the Vietnamese program teachers, the principal suggested that regular homeroom teachers were not obligated to send Vietnamese students to the program portables during the allotted language arts period if the students had passed the TAKS exam. It was not with the Vietnamese program teachers alone where growing tensions were increasingly apparent. There was a climate of general frustration with the new principal's micromanagement and with the strict by-the-book practices. She was described as "one of those people who needs to know everything that's going on all the time" (Personal Communication, 05.25.05). In one incident, the principal explained to the teachers that she was a very "black and white person" and that as an administrator, this is how she was required to be.

By the middle of the 2004-2005 school year, the question of whether or not to consider moving the program to a more hospitable campus was raised during one team meeting. At that time, the teachers decided it was best to stay and fight the battles that needed to be fought. They reasoned that school principals and administration are continually changing and these battles would have to be fought wherever the program might be housed. This issue was once again raised at the end of the school year when many of these tensions were near a breaking point. It was at this time that the district's bilingual education director stopped by to talk with the team. The Vietnamese program teachers shared with her their concerns about the hostility they felt towards them and the parents at the campus; that they were considering moving the program to a school outside the district. Alarmed at this, the bilingual education director made a number of telephone calls on the spot and suggested to the teachers that she and the superintendent would hate

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misbehaved in their homeroom classes were sent directly to the Vietnamese teachers rather than to the

to see the program leave. She assured the teachers that something could be worked out and asked if they would be amenable to moving to another school within the district. Because many of the problems that arose concerning the Vietnamese program had to do with students who passed the TAKS exam and yet still attended the Vietnamese program—largely perceived of as a bilingual/ESL program—she suggested that the program might be made a bilingual/Gifted and Talented program. This would also enable the district to address larger criticisms of under-representation of English Language Learners and minority students in the gifted and talented programs. The district bilingual education director asked that the teachers keep this conversation to themselves until she was able to have more conversations with the Superintendent and others at the district level.

However, soon after this transpired, the principal discovered that actions were being taken by district level officials to move the program and confronted *Thầy Phúc*. He recounted the incident as follows:

> …because the principal she was new, so we're not sure what her direction was and it seemed like, she was new and it seemed like this school is growing too big and she doesn't want a big school. But that including our Vietnamese program because our program is growing…but if she doesn't want a big school, that might be a problem…. But then also we also assess that time to see how many students from [a neighboring school district] because many of our students is from [there], but because the parents trust us, so they send the children over here. So, we were thinking, well, if majority of them from [outside the district], and the school, it really strict on that, then it force us, because we love our children. So, we have to follow where they are. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

That summer, district level meetings were held to consider moving the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. The Pecan Springs ES principal was not informed of nor invited to the meetings but somehow discovered that this move was being considered.

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principal's office.

…somehow the word spread around to our principal, so she approached me during summer school and she kind of upset about that decision and she told us that she highly support our program here. So, you know, she didn't know why we want to move to another school. So, after that, we talked with the team and we confront her, then she said well, she only support the program. So, lately, for this year, they aware of the problem that many of our students from [outside the district], but they close their eyes, they pretend they don't know anything. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

The former program director, *Dr. Tộc,* said of all this, "They [campus and district level officials] couldn't believe that those students can leave. Yeah, Vietnamese have family all over…so they can take each other address, they can go <u>anywhere</u> they want" (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05).

The following school year I asked the principal about the transfer issues raised the previous year. Understandably, in this interview context, she responded according to the dictates of a principal accountable to the district with responsibilities to ensure school compliance with district and state regulations. Her response was:

Um, there are some children who are attending school at [Pecan Springs] who do not live in the [Texas] Independent School District and it's because they're using addresses, um, that are not where they are officially living. It might be a grandparent's address or an aunt's address or something like that which is really going against district policy…. Again, we have people that are dishonest about their addresses, all for the right reason, because they want what's best for their children. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

She went on to say:

It's just important as the principal that I follow policy and procedure. So, when that is brought to my attention, for any family, not just Vietnamese family, for any family, if I find that a family is living outside of our district, if they don't move into the [Texas] Independent School District, then they have to transfer their child to the, to the school of which, the district of which they officially go to. And thank heavens the families are very willing to do the right thing. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

Although she referenced district policy to delineate the scope of her work, she also acknowledged that the Vietnamese Language and Culture program was an exception to many of these policies which do not recognize the needs of small populations. She said:

> …there is no written policy that says that it's one way for, you know, one bilingual program and one way for another. And, it could very well be, Miss Nguyễn, that nobody in their wildest imagination anticipated, (a) how well the program would do and (b) how many children and families it would attract. And, and I just think it's wonderful. I mean, I really do, um, but, I, you know, it's about equitable, equitability and excellence for all kids and so, what's good for one culture, should be good for all cultures. I really do believe that. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

The lack of written policies around administering the Vietnamese-English bilingual program seemed not to present problems, rather it appeared to open up opportunities. The VLC program director said in one interview,

> I went through five, five principals and every principal, every time that I, that I have a change of principal, the next principal say, 'Dr. Tộc, I have heard about you and everybody say that, thing ain't broken, so, don't, don't try to fix it when things ain't broken' (laughs). (Interview Transcript, 11.12.05)

Confirming this attitude, the principal also suggested that "this is the way the Vietnamese program has been at Pecan Springs for twenty, over twenty years. So, it's just the way it is and it doesn't look as though it's gonna change" (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06). Discussing the designation of limited English proficient status and exiting bilingual education programs, the principal too acknowledged that the VLC program is an exception to the rule. She said,

> Again, that, that is different than what it is for all other second language, languages in the district that I'm aware of. At [Pecan Springs], if you exit the program and you're a um, a Vietnamese speaker, you still remain at [Pecan Springs] and you still are getting pulled out to go to the Vietnamese program which is um, is different than it is at other schools. And again, it's just a part of the culture and the way that it is. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

In a meeting held to discuss the pre-kindergarten professional development centers with an Associate Superintendent from the district office this issue of Vietnamese student transfers came up yet again. The Associate Superintendent raised the question of how many Vietnamese students came from outside the school district. When the Vietnamese teachers hesitated in their response, the principal attempted to coax the teachers saying, "Come on, we all know there are those who aren't being honest about their addresses," she went on, "I just want to be able to attach a dollar amount to the numbers" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 02.22.06). During this rather candid discussion, the principal and Associate Superintendent were informed that about half of the Vietnamese students resided outside the district boundaries.

Appropriating Language Placement Policies

In compliance with state law, public schools are required to have all students complete a home language survey. It is provided in English and Spanish. For the Vietnamese families who intend to enroll their children at Pecan Springs ES, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers are available during school registration periods to assist parents in completing these forms. When the home language is Vietnamese, the child is assessed to determine the degree of English comprehension and fluency. According to one teacher in the Vietnamese language and culture program, the child is taken into a small closet-like space with an adult who conducts the assessment. These assessments are scripted so that the teacher or administrator has only to read from and perform tasks described and then document the child's responses. If the

child is determined to be either non-English proficient or limited-English proficient, then he or she is allowed to attend the Vietnamese Language and Culture program.

Once students have been placed, the Vietnamese program teachers then negotiate schedules with regular home room teachers at each grade level. One lower grade level teacher expressed frustration that the Vietnamese teachers have the pre-kindergarten students for only forty-five minutes at a time and that once the students had gathered their things, put on coats, formed a squirmy line, and actually walked to the portables (a very long distance for their very short legs), the amount of time these students actually spent on classroom instruction was whittled down to thirty minutes. At the upper grade levels, because of the increased number and rigor of performance accountability measures, at particular grade levels negotiating the amount of time students could spend with the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers was contentious. Consequently, the amount of time students spent in the Vietnamese portables varied from grade level to grade level.

One teacher explained that at the upper grade levels this negotiation could be a source of tension and difficulty amongst the teachers. During the 2004-2005 school year, at the third and fifth grade levels, the Vietnamese students spent an hour and a half with the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers. They received instruction in reading, writing, and grammar. At the fourth grade level though, the students spent only half that amount of time with the Vietnamese program teachers. The explanation I received was that the fourth grade homeroom teachers preferred to teach the students writing. In Texas, it is at the fourth grade level where schools are held accountable for the writing portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. She said,

…certain grade levels really support the kids coming here and some programs, they don't want the kids coming here. So, we have, I teach three grade levels, out of the three grade levels, I have one grade level that every year is fighting us, wanting to keep the kids. They don't want to send the kids, 'well the kids are exited [from LEP status], they passed the TAKS, why do they need to come to you?'.... So, it's a constant fight to get the kids here and it's always upper level. By the time they pass TAKS, we have problems. (Interview Transcript, 12.12.05)

At the beginning of each school year, a committee that oversees compliance with state regulations regarding provision of school services to English Language Learners, convenes to determine whether students ought to exit or reenter into the bilingual education programs. I attended this meeting for the 2004-2005 school year. There were five of us in a small room sitting around a conference table with a large pile of manila folders each of which held the results of language assessments and state standardized exams for students designated limited English proficient. For Pecan Springs Elementary School, this meant over five hundred student files would be examined and decisions regarding their placement for the year would be made. One of the school's assistant principals explained to me that this process was extremely important as well as their student monitoring process. The importance of appropriately identifying and monitoring these students was tied into state and national data that pointed to the over-identification of language minority students into special education programs. Additionally, proper monitoring of these students was essential as there was a mandated two year wait period between assessments for special education programs. Given current NCLB legislation and annual yearly progress requirements with particularly stringent constraints on exemptions from standardized exams for students identified for special education services and English Language Learners as well as the implementation of high stakes testing at multiple grade levels in Texas, student assessments that identify students for special

services becomes a focal point for many schools. For this school, the assistant principal said, "Even after our students are exited from LEP status, we continue monitoring them for two years. They are all assigned to ESL certified teachers." She went on, "we are an LEP school, so teachers know to monitor all the students" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 10.22.04).

The language assessment committee spent the next hour going through individual student files. Present were a reading specialist who worked with the Spanish fluent population, an upper grade level Vietnamese program teacher, the assistant principal, a parent representative, and myself. As they went through individual files, they noted language assessment scores, TAKS scores, and then either the reading specialist or *Cô Thi* would comment on the students' progress and any concerns they might have, the reading specialist with regard to the Spanish speaking students and *Cô Thi* with regard to the Vietnamese students. It was explained to me that when students passed the TAKS exam with a certain score, they were exited from limited English proficient status. These also helped the committee to determine whether or not a student would be reentered into LEP status. Almost all the Vietnamese student files looked at that morning presented exam scores well above the cut off point. Even so, as noted earlier, it was understood that the Vietnamese students are an exception to this rule. Each time this was the case, *Cô Thi* would comment on the student's ability to focus or some other area of concern and say that they "still need to receive support after school" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 10.22.04). After repeating this a number of times, the assistant principal explained to me that most of the Vietnamese students "are not really receiving support. The after school program for the Vietnamese students is more of an enrichment program" (Researcher Fieldnotes,

10.22.04). However, even given all the measures provided to ensure that students are appropriately placed and subsequently monitored over time to serve their language needs, students are still placed in ways that disrupt the intentions of the school managers.

Julian is a pre-kindergarten student; he is Amerasian and speaks only one phrase in Vietnamese, *muốn uống nước* (want to drink water). I asked his Vietnamese teacher how Julian came to be in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program if he is proficient in English. The response was one that pointed to my naïveté and to the often well-intended but ineffective practices of school systems that strive to efficiently put students in their appropriate curricular places. The teacher responded, "if <u>you</u> were a small child taken into a tiny room with a complete stranger and overwhelmed, you've never been in a school before, you might not say a word too. But that's okay, it works out for us" (Personal Communication, 2005). By the end of the school year, Julian was able to have conversations with his mother in Vietnamese and explained to his Anglo father that "I am Vietnamese now." Justin's mother shared with the Vietnamese teacher her pleasure with this and that Julian was now teaching her husband Vietnamese.

Co Oanh too expressed her excitement and joy in seeing these kinds of interactions taking place in her own classroom. She said:

> Um, some of the parents that we have right now, the kids know the English; they don't know the Vietnamese, so that's why they send them here, so that they can learn the Vietnamese and it's good because they, they're learning both. The kids that are learning English learn from that child. That child that's learning Vietnamese learns from the Vietnamese child. I think it's awesome. I have a little girl right now, pre-k, she knows all her English, all, I mean just, she could probably be in kindergarten. But she doesn't know Vietnamese and all the other pre-k, their, their, they know Vietnamese cause that's all they grew up with, so they're learning English and she's learning Vietnamese and it's so cool to see her speak it, you know. And it's, it's just amazing, so I would. I would, I would not

trade that experience, you know, I wouldn't want my child to miss out on it. (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06)

Since the Vietnamese Language and Culture program began, the Vietnamese teachers typically conducted the language proficiency assessments. However, this past school year (2005-2006), an assistant principal was asked by the principal to oversee and conduct some of these assessments herself. One Vietnamese teacher told me that there is an amount of skepticism at the campus administration level as to the trustworthiness of the Vietnamese teachers' assessments that appeared to largely allow all new Vietnamese students into the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Consequently, the school assistant principal was asked to retrain the Vietnamese teachers in administering the language assessment and to oversee the process. As the Vietnamese teachers were present to translate if needed, still, they witnessed the same phenomenon of temporary muteness exhibited by Julian when the assistant principal administered the assessment to these tiny petrified four year old children.

The Campus Advisory Council

The Texas Education Code which specifies the statutes, laws, and regulations pertaining to the provision of education in Texas calls for each public school campus to form campus advisory councils comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, community and business members as well as other campus staff. The purpose of these councils is to provide broad-based input to principals on educational programs, campus performance, campus improvement and staff development plans, and to review campus-level waiver requests to the state and the budget. These councils typically meet once a month over the course of the school year. The first campus advisory council meeting for

the 2004-2005 school year at Pecan Springs Elementary School was held in a portable classroom with thirteen parents and school staff in attendance including five parents, the school's parent specialist who spoke English and Spanish, the school principal and assistant principal, regular homeroom teachers, one of the Vietnamese program teachers, and myself.

The principal began by presenting a district generated preliminary data report to the council estimating standardized exam scores for the coming year. The report showed passing rates by subject area exams and disaggregated by subgroups including African American, Hispanic, White, Economically Disadvantaged, Limited English Proficient, and Special Education. Although the Asian and Pacific Islander population made up one fifth of the school's student population, they were absent from the report. The principal informed us that these students were grouped together with the White population[27]. She went on to explain that the Limited English Proficient students at Pecan Springs ES included Spanish and Vietnamese speakers and added that the Spanish speaking students were not doing as well as the Vietnamese students and that there was a need to close this gap. I had been told by one teacher that the principal had raised this issue at a prior faculty meeting and further questioned the Spanish-English bilingual teachers as to why the Vietnamese students were doing so well given that the Vietnamese students and teachers had fewer resources with which to work. *Cô Thi* said of this,

> …some bilingual teachers really support, support and really acknowledge
> what we do in the Vietnamese program and some teachers are very

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[27] At the next month's meeting, the principal would correct this statement and inform the committee that the Asian students were grouped under "all" students and that there was no separately disaggregated data for Asian students. This would be questioned on a couple of occasions by Vietnamese parents who had, until the current campus level administration, received reports on the Asian and Pacific Islander students at the school by the previous principal.

envious and *ghen* [jealous]…. I mean, there's a big mixture, even from one of the teachers that I'm really good, close friends with. She said 'there are teachers who are very envious of your program and they don't like it when they're being compared.'…. They don't like being compared and they get angry about it. (Interview Transcript, 12.12.05)

After she reviewed the report, the principal moved on to share a draft of the school's campus improvement plan which would be sent to the district in final form in the next couple of months. The first goal the plan addressed was student achievement. It aimed to: (1) ensure all students received rigorous DIG-aligned science instruction every day; (2) align instructional practices with school's culturally diverse population; and (3) ensure a campus focus on effort-based, standard-based learning.

When the second objective was raised a parent asked to know what the criteria were for moving a student from a bilingual education class to an English as a Second Language class. This was translated from Spanish to English by one of the school staff members. She was answered in Spanish and told that when a child passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the child could be placed in a different class and that the little ones stayed in bilingual education programs until they passed the TAKS or until a parent requested that the child not receive bilingual education services. Not satisfied, the parent again raised concerns about her second grade daughter. She had been removed from her bilingual education class and placed in an English as a Second Language class and the mother did not understand why. She certainly had not requested that the school remove her daughter from the bilingual class and her daughter was not yet subject to the state standardized exam. In response, the school's assistant principal responded that this would make the transition to regular classes easier. She closed this

discussion by further complimenting the child's ability to pick up another language so quickly saying, "you have a very smart daughter" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.15.04).

The meeting continued on with an African American teacher voicing her concerns about the African American student population and their levels of achievement on the state standardized exam. The committee agreed that there must be greater efforts to invite African American parents to the school and to get them involved in their children's education and that there must also be an African American parent representative on this committee. The next month's meeting continued this conversation of closing the achievement gap for African American students in particular, absent representation from the African American community. The principal proposed at this meeting that "Every time we meet with parents we should be talking about data [standardized and benchmark exams] so they really get it" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 10.13.04). On leaving that meeting, *Thầy Phúc* shared with me the reason for his silence during this discussion of how to close the achievement gap. He said, "They would <u>never</u> do what we do. They think that we're crazy for spending all our time and weekends with the students" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 10.13.04).

Performance Accountability

The research on Asian Pacific Americans (APA) in education reveals a masking effect that conceals the needs of and challenges to different subgroups within the APA population when data are not completely disaggregated. Pang, Kiang, and Pak (2004) and Kiang (2006) demonstrated this masking effect through an examination of education

research literature around APA populations. Regarding a widely cited report on minority achievement, *Reaching the Top,* Pang et al (2004) wrote,

> While calling for comprehensive, targeted support for African American, Latino, and Native American students from pre-K through higher education, the report also asserts that Whites and Asians are succeeding academically and, therefore, do not need comparable attention or intervention. (p. 547)

However, researchers have begun to reveal the detrimental affects of these often taken-for-granted perceptions. Using location as a proxy for Southeast Asian subgroups including Cambodian, Hmong, and Vietnamese in Massachusetts, Pang et al. showed tenth grade Southeast Asian Americans in particular districts failing the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test while APA students from districts of predominantly Chinese and Indian descent passed at the proficient level. Further, they reported that San Diego City Schools showed disaggregated data from 1998 where Indochinese American student scores on the Stanford Achievement Test in reading was 28.5%, comparable to the African American score of 27.0%. In contrast, the score for Asians was 61.7% and for White students, the score was 67.3%.

At Pecan Springs Elementary School, the Vietnamese population consistently outscored other minority subgroups at the school and maintained comparable or better scores than the White population (see Tables 1 and 2)[28]. In a district where increasing accountability measures and intensified scrutiny of schools pressed on each campus, and in particular, schools of poverty and majority minority populations, the performance of

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[28] The * indicates that the 2001-2002 academic year was the last year that the state standardized exam, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was administered. The new exam administered in the 2002-2003 school year, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), was designed to be more rigorous and to assess higher order thinking skills.

the Vietnamese students became of increasing interest to district level administrators. In a

2003 article, a former bilingual education director was quoted,

> It is now a majority minority district, and it's moving toward a language
> minority district…. It's really important for us to focus on this group
> because it is going to be the group that is going to be driving the
> achievement of this district. (M. Staff, 2004, paragraph 6)

Table 1: Passing Rates for Reading Test State Assessment by Student Group (Grades 3 through 6)				
Year	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White
1995	63.2%	**87.5%**	72.0%	81.5%
1996	66.7%	**81.5%**	66.1%	86.0%
1997	66.7%	**81.5%**	67.2%	86.8%
1998	71.2%	**92.3%**	72.7%	86.1%
1999	74.4%	**92.6%**	73.9%	89.5%
2000	86.0%	**95.4%**	73.6%	88.9%
2001	84.4%	**92.3%**	71.4%	97.5%
2002	88.4%	**98.3%**	83.7%	94.1%
2003*	68.1%	**93.0%**	66.2%	69.0%
2004*	68.0%	**94.0%**	76.0%	92.0%

Table 2: Passing Rates for All Tests State Assessment by Student Group (Grades 3 though 6)				
Year	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White
1995	28.9%	**76.0%**	52.5%	60.0%
1996	50.0%	**77.8%**	52.2%	77.3%
1997	49.0%	**78.6%**	58.8%	81.6%
1998	59.6%	**87.8%**	57.0%	81.1%
1999	55.8%	**91.5%**	58.5%	75.6%
2000	68.9%	**90.9%**	61.7%	85.1%
2001	60.0%	**90.9%**	63.6%	87.8%
2002	73.9%	**96.7%**	79.0%	91.2%
2003*	36.0%	**72.2%**	42.7%	54.8%
2004*	51.0%	**88.0%**	61.0%	78.0%

In their discussions of moving the VLC program to another campus, *Dr. Tộc*
relayed how one teacher pointed to the standardized test scores of the Vietnamese
subgroup at Pecan Springs ES:

> *Cô [Tiên]* say, 'there is no way that this principal would let us take the
> program away because of the performance, the, the score of the
> Vietnamese are so high that if we take all of the two hundred plus children
> out of [Pecan Springs], she will see, you know, a slump in the scoring. So,
> that is what she say, what *Cô [Tiên]* said that now they know that there are
> children that are from the other school district and outside of [the city], but
> they are kind of like closing their eyes. (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

In addition, some of the teachers sensed increasing attention at the district level
presumably because of the type of population the program serves, low-income, minority,
and linguistically isolated, and the consistently high scores on standardized exams. One
former district insider revealed that the new district bilingual education director had
hopes of using this program as a model for the district through a media campaign
(Researcher Fieldnotes, 11.30.05). This was supported in my observations of district
personnel arriving at the school to record classroom instruction within the Vietnamese
Language and Culture program as well as from reports by the Vietnamese teachers that
the district bilingual education director requested that the program teachers create
pamphlets and conduct workshops around the district on their program. The teacher
whose classroom and students were videotaped said that the district personnel indicated
that this videotape would be used to showcase the district's service to its diverse
population of students. One teacher said,

> I think the district is starting to realize, uh, that our program is, is a unique
> program in that it's, but it's very successful with the number of students
> that are passing and I think they're trying to find a way to get everyone in
> the district to pass at our level. And so, I think that's why they're starting
> to show an interest. They've always known about our *Tết* show and all
> that, but I think that as uh, I guess it's more, the district's becoming more

data driven, what the results are, they're seeing it, they're seeing the picture now. (Interview Transcript, 12.12.05)

The former program director too pointed to the mounting attention the program was receiving from district level officials:

> …the district pay it more and more attention since the numbers of students were growing…. It means that the, the attention of the school district is just like, focusing to our program, but continuously and building up…. They do pay attention to our program. It, it, it growing with the numbers of the students, with the scores and the testing and something like that. (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

When I asked the teachers what it was that made the program students so successful on these standardized exams, the teachers largely suggested that their program had something that the other teachers did not have—the support and trust of the parents. Of the student achievement seen within the program, *Dr. Tộc* said,

> …we cannot deny that they are intelligent. They're good students. Number two, it's because of the support in the family because we have a lot of respect from the parents and we visit with them regularly and they have done, um, what we, um, kind of advise them to do at home too, you know. To support, um, everything that the children need. (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

Another teacher suggested,

> I think, well, there's lots of different theories and tons of controversy on it. But, for me, I think the main important thing is because we have parent support. That is so important. In our culture, education is so highly um, stressed and the parents, you know, they care about, and I'm not saying that other parents don't care, but I just think that our Vietnamese parents, they go way beyond what they need to do as parents. (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06)

Cô Trang spoke to the ways in which these parents appear to "go way beyond what they need" and said,

> I have parents who ask me very often, you know, 'what do you do in the summer?' um, 'would you be interested in tutoring my kids for the summer?' Even though these parents work hourly wages, but they would

do anything to put their kids' education, to, yeah, that's how much they value it. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

From the upper grade level teachers, *Thầy Phúc* offered,

I think one is the Vietnamese kids, they are more disciplined, more respect, they more obedient, so. And also, the parents, you know, they value education very high. Many of them, even they didn't have, they weren't educated in Vietnam, they are laborer, but they value highly about education and they respect the teachers. So they, they teach the value at home and they reinforce that. So they push the kids, so the kids work hard too and we have, teachers also we have high expectations…. They also have longer days and they have more homework compared with the regular classroom…. We don't have busing for afterschool program and I would say, like ninety percent of them stay after school. So, we know that some kid that doesn't do well, we talk to the parents right away so, the kid's aware of that, we have the good communication, so they try harder and also, we always making like, we making learning is fun for them. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

The other upper grade level teacher, *Cô Thi*, said,

I think it's uh, work habit and teaching the kids strategies and just uh, the fact that the parents, I mean culture wise, the parents value education. Uh, with my kids, just kind of, as we get closer to TAKS, we kind of drill and, what I call drill and kill. We review, review, review. 'What is the step, what have we taught, how do you do it?' Teaching them strategies. So, a lot of the kids, uh, they have the ability, but they're lacking that strategy on how, the test taking strategies and we just teach them basic strategies that will help them on their homework, whether it's a test or not and then it helps them a lot. And uh, afterschool, if they have questions, they're with us after school and we can help them with their homework. And so, it's a lot of time that they take in to do their work. (Interview Transcript, 12.12.05)

The Vietnamese students are undoubtedly aware of the importance placed on standardized exams. In classroom observations of the upper grade level students, the importance of learning appeared to be directly tied to the state standardized tests. One exchange between fifth grade students and *Thầy Phúc* on writing looked as follows:

Teacher: Why is it important to know what the main idea is?

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Student: Because if someone asks you what the main idea is, you have to

know

the answer.

Student: Because on the TAKS test, they ask you what the main idea is.

Student: I still don't understand your question.

(Teacher repeats the question)

Student: I know, Dad. It's important for your writing. In TAKS writing,

they ask what is important in each paragraph. (Researcher Fieldnotes,

10.27.04)

The principal too had explanations for the success the Vietnamese students experienced

on the state standardized exam,

> …in terms of academic achievement, the children in the Vietnamese program are achieving at a higher level than the non-Vietnamese children who are in a bilingual program. Um, and I'm not so sure that it's a hundred percent because of the pull-out as it is more from the commitment of the Vietnamese team because they, in addition to their stellar work during the school day, they are committed to working with the children every afternoon from the time school is let out until about six o'clock in the evening. We don't do that with any other second language program or ESL program in this district that I'm aware of…. Commitment of the teachers and, and also the parents' value in education for their children. That's not to say that other cultures don't value education. They most certainly do. Um, but it is, it's a commitment, it's that, the whole package is there for most of our Vietnamese families. The parent, the teacher, the child and when one of those is left out, then the academic achievement of the student sometimes suffers. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

Although their answers vary, one thing the Vietnamese teachers all agreed on was that

they are all largely left alone to conduct instruction in the manner they see fit. That is, so

long as their students perform well on the standardized exams.

Performing the Cultural Self and Other

At the beginning of every school year, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers organize an orientation for the Vietnamese parents. It is held to inform parents of school dress codes, health initiatives, services the VLC program offers, and what the program teachers do. In preparation for this meeting, the Vietnamese program teachers sent home a letter with a detachable portion to be returned letting the teachers know whether or not parents would attend. Reminders were also sent home. In one class, the teacher asked each child if their parent intended on being at the meeting. When students told him no, he questioned the students as to why the parent wouldn't be there. When students did not know, he told the child to call his or her parents to find out and to remind their parents that this was a very important meeting. They needed to remind their parents to be "good citizens" and being a good citizen meant coming to this meeting as "it takes a whole village to raise a child" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.10.04).

That evening, the teachers brought *bò kho* and *bánh mì* for the parents and sandwiches for the students. *Dr. Tộc,* perfectly coifed having come directly from her hairdresser (a regular practice of hers when there was an event or important meeting), waited for the students to finish eating and to be taken to the gymnasium to play before she began the meeting. A sign-in sheet was passed around the room and *Dr. Tộc* encouraged everyone to sign it to "show the principal that the Vietnamese parents come in large numbers to support the program." She introduced the teachers and staff of the VLC program and then clarified, "a lot of you have come to me and said 'I want to leave my child with you so you can teach my child Vietnamese.' We don't teach Vietnamese" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.10.04). She then described how the children spent much of the

day with American students and that the Vietnamese children came together only once a day for 45 minutes up to an hour and a half. She explained that the need for the program lay in the use of Vietnamese for better understanding and comprehension of English. However, Fridays were Vietnamese Culture day, "so they still know that they are Vietnamese." She went on to caution the parents, "In a couple of years, without this program, they'll forget and then you will have a problem." She went on to say,

> They [the students] can become Americans. I have been here much longer than you, but I can never be American. I'm just an old Vietnamese lady. You haven't seen me chewing betel leaves and areca nuts[29] here, but that's because they don't have that here in the U.S. Every night I listen to folk music and Vietnamese opera. So, every Friday, we remind them that they are Vietnamese. (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.10.04)

Dr. Tộc then talked about disciplining students in the program:

> When the American teachers have problems with Vietnamese students, they all turn to us and they don't know what we do, but the students behave. The students may come home and say they're afraid of me… (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.10.04)

At this point, someone from the audience called out "child abuse" and laughter erupted from the audience of parents. She went on, "We yell, but when they cry, we hug them and comfort them. We scare them with threats, but we love them and we want them to learn *tiên học   lể, hậu học văn.*" That is, the children were to learn the ritual and ceremony of virtuous and respectful living and then they would learn letters.

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[29] This tradition of chewing betel leaves and areca nuts stems from a Vietnamese legend of two brothers and the elder brother's wife. In a local newspaper, a community leader says, "understanding Vietnamese identity means more than knowing the language—it means learning cultural history, like the trau cau legend…. The legend is so poetic. These two words recall a whole history. If you don't know the story, they're just words" (Staff, 2002).

Dr. Tộc then talked about the after school program and the differences between the after school tutorial program that the VLC program teachers provide and another after school program offered by the school. She said,

> …our after school program goes from the beginning of school to the very end whether or not we receive money and we mostly don't. I don't think there is another program like this one. This program is free to you. We do this because we are ashamed if our students don't pass the test [TAKS]. If this happens, we feel that we have not fulfilled our responsibility to you" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.10.04).

She then provided each teacher's classroom telephone number and asked that the parents "call when you need us." She emphasized again that the after school program would not cost the parents anything, that "it's all free."

Then she spoke of *Cô Liễu* and her responsibilities with the program. She is paid to monitor the cafeteria, but she has volunteered to care for the pre-kindergarten students after school for the last three years. *Dr. Tộc* relayed that she has asked the campus principal to pay *Cô Liễu* a salary for this service, but was told that there were no funds to do so. "This is unfair for *Cô Liễu*. I want for you to know this situation. If you want to do something about it, that is between you and *Cô Liễu*." Another aspect of the after school program she talked about was the extracurricular activities which *Thầy Phúc* oversaw every day after school including martial arts, soccer, dragon dance. "Again, this is free to you. But every so often there are certain costs that we ask you help with like purchasing jerseys for the students. Also, these activities would not be possible without the help of our university volunteers."

Next she discussed school regulations and appropriate practices and reminded the parents that there were consequences for excessive absences and tardies, that every year each child could have only five unexcused absences. If students accumulated more than

this, then depending upon the teacher and the student's progress, the student may not be promoted to the next grade level. *Cô Trang* then talked about the school's policy that students were not to bring junk food to school for lunch or for snacks. She explained that they were not allowed to have pizza, anything with sugar, no chips, no soda. "Why don't you just bring rice, eggrolls, or *chả*." *Dr. Tộc* then interjected,

> Teach our children to chew with their mouths closed and not to talk while they are eating. When they sneeze—Americans sneeze differently than we do, they sneeze very loudly so that the itch to sneeze is satisfied—but then you need to teach your children to say 'excuse me' afterwards. We only have a short while with the children, they are with you for much longer. Also, you need to dress your children appropriately for school. I blame the older children who show their bellies, wear pants that hang way down so that they don't even cover their butts, and reveal their breasts. From pre-kindergarten on up to the sixth grade, this must be adhered to or the children will be sent home to change. T-shirts with images on them must be considered with care as to the messages that are on them, they must wear tennis shoes, they cannot wear flip flops because they have physical activity every day. Your children must wear underwear. We had a child who got his wee wee caught in his zipper earlier. Please be hygienic, brush their teeth and hair. Also, every household has soft and loud voices. Often we have loud voices when we are fighting, please avoid doing this in front of your children. They tell me everything; they say it in front of all the other children. Try hard not to say angry words in front of the children so they aren't hurt and sad. (Researcher Fieldnotes, 09.10.04)

The principal had also asked her to convey to the parents the need to drive with care in the campus parking lot as a child was hit by a car the year before. "Please don't let this happen. I don't want to hear that one of our parents was reckless; it makes me lose face and feel hurt. I am not American, I'm just an old Vietnamese lady." Finally, she talked about a course that the teachers would be holding on how to help their children learn to read. *Cô Tiên* suggested that this would be especially important for kindergarten, first, and second grade students and that food and drink would be provided. A parent asked if the teachers would also be holding classes with regard to attaining general

equivalency degrees and citizenship. *Thầy Phúc*, who organized and led these classes, responded that this had not yet been determined and that it would be based on the degree of interest expressed from the community. I would learn later that *Thầy Phúc* himself has not yet become a U.S. citizen as he simply has not had the time. The meeting ended with one person asking for time to speak to the group about Medicaid applications for children and recommendations for dentists and optometrists.

I asked *Dr. Tộc* later on what she meant when she said that the students could become Americans. She gave a long and considered response:

> They can become American, completely American in like, physically, {like at home, they are allowed to wear clothing like Americans that are open and revealing all over the place, short, and torn, all different sorts of things. That's the physical. Also, they follow their American peer and they thought that this is good. We don't put Americans down. But we have to remember, I am afraid that they follow the American peers who are a bad influence and not the good ones. Because when they make choices, we are afraid that they will make wrong choices. And they go home and they yell at their parents and they don't tell their parents what is going on and they don't think. You see, the Americans give their children too much freedom. But the freedom} I don't blame on Vietnamese for not giving their children {a lot of freedom. But you have to remember, before you allow them to choose, you have to teach them first. You have to teach them what freedom is, and when we want to choose freedom, there are limitations. It's not just freedom}. Okay, an example, you're not free to kick people {is that right?} It's your freedom, yes, you can do what you want, yes, but you don't kick people. It's limitation. But you, {there are many parents here who say, let their children make choices, but they don't teach the children beforehand. That is why I am afraid that our parents might think that it's okay for their children to make choices. But before that, we have to} give them a foundation first. To build on something. {Right? That's one thing. Many people want to give their children a lot of freedom like the Americans, but they don't teach them first. But here, there are many times when Americans have taught their children, but they've grown up in a society where they have freedom and choice that they are used to. But we haven't had that. From way back when until now, you see, how many Vietnamese people got to vote for their president? How many get to vote for governor? In Vietnam, even if they let you vote, it is only that they have already told us who to vote for. This means that Vietnamese have not yet gotten to that point of freedom, that they can understand the freedom,

and to see} freedom in the very good way. {I am afraid that at home, they do not explain, and they allow their children to be too American. They are like them, and they imitate them, but they imitate the bad and not the good. Do you see? And one more thing. There are many children who} want so much to become American that they lost their identity. {Do you see? And then, they don't know when they see themselves, they don't see Americans, but in their heads, they are Americans inside and then they} feel bad, lost identity, feel bad, depressed, {do bad things. Do you understand? Because} lost identity {then this means that necessarily you lose the self-esteem, the self-respect, is that right? So, now, I want for the children to know that they are Vietnamese, that they are} proud to be a Vietnam, a Vietnamese, proud to be a Vietnamese-American and build up from there. {Take the good from both cultures. What is good from the Vietnamese we take and use, what is good of the Americans we take and use. This doesn't cause any harm, right? For example, my nature is that I can not listen to pop music, I can't listen to rap music}. I'm not forcing myself, {Oh, now I'm American and I have the right to listen to all of this, but if I don't like it, then what? Right? And also, if we know that we are Vietnamese} so what? I am proud to be a Vietnamese. Because there are good people anywhere. But bad people can be of any color. {Right? So, I want to do something so that the children see this. So, I don't want them to want so much to become an American that they go out and dye their hair red. Right? There are a lot of parents who have just come to the United States and they already wear clothes, shoes, hair in a way, and I say, 'look at me, I've been here for fifty years now. I don't try to be an American.' That is the value, the individual value. We have to strive to keep and to be proud of, but it's not even striving or trying, when we see our value, then we know we have value, so, we don't have to try}. You don't have to try. It is there. {Is that right? Because of that, I say that I don't want for them to try so much to become somebody that they're not.} If they want to be a good American, good for them, you know. {But don't say, American is this or that. And then when you go home, there is also this. If you go home and you cannot teach your teacher, if your children don't respect you and, instead of teaching them that they're acting American, they are not acting American. There that's how I explain it to the parents. It's not like they are like Americans. Are Americans ridiculous and unreasonable like that? It's just that we don't know them. There are good and bad Americans, there are good and bad Vietnamese. We are not racist about that. But we have to explain clearly to the children what is what. But explaining is not about explaining for one day or one hour. You have to say it constantly, you have to say it this way and that way, backwards and forwards, but over and above this, you have to} set an example…. I cannot {even until now, if I eat American food, I don't like it, but love Vietnamese food. And listening to American music, I can't do it. I listen to Vietnamese opera and folk music. It's probably because our nature is this way}. (Interview Transcript, 11.15.05)

I heard and witnessed instances where the desire for Vietnameseness was clear. "This program is not just about academics" was a phrase I heard over and again from the Vietnamese teachers. They saw their obligation and responsibility as teachers, not just within the academic aspects of learning, but cultural and moral aspects which would help their students understand their identities and keep them from losing a part of their heritage. One teacher said,

> As for the kids themselves, certainly they can learn English in the classroom, many of them were born here. But, I think the important thing is that we celebrate and we recognize where they're from and I feel that if the program is not there, being Vietnamese, I don't think it means much to them. (Interview Transcript, 12.20.05)

Speaking about what she hoped to accomplish as a teacher, another Vietnamese program teacher said,

> …my goals as a teacher which is to teach these kids English as well as to keep their, their native language and to teach them where they came from, their culture…. when they leave this program, I want them to still remember who they are and never ever look back and say, 'I don't like Vietnamese, I'm not Vietnamese, I'm not gonna speak it,' you know. (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06)

When asked about the stated objectives of the program found in the school literature though, one Vietnamese program teacher found the language of "maintaining" culture and tradition problematic. She said,

> Maintaining, I'm not sure if I agree with that word because, especially with younger generation Vietnamese. They're born here, they didn't know anything; they didn't know anything about Vietnam, they didn't know anything about their heritage. So, there's really nothing there to maintain. It's rather to introduce them to that culture so that they are familiar and have a connection with it, which in turn, helps them connect with their family because that's their family heritage, that's their parents' heritage. Maybe for the older generation maintaining is more appropriate, but I don't know if for younger generations that's appropriate anymore. Introducing and instilling? Not just introduce, but we want them, or as a teacher, I would like to introduce my kids to their Vietnamese heritage but

also, I would like for them to have a curiosity, instill a curiosity about it so that they, when they grow, when we are not there anymore, when we're not around them, they can still go out and do the learning on their own and uh, really be proud of who they are. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

She went on,

For me, I think it's important because, it, again, allows them to communicate to and with their parents at home. That's a bridge there that I see so many, I see is not happening in many um, immigrant families where the parents speak primary, or native language and then their kids go home, doesn't understand the native language. All they speak is English, so there's a communication gap there which has so many other consequences. When children and parents can't communicate, um, there's a disconnect in the family, there's a lack of bonding and so, it goes, to me, even beyond traditional or cultural preservation. It's just as basic, to me, even more basic, the connection between the child and his or her family and when that child can't communicate, it's hard to feel the support, it's hard to share. And um, and so, I think the more immediate, I don't even really, it never occurred, it just didn't seem, uh, relevant from the kid's point of view. It doesn't seem like it's relevant for them to speak Vietnamese because they are Vietnamese. Does that make sense? I mean, what does Vietnamese mean to them when they don't even know, or some of them, don't exactly know where Vietnam is, don't exactly know what the whole culture and tradition is. It's just a word to them. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

One of the teaching assistants for the Vietnamese Language and Culture program suggested that the program was not simply beneficial for the students in coming to understand their heritage, but that it too was an educative space for him as well. He said,

I would say I fell in love with this program not just for the kids and teaching, but when I knew that I could learn my own culture and just being around so many Vietnamese people for the first time in 1999. I thought I was in Vietnam. I don't need to go back to Vietnam, I can just like, hey, just go to [Pecan Springs] here, you know, there's so many Vietnamese kids here you know, and parents give you food…and also learning about the history of our country, you know. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

The Lunar New Year's Celebration

Every year since the Vietnamese Language and Culture program was established, the students perform in an annual Lunar New Year's celebration. It is a tremendous exhibition of cultural pride and tradition. The program teachers and students begin preparing for this celebration at the beginning of the school year and spend the next several months choreographing and practicing dances, sewing costumes, making props and painting stage backdrops, organizing volunteers, persuading parents to allow their children to participate, asking for food and other material donations from local stores. Other schools from both within and outside the district often invite the dragon dancers and some of the other student performers into their schools to perform traditional New Year's dances year round. In addition, the local Asian markets and restaurants also schedule the student to perform at their establishments so as to bring good fortune and prosperity to their business ventures in the coming year. All this has brought a degree of notoriety to the school and program.

In an interview with *Dr. Tộc,* she reminisced on the first years of the program when many of the families had only recently arrived in the United States and did not have much.

> But the parents at that time were very poor. So, I dressed the students up in my old sheets, my old sheets from home (laughs) and came in and sewed their clothes with the sheets. [Teacher and former student—*Cô Oanh*] remembers as well that they had to sew their costumes by hand themselves. The props, they had to make all of it. The flowers, the umbrellas, they had to do all of it. I bought the umbrellas, but they had to paint and decorate them. We did everything that we can to make the show, but we always have shows for the children. (Interview Transcript, 11.05.04)

Now these same celebrations are attended by the larger Vietnamese community, sponsored by stores and restaurants owned by Vietnamese families around the city, and

the district's superintendent has regularly joined in the celebration over the last several years.

I arrived at the Vietnamese Language and Culture program portables shortly before five that evening to see if I could help with any preparations the Vietnamese teachers might need. However, this time I would watch the *Tết* celebration. For the past four months, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program students had been learning and practicing dances and routines for the New Year's festival. This show would be at least the fourth time that most of the Vietnamese students had performed in the Lunar New Year show within the last two weeks. Two of the performances were during the school day while the other two were held in the evening. Because the school's enrollment is such that the entire school population cannot be housed in the cafeteria/auditorium space at one time, the school day performances had been split between two or three days. Similarly, the audience in attendance for the evening performance has grown substantially over the years and so, the Vietnamese program teachers along with the school principal, decided to conduct the evening performances over two nights. I assisted with the previous three shows and observed this last performance. The third of these shows was held on a Friday night for the entire community; this is typically the most well-attended of the shows as parents, relatives, volunteers, friends, and students from other schools usually turn out for this most important of Vietnamese celebrations. For this fourth performance, school district officials and campus teachers were invited and the district's media personnel were also present.

This year, for the evening performances, tickets were required for entrance and different colored wrist bands distributed to identify who was a volunteer, student, or part

of the general public. Such had not been the case in years past. As a result of the growing numbers of students and attendees as well as the headache of middle and high school students arriving at the campus to hang out in the hallways, the purchase of tickets at the main entrance was instituted for the first time. The Vietnamese program teachers thought that this would deter loitering teens who would not likely spend money to hang out in an elementary school hallway. As it turned out, the teachers were right. Instead, these ne'erdowells camped out just beyond the school's entranceway playing cards and shooting the breeze. Additionally, one teacher recommended that they select an "American" teacher to help as a White teacher would deter the parents from asking questions and complaining about the change in arrangements this year.

As you walked through the hall leading into the cafetorium, one wall was decorated with student drawings of Chinese zodiac animals with accompanying explanations or each animal's temperament while the other displayed grade level group portraits of the Vietnamese program students in their Lunar New Year's show outfits. The lighting in this space was dim in the front toward the stage and brighter in the back behind the seating area where concession tables were set up. As parents arrived with their children, they would stop by these tables to drop off the dishes they'd prepared for the evening and to chat with the teachers and other parents. Most of the students wandered off to find friends and occupy themselves before they were rounded up by grade level to await quietly in different classrooms until they were called upon to perform. A few stayed in the cafetorium and attended to their dinner plates with small piles of fried rice, stir fried noodles, eggrolls, chicken wingettes and drummettes, sticky rice, while others had small plates of Vietnamese sweets and cookies.

Earlier in the year *Cô Tiên* told me that she didn't believe the program would exist without the parents' support. As examples she talked about how the parents and community helped with the New Year's celebration, the program's primary fundraiser of the year. For *Tết* she said that "the parents cook the food and bring it only to buy it back to eat to support the program and the parents are happy to do it." She also spoke of going to a local clothing store to find student outfits for the performances. She chose a few and asked if she could borrow them so that the students could try them on. The storeowner told her to take the entire rack of children's clothing, and to bring them back when she could. As a business woman, *Cô Tiên* explained this was not a good business strategy, but that there is such great support in the community that neither was it surprising.

Figure 11: Student Drawings of Chinese Zodiac Signs (Rooster, Dog, & Boar)

Figure 12: Student Drawings of Chinese Zodiac Signs (Horse, Ram, & Monkey)
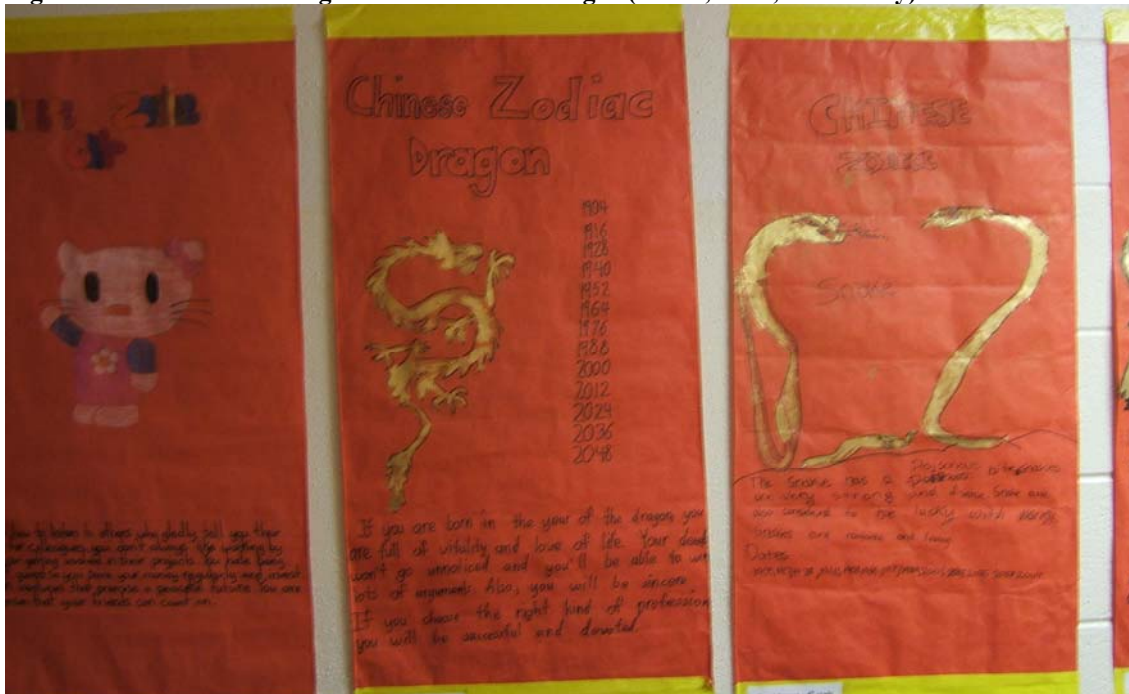
Figure 13: Student Drawings of Chinese Zodiac Signs (Cat, Dragon, & Snake)

Figure 14: Student Drawings of Chinese Zodiac Signs (Rat, Ox, & Tiger)

The first two rows of seats were cordoned off as they were reserved for the night's special guests, the district officials and school teachers. Only a fraction of these particular seats were filled. The district's bilingual education director arrived with her assistant and both were ushered to the front row. An Anglo woman, with what appeared to be her two daughters, sat next to the district bilingual education director; she and her daughters wore shiny red and green Chinese shirts embroidered with gold thread. A couple of other non-Asian folks were in the reserved section but sat off to the side. As the crowd milled about visiting and eating, announcements were periodically made asking students to report to the stage. On either side of the stage are large paper statues of Asian imperial guards holding bowls of fire. Next to each of these were big balloon blowups of Snoopy and Scooby-Doo. In a strange union of East meets West, Snoopy and Scooby-

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Doo were incorporated into the festivities to serve as representations to usher in the year of the dog. Paper lanterns hung from the ceiling and decorated the stage. The curtain itself was also decorated. It was painted with a gated entranceway leading to a majestic estate with dragons adorning the rooftop. The backdrop for the stage depicted rural Vietnam with water buffalo, a humble dwelling place, a woman with two baskets hanging from a pole she carried across her shoulders, and a person rowing his small boat across the water.

Figure 15: Hand-Painted Curtain for Lunar New Year Celebration

Figure 16: Hand-Painted Backdrop for Lunar New Year Celebration

After a flag raising ceremony and the national anthems of the United States and South Vietnam were played, there was an appreciation ceremony recognizing the school principal and the VLC program teachers with gifts of flower bouquets from the parents. *Dr. Tộc,* although now retired, agreed to help with the show. She greeted the guests in both Vietnamese and English and welcomed in the year of the dog. The students who were chosen to narrate the show in both English and Vietnamese stepped out from the side stage. They bid farewell to the year of the rooster and briefly explained that the Vietnamese were largely from an agrarian culture and that the New Year's festival was held after the fall harvest and before the start of a new planting season. Thus, the festival was about welcoming in the spring and anticipating a prosperous year to come. The

students also provided a description of the lunar calendar and the accompanying zodiac animals. "Some people believe that a person born in the year of a certain animal will have some characteristics of that animal." The student went on to describe the characteristics for this the year of the dog.

> A person born in the year of the dog is thought to possess the best traits of human nature. They have a deep sense of loyalty, are honest, and inspire other people's confidence because they know how to keep secrets. Dog people make good leaders and are compatible with those born in the years of the horse, tiger, and rabbit. (Student Script, 2006)

For the Vietnamese, *Tết* is an important time with many associated customs. One must speak gently and well of others, never using profanity, everyone must be on their best behavior as "it is believed that whatever happens this day will determine your luck for the entire year." It is a time of joy and warm gatherings of friends and families to bring in a new year that all hope will be filled with prosperity and love.

The performances included a Taiko drum dance, choreographed dances at each grade level to songs of the spring, the heavens (*Thiên Đàn Búp Bê*), cherry blossoms that signify new beginnings and is a symbol of life and vitality in Vietnamese culture (*Chào Mùa Xuân*), songs that recalled Vietnam through descriptions of particularly well-known areas and of the rural countryside and poor farmers, and a series of martial arts demonstrations including a sword dance. Students from neighboring high schools also participated in the show performing to contemporary hip-hop music dressed in jeans and t-shirts. The show concluded with the traditional dragon dance led by the laughing Buddha. Each performance was introduced by two students, one who read from a script in English, the other from one in Vietnamese. For the pre-kindergarten performance, the following introduction was given:

Springtime for young children is never far away. It is found in places like the playground, the classrooms, and even in their backyards. You know spring is in the air when you see and hear the sounds of children playing, reading, singing and having fun. Today, our pre-kindergarten classes would like to welcome you to their springtime fun through a performance called My Spring. (Student Script, 2006)

The pre-kindergarten students were ushered out onto the stage, the girls wore black and pink leotards and tights with paper tiaras adorned with the words "Happy New Year" in silver glitter while the boys dressed in black with silver top hats and silver sashes tied around their waist. They performed a simple dance to the song *Mùa Xuân Của Bé*. Next were the kindergarten students who performed to the song *Thiên Đàn Búp Bê*, My Magical Heaven. The girls wore pastel colored dresses, halos, and wings while the boys wore all white with bright multicolored sashes and a blue flower pinned to their shirts. In traditional *áo dài,* long form-fitting tunics and wide silk pants, peach for the girls and blue for the boys, the first graders performed to a song about cherry blossoms and springtime, *Chào Mùa Xuân,* or Hello Springtime. Each group performed in turn, ushered into appropriate places by the dozen or so university volunteers and the VLC program teachers. There was one teacher on either side of the stage to raise and lower the curtains, to work the fog making machine, brighten and dim the lights, and to guide students on and off the stage. One teacher dealt with the sound system, one directed the volunteers who helped to sell food and drinks, while the other two monitored the halls and ushered the kids from the classrooms to the backstage area. After each performance the students were guided back to the rooms where they had been waiting earlier to be picked up by their parents. Some students wandered off into the crowd while the parents of other children were not aware of having to pick up their child. Announcements were made

throughout the program to reunite lost children with parents and family. Finally, the

students introduced the program finale, the dragon dance:

> In many large cities, the dragon parade ends many days of celebration. This is the grand climax of the *Tết* holiday and also the grand climax of our show. Vietnamese people believe that being surrounded by loud sounds of banging drums and noisy firecrackers, magic dragons will chase away the bad luck of previous years and shower the people with good fortunes in the New Year. (Student Script, 2006)

Another student took the microphone and continued to describe what the audience should

anticipate:

> The dragon dance team consists of members ranging from second grade all the way to college. Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers who train our students diligently throughout the year and bring you our grand finale. This mystical ceremony will have three parts. At the beginning, the dragons will bow to honor the guests three times. During the middle of the celebration, the Happy Buddha will fan the dragons to peacefully rest their bodies. After restoring their energy, the mystic dragon will awake to further shower the guests with good fortunes. To finally display their majestic powers, the dragons will rise towards the heavenly sky and welcome in the New Year. (Student Script, 2006)

At each performance during the previous three shows, this was the favorite. The loud

drumming started out slow and deliberate steadily increasing the frequency of beats, soon

after the clanging of cymbals and gongs was added. Enormous dragon heads were

manipulated by student performers the mouths opening and closing, the eyes winking at

the audience. There were four large dragons, one black and silver, one green and gold,

one red and gold, and the fourth red and black. On the floor along the front of the stage

were smaller elementary student sized versions of these dragons as well. The dragon

dancers did as the student narrators had explained. They each bowed three times toward

the audience and then began dancing. After a short while, the Happy Buddha made his

way down the stage leading the dragons into the crowd. Some of the dragons leapt up

into the air and landed just in front of the audience. Students and adults squealed with delight at this. I imagine—as had been the case during the school day performances—that some of the younger children cried in fright at this point as the dragons made their way through the crowd eating up small red envelopes of "lucky money" offered to ensure a prosperous new year. Half way through the show, the drums and cymbals slowed and each became more and more quiet; a hush came over the crowd as the dragons laid down to rest and to be fanned by the Happy Buddha. The drums and cymbals grew louder and the crowd more agitated. The dragons once again moved through the crowd. Nearing the end of the show, the dragons made their way to the front of the space to welcome in the New Year. The dragons began their ascent toward the heavens as the dragon dancers at the heads of the dragons were lifted onto the shoulders of others. Once at a great height, long red scrolls flew out from the dragons' mouths. The scrolls read "*Chúc Mừng Năm Mới*" and "Happy New Year."

Figure 17: Lunar New Year Celebration Dragon Dancers

Figure 18: Lunar New Year Celebration Dragon Dancers and Laughing Buddha

CHAPTER FOUR

PLACE, PERFORMATIVITY, AND POWER

Diaspora, Identity, and Home

The transnational migration of millions of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants has lead to the creation of myths and remembrances regarding place and home that mark diasporic communities and the ways in which they understand and experience the world. Diaspora has been defined in numerous ways using varying indicators to identify communities that are "true" diasporic communities. Dorais (2001) presented various conceptualizations of diasporas from Conner's simple and open definition of "any segment of a people living outside their homeland" to Safran and Tololyan who each provided a set of characteristics identifiable within true diasporas. These characteristics included: (1) having ancestors dispersed from a central point of origin toward two or more foreign locations; (2) sharing a collective memory; (3) feeling isolated and alienated from their host society; (4) sharing a well-defined identity before leaving their country; (5) maintaining relations among themselves; and (6) maintaining contacts with the country of origin. Instead of characterizing Vietnamese Americans as constituting either a true or false diaspora, Dorais chose to subscribe to Clifford's assertion that many populations, whether indigenous or migrant, experience "diasporic moments" or "diasporic dimensions" in the course of their history. He wrote of diaspora that,

> The concept may be useful, however, for understanding transnational communities that, unlike 'ordinary' migrants, are not expected—or do not wish—to assimilate to the nation-states in which they live. Such communities must be delineated by *determining what they define themselves against, rather than by locating some of their alleged essential features*. (p. 6, emphasis added)

For the Vietnamese, Dorais maintained, diasporic moments stem from memories of exile and the existence of transnational ethnic organizations. Myths of returning to conquer Communism to reclaim the homeland continue to circulate in overseas Vietnamese communities. Associations established by immigrant Vietnamese maintain that Vietnamese culture has been destroyed by Communism and that it must be preserved abroad. Such preservation, they claim, will facilitate its reinstatement when the current regime falls.

Although these myths have become less relevant to a younger generation of Vietnamese Americans who do not identify with stories of exile from the homeland and as returning to the motherland becomes little more than a nostalgic and fanciful retreat from troubling American ways, Threadgold (2000) asserted,

> The meaning of 'home' is never unproblematic in the diasporic experience and the struggle for the meaning of 'home' is intimately connected to embodiment and identity. Home is rarely a 'place' in fact, but a series of memories and imaginings about 'the way the places we think we have left have shaped us.' (p. 208)

In her study of women's self-representation and ageing, Threadgold described a Vietnamese enclave in Melbourne, Australia as follows,

> The body, as Bourdieu has said, does indeed remember, responding anew to a simulacrum of the past in a new and different space. What is most comfortable for them about this street is its inhabitants whom they called 'the black hairs'. It was good they said, to be among the black hairs again. Familiar bodies, spatial organisation and rhythms mark off this space in the city as theirs. For us, it is exotica, a place of cosmo-multicultural culinary experiments and visual delights, a foreign place. For them it is full of metonymies for Vietnam, smells, tastes, sights and urban geographies which make them feel at home. It was being able to *show* us their ownership of this space, their food again, to have us smell the smells of Vietnam, to meet their friends, being able to show us the way they had remade and translated the space that was now home in this foreign city, that gave them greatest pleasure. (Threadgold, 2000, p. 207)

The memories and imaginings of our elders pervade the worlds we inhabit; the built environment meant to ease the pain of exile and loss simultaneously creates secondary longings and commitments within subsequent generations. Consequently, diasporic struggles over the meanings of home, embodiment, and identity are not limited to those who have known the loss of a motherland. Moreover, such struggles may be felt even more acutely by those who have no memory of a physical space from which to generate possible geographies of desire, from which to construct simulacra to ease the longing for home. One Vietnamese Language and Culture program teacher described this space of neither here nor there regarding her students:

> …then another challenge, I see, like more and more, especially with the younger generation, the parents themselves, like our age, they speak more English than Vietnamese and so, when their children, even though their children are Vietnamese, they don't know anything about Vietnam or Vietnamese. And so, the kids, literally, are American, but they look Vietnamese, but they're not really Americans because they really, they don't really participate in mainstream American activities, you know. They're still in their Vietnamese, within the Vietnamese community, kind of in the middle, kind of stuck, not quite mainstream all the way, but yet, they don't know anything about their background or traditions or heritage (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

Ang-Lygate (1996) discussed experiences of transmigrant Chinese and Filipina women who moved to the United Kingdom from their home countries. She described the construction of the female Self as not only a product of socialization but as "equally a product of individual locationing, in historical time, geographical space, and within hierarchised frameworks of power relationships" (p. 375). She argued that there is an "(un)location," the term she uses for the space where experiences of diaspora reside and that, "[these spaces] are invisible, and largely unacknowledged and therefore under-

theorised" (p. 377). The work presented here attempts to begin theorizing these (un)locations through interrogations of spatial production and performativity.

In coming to an understanding of my observations in the field, my responses to the field, the responses of those in the field to me, the concept of place, in particular, place-making was increasingly significant. As I made sense of my place in the world, the ways in which I was positioned by others, by cultural, communal, and familial pressures of being a Vietnamese girl, by the "natural" logics and structures of schooling, I came to understand how these too impinged upon what form my movement in the world could take, how I could push back and renegotiate and reterritorialize those locations, the ways in which my locations positioned others too. The spaces I occupied and helped to (re)produce mediated the (in)appropriateness of my performances therein. Yet, embodied and emplaced experiences of the world are often subsumed to or neglected within our *conceived* understandings of the world. These are largely displaced by legitimated forms of knowing, that is, textually based knowledge production and critique. I aim not to discount the importance of history and voice, of who may speak and author texts, but rather I hope to provide accounts that privilege a different kind of knowing in an effort to reveal everyday counter-spaces and counter-performances. Perhaps accounts such as these may illuminate alternate possibilities and work to stave off those spaces which allow us "to treat each other like dead objects rather than living subjects" (D. E. Foley, 1990, p. 168).

On Place, Space, and Power

Massey (1993) asserted that the literature around space is connected by a common thread, that is, space defined as stasis. She wrote, "…among the many and conflicting definitions of space that are current in the literature, there are some—and very powerful ones—which deprive it of politics and of the possibility of politics: they effectively depoliticize the realm of the spatial" (p. 142). Because space and place are largely conceptualized as static and neutral, researchers and practitioners consequently attribute to them a problematic transparency. This study examined place-making in the context of a program designed for a low-incidence population, in this case Vietnamese. It argues that the spatial is not politically neutral and that place, both literal and figurative, affects the bodies of teachers and students framing (im)possible subject positions. Places forged through social relations in turn influence how subjects learn their place, are displaced, put in their place, and reappropriate, transform or reterritorialize places. Examining how power circumscribes, circulates within, and emanates from places—through mapping the spatial practices that are (dis)allowed, the kinds of representations of space inscribed within these places, and the lived experiences of particular places—is instructive in interrogating determinations of how vulnerable populations are placed and how they might engage in place-making that resists dispersion, homogenization, and colonization.

Critical spatial theorists and philosophers such as Malpas, Soja, Keith and Pile, make distinctions between space and place. Although these are important conversations that shed light on the ways in which we talk about and conceive of spaces and places, this study is not interested in the dimensions or characteristics that distinguish between these concepts. Rather, I am interested in the process orientation of place-making.

Consequently, it is outside the scope of this study to delve into a contested realm of discourse that attempts to define and delineate distinctions between place and space. However, because there is a history that subordinates the idea of place to space, this comes to bear on the taken-for-grantedness of place-making in education and educational research.

Gruenewald (2003) and others (Casey, 1997; E. W. Soja, 1989) argued that "place has been undermined and subordinated to space and time" (p. 622). They contend that neglect of spatial dimensions stems from a history of unproblematic acceptance of *space* as an empty container and of *place* as simply a location or point on a grid wherein human beings animate the world. Malpas (1999) wrote,

> …we very often treat places purely in terms of their abstracted, represented identities, rather than attending to the concreteness with which those places actually present themselves. In doing so, we are often led to view places as if they were just the static backdrops to action and experience, rather than being the very ground and frame for such. (p. 173)

He cautioned that place should not be conceived as merely location, but that neither should it be seen as the psychological emotional responses to physical spaces. Others (Dear, 1997; Featherstone & Lash, 1999; Massey, 1993, 1994; Natter & Jones III, 1997; Peet, 1997; Shields, 1991, 1997; E. Soja & Hooper, 1993; E. W. Soja, 1989, 1999) also discuss this problematic treatment of space and place as nothing other than transparent, neutral, and empty. Shields (1991) suggested that traditional conceptualizations of space and place are reduced to "context-less assemblages of objects and then to a grid of meaning" resulting in an impoverished understanding of the "manner in which the range of images reflects, and is evidence of, an all-pervasive logic of social spatialisations by which places, views, and scenes are linked to feelings, ideas, and political and cultural

ideologies" (p. 26). These are difficult terms, as Soja argued, because of their broad meanings and because the spatial is one of the "unsaid dimensions" of epistemological and ontological structures. Casey (1997) suggested that a philosophy of place may have been hidden and obscured because our experience of places is so commonplace. This is the fundamental paradox of place, that "although we can experience it everywhere, everywhere it recedes from consciousness as we become engrossed in our routines in space and time" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 622). Thus, these spatial theorists argue the importance of elaborating these concepts through the interconnections of subjectivity, objectivity, and intersubjectivity as well as notions of agency and causality.

Intimately tied to our identities (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996), Carter, Donald, and Squires asserted of place that "the presumed certainties of cultural identity, firmly located in particular places which housed stable cohesive communities of shared tradition and perspective, though never a reality for some, were increasingly disrupted and displaced for all" (1993, p. vii). Even so, what is possible is circumscribed not simply by our spatial locations, but by our subjectivities within particular places. Malpas wrote,

> Our subjectivity is inseparably tied to place, so our self-identity and self-conceptualization (and our conceptualization of others) is something that can only be worked out in relation to place and to our active engagement in place—and this is so regardless of whether or not we give explicit recognition to the fact. (Malpas, 1999, p. 178)

Further, "As centers of experience, places can also be said to hold our culture and even our identity" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 625). Along with Foucault, Lefebvre, Shields, and others, I contend that places delimit what is possible, what behaviors, what traditions, what rituals are (dis)allowed. Appadurai (1988), Gieryn (2000), and Natter and Jones III

(1997) called for greater attention to the spatial dimension in relation to identity production. Natter and Jones III maintained, "Inasmuch as social relations constitute and embed both identities and space, theorizing the linkages between these moments is an important task for social theory" (p. 142). Elaborating on this, Gieryn suggested that such a task would involve the ability to:

> …see all social phenomena as emplaced, as being constituted in part through location, material form, and their imaginings (Appadurai 1996). Put more tractably, place stands in a recursive relation to other social and cultural entities: places are made through human practices and institutions even as they help to make those practices and institutions (Giddens 1984). Place mediates social life; it is something more than just another independent variable (Abu-Lughod 1968). (2000, p. 467)

Although increasingly examined in the social sciences broadly, such interrogations have been infrequent in educational research literature. Perhaps this is a result of our ubiquitous and commonplace encounters with place as is discussed by Casey (1997). Gruenewald proposed a different possibility,

> Although culture and place are deeply intertwined (Basso, 1996; Casey, 1997; Feld & Basso, 1996), our relationship with places has been obscured by an educational system that currently neglects them. That is, schooling often distracts our attention from, and distorts our response to, the actual contexts of our own lives (places). (2003, p. 621)

He went on to assert that not only does formal education neglect culture and place, moreover, it "blunts our ability to perceive" (p. 625). This blunting of our perceptual ability arises out of how we are normalized and our bodies disciplined such that we take for granted and are complicit in specific and uneven social and spatial arrangements.

Gruenewald (2003) went on to write,

> The colonization and *displacement* of disenfranchised cultural groups (e.g., African Americans and Native Americans) are the epitome of how power has operated historically through the production of space, how power affects and controls people and places simultaneously. (p. 630)

In the following sections of analysis, I explore this simultaneous control of peoples and places as it may be, as Soja (1989) suggested, "space more than time that hides consequences from us, the 'making of geography' more than the 'making of history' that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world" (p. 1).

Foucault asserted that "all of the knowledge we have is the result of the effect of power struggles" (Mills, 1997, p. 21). This relationship, which Foucault refers to as power/knowledge, informs what we accept and practice as truth. One "truth" Foucault strived to disrupt is the Marxian notion of power that is repressive and conceived of as a possession to be found in economic structures. However, Foucault argued, "If power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey?" (1980). Thus, he saw power not as something that could be possessed nor as simply and solely an oppressive force, rather, he saw power as circulating through social relations. For Foucault, where there was power, there was also resistance. With this conceptualization, individual's subject positions were framed by effects of power that are neither fixed nor stable. Yet, the normalization of "docile bodies" appears pervasive.

Foucault (1986) wrote that "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time" (p. 23). Interrogating the relationship between power and space, he characterized spatial arrangements and architecture as technologies aimed at creating "docile bodies." This was achieved through enclosure and the organization of individuals in space. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault described technologies of power, or disciplinary methods as:

> …a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation
> of its elements, its gestures, its behavior…. it defined how one may have a
> hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes,
> but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed
> and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected
> and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. (pp. 137-138)

Discipline works to create obedient, complicit, normalized subjects. Foucault wrote that "discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (1977a, p. 141). Such discipline and distribution is achieved through categorization and classification, or through a spatial ordering aimed at controlling the body. This in turn produces a "hierarchical and efficiently visible organization" (Foucault, 1984, p. 19). Moreover, "a disciplined body is the prerequisite of an efficient gesture" (p. 152).

Drawing from Foucault, Shields (1991) contended that "spatial control is an essential constituent of modern technologies of discipline and power" which proceeded through the organization of individuals in space. This would require "a specific enclosure of space" so as to facilitate use of particular techniques of power including supervision, discipline, and normalization. He wrote,

> The human body enters a spatial machinery of power that explores it,
> breaks it down, and rearranges it (Foucault 1979: 137-138), allocating to
> each person a place, and to each place a person (Foucault 1979: 143). In
> this 'grid' or apparatus, each position or place is coded as a value so that
> the distribution of functions is transposed into relations fixed in this
> structured grid. The success of this arrangement thus depends on the
> coding of this space. In this manner, individuals and values become places
> and positions in a grid defined by power which are observed and
> administered with great efficiency. (p. 40)

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault elaborated on this "bio-power" aimed at the "subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (1978, p. 140). He claimed that this form of power was increasingly foregrounded as a result of shifts in governance to account for the explosion of populations. Soja too took up this discourse and incorporated

it into his understanding of the spatial dimension. He noted the ways in which the capitalist mode of production produced and reproduced uneven developments through homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchization. Natter and Jones III, a social theorist and geographer, respectively, also theorized how effects of power circulated through categorization. They wrote:

> Rather than the mere filling-in of linguistic containers that facilitate communication, the category's role in instrumental reason suggests that it is a purposeful construction that is never neutral in intent nor inconsequential in effect. As Foucault argued, where one encounters the category, one of necessity also finds ordering, hierarchy, and—under the aegis of instrumental reason—tools for social dominations. In short, in the category there lurks a particular form of social power: the ability to seize alterity and assign it a social significance. (1997, p. 143)

The categories we create are instrumental in delineating insiders and outsiders, foreigners and citizens, center and periphery. They come to bear on the types of spaces we produce and likewise, how spaces simultaneously produce us. Such categorization and spatializations raise the specter of institutions composed of essentialized and homogenized individuals and spaces.

Henri Lefebvre's Theory of Spatial Production

In order to expose these disciplining technologies, I draw from Lefebvre's theory of spatial production. Lefebvre argued the need to "uncover the theoretical unity among three fields that are usually apprehended separately: the physical (nature); the mental (logical and formal abstractions); and the social" (Dear, 1997, p. 50). This could be realized through an interrogation of how space is produced. He argued that,

> To date, work in this area has produced either mere descriptions which never achieve analytical much less theoretical, status, or else fragments and cross-sections of space. There are plenty of reasons for thinking that

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descriptions and cross-sections of this kind, though they may well supply inventories of what exists in space, or even generate a discourse on space, cannot ever give rise to a knowledge of space. And, without such a knowledge, we are bound to transfer onto the level of discourse, of language per se—i.e. the level of mental space—a large portion of the attributes and 'properties' of what is actually social space. (p. 7)

The failure of the social sciences to delve deeply into the production of space in order to develop a more complex understanding and to define a line of work that would provide insights into the lived bodily experiences of people troubled Lefebvre. He believed that traditional means of inquiring into social relations enacted primarily through language and other abstractions were impoverished. How could one move directly from abstractions to experience? For Lefebvre, the mediating element was space. He wrote,

In the immediacy of the links between groups, between members of groups, and between 'society' and nature, occupied space gives direct expression—'on the ground', so to speak—to the relationships upon which social organization is founded. Abstraction has very little place in these relationships (1991, p. 229)

Moreover, Lefebvre also contended that absent concepts of space and spatial production, "power (whether as reality or concept) simply cannot achieve concreteness" (1991, p. 281). Thus, the demand to critically examine spatial production in relation to Foucault's creation of docile bodies through social and spatial ordering becomes of great urgency in a terror-driven post 9/11 era where "foreignness" and difference are increasingly under attack.

Discussions of otherness, foreignness, marginalization often portray how the dominant social order oppresses and assimilates, that understand "the margin as a site of deprivation or domination." There are few which reveal instances of resistance and empowerment within these marginal spaces (Gee, 1999; Pillow, 2003, 2004). Using Lefebvre's three dimensions of spatial production—spatial practices, representations of

space, and representational space or the "spatial imaginary"—I hope to show how the spaces within which the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers, parents, and students operate work on these individuals in ways that both produce docile bodies as well as resisting bodies and how these spaces were appropriated and transformed through acts of hybrid place-making and its attendant performances. I argue that in continuing to confine our understanding of the spatial to static backdrops, we limit our abilities to imagine spaces of difference, geographies of desire, places of radical openness and possibility (hooks, 1990a), third spaces of political opportunity (Bhabha, 1994).

The first of Lefebvre's dimensions of spatial production is spatial practice. For Lefebvre, spatial practices involve a continual "appropriation and re-affirmation of the world as structured according to existing socio-spatial arrangements" (Shields, 1991, p. 52). He characterized the spatial practices of a society as follows:

> The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytical standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space…. A spatial practice must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that it is coherent (in the sense of intellectually worked out or logically conceived). (p. 38)

Spatial practices create a sense of contiguity and coherence whereby social practices are connected with particular places. They often become sedimented into our ways of knowing such that we achieve a certain spatial competence and take for granted spatial performances. For instance, we enact taken for granted spatial performances in places inscribed with particular significance (e.g., movie theatres, beaches, classrooms, restaurants, etc.). Our "competencies" in these spaces increases as we are socialized into

the mores and norms of the larger community. It is within this dimension that we *perceive* the world.

The second dimension, representations of space, are the abstractions we construct of lived space. Lefebvre called this "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (1991, p. 38). He conceived of this dimension as constituting the dominant space of late capitalist societies. That is, the ways in which we *conceive* of the world, the abstractions we create, dominate the ways in which we negotiate living in the world. Shields explained these representations as "central to forms of knowledge and claims of truth made in the social sciences which in turn ground the rational/professional power structure of the capitalist state" (1991, p. 54). Lefebvre (1991) went on to suggest that "conceptions of space tend…towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs" (p. 39). These verbal abstractions are inherently reductive in their insistence to homogenize; moreover, "*there is a violence intrinsic to abstraction,* and to abstraction's practical (social) use" (1991, p. 289, italics in the original)

Finally, the third dimension, representational space or the "spatial imaginary" is "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). Lefebvre considered this space dominated and "passively experienced." He contended that this is the "space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" and which tends towards "more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs" (p. 39). This for Lefebvre is what he

called *absolute* space as opposed to the *abstract* space produced through representations of space, conceived space. He wrote

> …in every society, absolute space assumes meanings addressed not to the intellect but to the body, meanings conveyed by threats, by sanctions, by a continual putting-to-the-test of the emotions. This space is 'lived' rather than conceived, and it is a representational space rather than a representation of space; no sooner is it conceptualized than its significance wanes and vanishes. (pp. 235-236)

Shields wrote that representational space "is a matter of *functions and effects of a given, often untheorised understanding of space.* This amounts to the effect conceptions of reality have in terms of conditioning discursive possibilities" (1991, p. 54, italics in the original). However, representational space comprises the prevailing patterns and social relations which are able to both close off and open up possibilities for imagining otherwise. There is a trilectic relation between the three; they are interdependent, each always already implicated in the other. Using these dimensions as an analytic frame allowed for a critical socio-spatial analysis of the relations constituting the Vietnamese Language and Culture program.

In an effort to examine the spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces surrounding this Vietnamese Language and Culture program, I examined processes of place-making. The majority of the research literature around ethnic place-making speaks to what Chacko (2003) called ethnic *sociocommerscapes* defined as the "ethnic business areas that serve dual purposes as commercial areas and sites of social interaction between co-ethnics" (p. 21). Consequently, these examinations pursue an understanding of social relations found in small neighborhoods or ethnic business enclaves, particularly those confined to private spaces. Such is the case with literature focused on Vietnamese place-making (Aguilar-San Juan, 2005; Mazumdar,

Mazumdar, Docuyanan, & McLaughlin, 2000; Wood, 1997). However, the intimate connections between place and identity suggest that it is important, especially for displaced communities, to explore these relations within other major social institutions, particularly public institutions such as schools. Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) asserted that "the concept of 'place' has been neglected in contemporary education, yet it seems to be an important one for postmodern times" (p. 387). She argued that where you are and where you come from are intimately interwoven with a knowledge of who you are. Further she suggested that there is a deep sense of loss of place in contemporary times which "undoubtedly affects all aspects of education and teaching" (p. 388). Thus, to address this lack she examined the concept of place in education generally and, in particular, how immigrant teachers find and make a place for themselves within schools. She commented on the emphases placed on political and historical frames regarding this type of work and the strange absence of a sense of place:

> Teachers' lives and the development of their careers and identities have been the focus of much recent research on teaching. We now have a rich and detailed understanding of teachers' life stories (Gudmundsdottir, 1991; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), and of how teachers develop a 'teaching self' (Nias, 1985; Measor, 1985; Kelchtermans, 1993). Efforts have been made to contextualize this understanding in terms of the concrete details of biography, school settings, relationships and educational systems within which teachers work (Raymond *et al.,* 1992). The need to attend to the political and historical frames within which teachers' lives are lived and their stories elaborated has also been emphasized (Goodson, 1992). What is often strangely lacking, however, despite descriptions of social and cultural context, is a sense of the teacher teaching in a *place*—a given location that is not only specific, describable and distinct from other locations, but that holds meaning, that matters to the persons who inhabit it. (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, pp. 387-388)

Although this work around place-making and the production of space is a significant contribution to social theory, what these pieces leave largely unaddressed and, in fact

may perpetuate, are practices reinscribing pseudo-natural boundaries that determine who and what may be included or excluded within private and public spheres. There is little research around place-making efforts of subaltern subjects within public spaces. I contend that it is largely our sedimented practices and abstractions which delimit public spaces such as schools as spaces for the production of a unitary and productive nation. Consequently, spaces of difference are relegated to the private realm. Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) suggested though that "It is impossible to look at how people negotiate immigration and acquire or create a sense of belonging in a new place without at the same time questioning how the place itself makes it possible for various groups to belong" (p. 391).

I contend that to interrogate processes of place-making and how places make belonging or exclusion possible, we must attend to everyday practices and relations. Moreover, we must attend to these within public spaces. With Villenas (2000), I argue that examinations of social life must extend to the mundane, the ordinary, the everyday as this may reveal what a tradition of exotic ethnographies are incapable of, that is, moments of resistance that may illuminate the emergence and sustainability of our critical subjectivities.

Watkins (2005) used Lefebvre's dimensions of spatial production in organizational analysis suggesting that current discussions of organizational space attend to only a single aspect of space unlike the focus on physical, mental, and social space that Lefebvre provides. She suggested these dimensions were important "to make lucid the complexities of everyday life" (p. 209). Another feminist researcher, Dyck (2005), too pointed to the importance of examining the everyday and, in particular, feminist

geography with regard to the everyday and caregiving. Regarding transmigration and Asians, Chuh and Shimakawa (2001) argued that it is the "quotidian (rather than academic) configurations of Asianness [which] are transgressive of national and disciplinary borders" (p. 15). Moreover, with Bhabha (1994), I contend that

> it is precisely in these banalities that the unhomely stirs, as the violence of a racialized society falls most enduringly on the details of life: where you can sit, or not; how you can live, or not; what you can learn, or not; who you can love, or not. Between the banal act of freedom and its historic denial rises the silence (p. 21)

In addition to attending to place-making in the everyday practices of social relations, I too argue that it is important to critically examine performances surrounding place-making.

Dwight Conquergood's Terminals of Performance

Performances of place-making and the performances which are (dis)allowed by places—"practices a place makes possible or closes off" (Pillow, 2000)—are significant to an examination of the everyday. Kondo wrote, "the ephemerality of performance, its implication of audiences, its resistance to fixity, make it more continuous with the anthropological focus on the contextual and on the practice of everyday life" (2001, p. 30). Hence, in addition to using Lefebvre's production of space, I too look to Conquergood to frame my analysis of the performances I presented in the previous chapters. Along with the notion of place-making, performance offers a second overlaying frame that emphasizes *processual dimensions of the every day* that hold out the "the promise of reimagining and refashioning the world" (Conquergood, 1989, p. 83). Although there are multiple and contested definitions and theories of performance (B.

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Alexander, G. L. Anderson, & B. P. Gallegos, 2005), the utility and power of this concept

is found in the work of prominent scholars including Judith Butler and Erving Goffman.

Foley (2005) argued

> Once we acknowledge that all public identities are performances (i.e.,
> discursively constructed expressive forms), our common sense
> understanding of identities as fixed and stable collapses. Once we have
> made the notion of identities processual, we have many new things to
> study. (p. 228)

For the purposes of this study, I use Conquergood's description of performance to frame

a complementary secondary analysis of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program.

However, due to limitations of space and time, this secondary analysis is not fully

explicated here.

Conquergood (1989; 2002) offered *performance* as an analytic frame that

privileges process; in particular, he contended that poetics, play, process, and power were

"significant terminals in the discursive network" of the anthropology of performance. For

Conquergood, "Cultures and selves are not given, they are made; even like fictions, they

are 'made up'" (p. 83). *Poetics* in performance-based research features "the fabricated,

invented, imagined, constructed nature of human realities" the most conspicuous of

which include "rituals, festivals, spectacles, dramas, narratives, metaphors, games,

celebrations" (p. 83). These have the capacity to "remind us that cultures and persons are

more than just created; they are creative" (p. 83). His second terminal in the discursive

network of performance, *play*, was described as being linked to terms such as

"improvisation, innovation, experimentation, frame, reflection, agitation, irony, parody,

jest, clowning, and carnival" (p. 83). It "opens up a privileged space for sheer

deconstruction and reconstruction" (p. 83). Conquergood described the performance of play as follows:

> As soon as a world has been made, lines drawn, categories defined, hierarchies erected, then the trickster, the archetypal performer, moves in to breach norms, violate taboos, turn everything upside down. By playing with social order, unsettling certainties, the trickster intensifies awareness of the vulnerability of our institutions. (p. 83)

The third terminal, *process*, dispossesses us of desires to conceive of the world in terms of "static structures and stable systems with variables that can be measured, manipulated, and managed" (Conquergood, 1989, p. 83). Conquergood associated process with descriptors including "emergent, temporal, contingent, provisional, indeterminate, dynamic, destabilizing" (p. 83). In framing educational research and its findings as process-oriented, we expand our understanding of culture and are more conscientious of the "irreducible and evanescent dynamics of social life—all the forces that resist closure" (p. 83).

Finally, Conquergood (1989) suggested that the fourth terminal, *power*, invokes such words as "politics, history, ideology, domination, resistance, appropriation, struggle, conflict, accommodation, subversion, and contestation" (p. 84). With its emphasis on processualism, Conquergood noted that ethnographers increasingly champion research questions that acknowledge a "both/and complexity" rather than an "either/or polarization." Questions that he asked included "How are performances situated between forces of accommodation and resistance? And how do they simultaneously reproduce and struggle against hegemony? What are the performative resources for interrupting master scripts?" (p. 84). In their recent work on performance theories in education, Alexander, Anderson, and Gallegos (2005) asserted that through a performance lens, we are less

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likely to succumb to a cognitive reductionism that allows the treatment of culture as so many "variables to be isolated, measured, and manipulated" (p. 2). They went on to argue that "the extent to which people enact assigned *assumed-to-be-natural* roles and the degree to which they enact counter roles or modify existing ones, provides an analytical space in which to rethink current conceptions of pedagogy, policy, and leadership" (pp. 3-4).

In her article, "Productive bodies, performative spaces: Everyday life in Christopher Park," Conlon draws from Lefebvre and Butler to "excavate the intersection between space and identity" (2004, p. 462). Although Conlon uses the term "identity," it is critical to a performance orientation that identity is understood as:

> …not only a state of being, but a matter of becoming and enacting. Identity then is conceptualized as contingent, unstable, and constantly being remade. The analytic of performance enables theorists and researchers to conceive of individuals and groups as imbued with agency and promotes the consideration of the complex and dynamic nature of social action. (Manalansan IV, 2001, p. 156)

In bringing the work of Lefebvre and Butler together within her study, Conlon desired to reveal the possibilities of spatial production and performance in imagining and living otherwise. In explicating her use of these analytics, she wrote:

> 'representations of space/*discourses*, constrain the gendered/sexed production of the social spaces of everyday life and operate to produce 'concrete abstractions/*the citation of norms*'. Our bodies are imbricated in these processes at the same time that they produce us. In this sense space and identity, as well as representation and discourse, are mutually constituted and our productive bodies constitute performative spaces. However, we do not simply re-produce or re-enact institutional knowledge in our everyday practice, instead the 'production/ *performative'* acts of social space and gendered and sexed bodies offer the possibility for 'moments of "truth"/*subversive acts*', wherein space and sexuality can be done differently. (pp. 464-465)

Conlon recognized, though, that the coupling of Lefebvre and Butler is an uneasy one. Although Butler appears to conceive of discourse and materiality as inseparably bound, Lefebvre is troubled by our inattention to the ways in which discursive representations of space have dominated lived space. Conlon wrote:

> …spoken and written words are fetishes of western culture that 'are taken for (social) practice' (Lefebvre, 1991: 28); they dominate the social production of space operating in the realm of concrete abstractions and serve to obscure, through apparent legibility, the process of social production. (p. 465)

Although Lefebvre draws from a Marxist tradition, the obscured social production processes are not necessarily tied up solely in class or capital. Rather, Lefebvre understands culture as the production of space, as the trilectic interplay of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space or the "spatial imaginary." Through this work, I hope to provide a critical socio-spatial analysis that privileges the everyday through examinations of place-making and performance. This may serve to encourage a reconsideration of how we live and experience the world so that we may "enable subversions that matter" (D. Kondo, 2001, p. 39). The material effects of a power that hasten us to count, disaggregate, and order inputs and outputs to satisfy a pervasive efficiency-bias in our understanding of the world are not impervious and absolute. The ways in which the VLC program teachers, parents, and students resist normalization and disciplinary techniques derived from what Shields called a "Taylorism of perception," whereby how we order the world appears largely informed by managerialist biases, reveal inadequacies within notions of democracy that fail to understand difference and subalterity. Shields (1991) wrote, "In their pursuit of theoretical elegance in the form of a 'Taylorism of perception,' the positivist geography of 'mental images' and 'cognitive

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maps' perpetuate the administrative bias of the social sciences identified by Foucault" (p. 24). This administrative bias was apparent in the spatial and social ordering of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, but so too were instances of resistance, of hybrid placemaking that served to counter hegemonic practices and representations.

CHAPTER FIVE

HYBRID PLACE-MAKING ON THE MARGIN: A CRITICAL

SOCIO-SPATIAL ANALYSIS

A Taylorism of Perception: Steering at a distance

Increases in immigrant populations and debates over the teaching of "foreign" languages are not new to American public education. Tyack's (1974) history of urban education in the United States recounts a swelling of European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the accompanying response of assimilationist policies. Because immigration and "radical foreign values" were blamed for ignorance, vagrancy, criminality, and the general disorderliness of society, Americanization of immigrants became a primary concern of schools in serving the public good. Public education was seen as "the most humane form of social control and the safest method of social renewal" (p.74). Such "humane" form of social control and renewal would be realized, in part, through a systematic excision of foreign languages and cultures and socialization to American norms (Spring, 2001a, 2001b; Tyack, 1974). This form of social efficiency permeated multiple sectors of society. During and subsequent to World War I, behaviorism and science prevailed as the means through which societies would advance. Businesses engaged in scientific investigations involving time-and-motion studies with an eye on creating a surplus of products for the common social good. "Educational progressives" (Tyack) soon took up the call for scientism in the continued search for the "one best system."

Taylor's principles of scientific management continue to be significant to our understanding of the organization of schools. In their discussion of historical shifts in the study of organizational theory, Hinings and Greenwood (2002) suggested that the study of organizations was conducted initially by faculty within the social sciences, in particular those from schools of sociology, and has since then moved onto research agendas within business schools. With this shift they argued, the study of organizations increasingly took on a more managerial orientation in contrast to its once sociological focus. Hinings and Greenwood wrote, "In particular, the question of consequences, i.e., efficient and effective *for whom?*, is usually left unasked" (p. 413). Where once questions of consequences were explored, organizational theory now focused on questions of efficiency and outcomes.

In response, Clegg (2002) provided something of a genealogy of organizational theory development. He suggested that Hinings and Greenwood's explanation of the disappearance of the disciplinary roots in sociology as the reason for organizational theory's inability to "exercise sufficient torque or purchase" is too simplistic and fails to recognize more insidious dynamics at play. Clegg wrote:

> …in North American organization studies, rationalized rationality has become the moral path, a path on which the social practice of science as something that involves politics becomes minimized by a singular focus on efficiency and effectiveness. And rather than this being the intended consequence of some grand strategy, it is far more feasible to see this as an unanticipated outcome of the normalization of organization theory within the disciplinary rituals of those institutions that host it. (p. 437)

These organizational theorists raise questions of morality, of political and cultural consequences, of how the organization of schools creates uneven power relations, of the importance of tracing these organizational techniques that discipline and normalize in

manners that diminish us. These questions of power relations though become obscured in our depoliticized pursuits of efficiency, effectiveness, and economy.

Taylor's scientific management as a method of labor discipline and plant organization to improve efficiency and expand production through maximization of output to input ratios and benefits to cost were well-received in the United States. The success of scientific management in the business sector evidenced in dramatic increases in production was soon championed by those in education arguing that these ideas of systematization, standardization, and scientific investigation to enhance productivity and efficiency would be equally beneficial in schools.

In his analysis of Taylorism, Littler (1978) examined divisions of labor, structures of control over task performance, and implicit employment relationships. Divisions of labor for Taylor are based on five principles constituting a "dynamic of deskilling". These principles include a general principle of maximum fragmentation promoting limitations of individual jobs to a single task, the separation of planning and doing, the suppression of worker's activities and involvement in the preparation and organization of his/her own work, minimization of skill requirements and job-learning time, and the reduction of material handling to a minimum. The second dimension of Taylor's scientific management, the structure of control of task performance, is characterized by standardization described by Taylor (1967) such that

> The work of every workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used in doing the work…. This task specifies not only what is to be done but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it. (p. 39)

This structure of control was also characterized by what Taylor termed *functional organization* where, not only were workers to be subdivided and deskilled, but managers too were spatialized into a division of management paralleling the division of labor. Monitoring systems became central to Taylor's structure of control. As supervisory abilities were diminished due to the growth of large complex organizations with increased physical separation, the demand for monitoring from a distance through performance documentation grew. Finally, his incentive payment scheme was understood by Littler to be a method of system integration as Taylor was unconcerned with social integration. That is, Taylorism is not simply looking for a means of control of task performance, but more importantly, a means to perpetuating this control through an "atomization of the workforce" instituted through worker self-interest.

In their discussion of performance indicators, Helsby and Saunders (1993) indicate that Taylorism remains easily identifiable in large-scale social and educational programs and manifested in a

> recurrent pattern of centrally devised and standardized programmes, divided into manageable units, aimed at particular target groups, implemented by teacher/workers, who had not been involved in the planning of the programme, constantly monitored by outsiders concerned with efficiency, and finally judged by 'consumers' rather than by 'workers'. (p. 61)

Maurice Holt (2001) too argued that the persistence of Taylorism has marked schools. He delineated four "regrettable respects" by which this has occurred. These are: (a) a separation between educational administration and curriculum planning; (b) a fostering of the teachers viewed as "mere functionaries on the receiving end of curriculum schemes devised elsewhere" (p. 147); (c) an emphasis on outcomes rather than inputs; and (d) a "mania for numerical results" leading to an overly heavy reliance on tests, assessments,

audits, and appraisals. Although some would argue that Taylorism is dead in the U. S., that systematization and standardization through scientific investigations are no longer feasible in this more complex society dependent on knowledge/information workers rather than factory line workers, I argue that Taylorism is not dead, that it has simply undergone a revival. Pollitt (1990) characterized this revival as "more tightly focused, financially disciplined, performance-conscious management" (p. 112), dubbed neo-Taylorism, in British and American managerial reforms in the 1970s and 1980s. Neo-Tayloristic means of restructuring and managing schools are apparent in Ball's (1990; 2003) *new managerialism* and Foucault's (1991) *governmentality*.

Discussing governmentality, Foucault contended that 'governing at a distance' occurred through practices that "constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals *in their freedom* can use in dealing with each other" (Foucault, 1997, p. 166). Thus, it is through strategies and practices that demand constant self-regulation that government rationality is exercised. Populations can then be governed at a distance with what Ball (2003) calls "no hands control" and relations of power continue to be reproduced. Performance accountability measures are one strategy through which this is realized. Although the Vietnamese students are sequestered in their two yellow portables, they are still easily identified, categorized, and managed through the disciplinary technology of standardized examinations. Another means by which Neo-Taylorism is reconstituted in schools is in the dynamic de-skilling and re-skilling of teachers as "'classroom managers' or as supervisors of a predetermined classroom production process" (Carlson, 1986, p. 22). In the last narrative describing the performances of the Vietnamese teachers, it is evident that they do not perceive

themselves to be simply classroom managers. Rather, they are keepers of the Vietnamese culture. The will to reassert their subjectivities as cultural producers rather than objects to be manipulated underpins this resistance culture.

In his literature on *new managerialism*, Ball (1993; 1994; 2003) suggested that the "installation of the new culture of competitive performativity involves the use of a combination of devolution [site-based management], targets and incentives to bring about new forms of sociality and new institutional forms" (2003, p. 219). Taylorism's uniform practices and operating procedures, monitoring systems to enhance performance comparisons, and the stabilization of performance efforts through incentive schemes to ensure calculability and predictability within organizations (Helsby & Saunders, 1993) are augmented with this intensification of scientific management.

These management practices of reform reflect techniques of power "invented to meet the demands of production" (Foucault, 1980, p. 161). Through these techniques Foucault's *governmentality,* or the art of government is expanded via the self-regulation of docile bodies or what Ball sees as the displacement of individual qualities resulting in inauthentic practices and relationships. Ball (2003) wrote,

> …the potential for inauthenticity and meaninglessness is increasingly an everyday experience for all. The activities of the new technical intelligentsia, of management, drive performativity into the day-to-day practices of teachers and into the social relations between teachers. They make management, ubiquitous, invisible, inescapable—part of and embedded in everything we do. Increasingly, we choose and judge our actions and they are judged by others on the basis of their contribution to organizational performance, rendered in terms of measureable outputs. (p. 223)

Although these techniques of management may appear novel, the effects of these more particularized technologies remain the same. Instead of control over surplus in commodities, an efficient commodification of knowledge as measured through

performance accountability systems is established and sustained through self-discipline and self-regulation.

The logics of Taylor's scientific management of mass production and efficiency manifest in spatializing techniques in schools including age grouping and egg-crate architectures that facilitate the Americanization and normalization of students. Subdivisions of students within grades by ability groupings via intelligence tests, standardized exams, language surveys, further spatialize students and teachers casting some as regular or normal and others as deviant. Foucault (1977a) regarded this division of space as a disciplining practice that seeks to produce docile bodies. In his book, *Raising Silent Voices: Educating the linguistic minorities for the 21st century,* Trueba (1989) described the production of docile bodies:

> Linguistic minority students may notice upon arrival at the new school that teachers control all the details of classroom activities. Students ask permission to talk, they observe different norms of behavior in specific school contexts, and they imitate behaviors. Newcomers may also notice that teachers control the posture and physical movements of students in class, as well as their access to others, the manner in which requests are made, and the overall participation of students in academic activities. (p. 39)

Spatializing techniques such as these persist in schools and are commonly seen as natural. What becomes naturalized, though, are not simply schools as places to learn, but simultaneously places to learn one's place.

Spatial Practices

Spatial practices of placing "irregular" students and "non-essential" subject areas on the periphery or out of sight (Gee, 1999; Nieto, 1992; Pillow, 2004) are not unique to the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. The portables are a space pregnant with

meaning for not only this Vietnamese population, but also for those within special education, vocational education, and other non-core curricular areas. Common conceptions of the social practices connected to these particular places often assume remediation and non-essential instruction. Yet, the practices of hybrid place-making found within the marginal spaces of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program engenders a sense of productive resistance. Following Nocon (2005), use of the term "productive resistance" refers to resistance "channeled in educationally productive ways that do not require that children take on identities of failure or emotional, cognitive, or cultural deficiency" (p. 192). Hybrid place-making then, is used to describe spatial production that recognizes the social and political dimensions of space and is deliberatively conducted toward these counterhegemonic ends of productive resistance. The practices of those within the Vietnamese program distort and alter the space to accommodate culturally and linguistically informed place-making and unabashed celebration and heritage. This is accomplished, in part, through practices that resist the Taylorism of perception described earlier.

In the account described, I began with a discussion of the displacement of the Vietnamese following the Vietnam/American War and the subsequent Refugee Dispersion Policy instituted in the United States. Such practices illustrate the Taylorism of perception informing our sedimented spatial practices. Political and economic expedience encouraged practices at the national level that scattered a vulnerable community across the globe and across the nation. At more local levels, these types of practices were encouraged as well.

Sedimented spatial practices enacted within Texas Independent School District encouraged an apparent unproblematic valuing of efficiency based practices. The district implemented policies regarding catchment zones and transfer of students within and across districts that encouraged divisions according to naturalized geographic boundaries, boundaries which facilitated largely homogeneous groupings of students by racial and socioeconomic status. As was the case with the transfer of students out of under-performing schools according to annual yearly progress measures and the construction of pre-kindergarten professional development centers, the shifting of these naturalized geographic boundaries was considered by district officials only when such a shift would prove cost-effective.

In many ways, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers too operated in concert with new managerialist and Neo-Tayloristic logics. Shields (1991) wrote,

> Over time, spatial practices, the habitual routines of 'place ballets' are concretized in the built environment and sedimented in the landscape. Giddens refers to this process as the constitution of 'locales' (1984; see also the critique in Duncan 1985) which become resources for social action as contexts: they provide a *mise-en-scene* which suggests the appropriateness of particular actions and, where these are ritualized, particular roles. (p. 53)

The "place ballets" concretized in generalized practices of schools too played out in the Vietnamese portables. For example, the "separation of planning and doing" manifest in the district's mandated use of the Daily Instructional Guides. In addition, the division of students into "low" and "high" groups reflected the fragmentation and ordering necessary to scientific management; the use of monitoring systems imposed on students that reward and punish too align with Taylor's incentive schemes to compel efficient performance

through self-interest. Instances where the program teachers lectured students on more efficient and effective use of time within the classroom—"we don't want to lose time" and "time is very precious"—reflecting common spatial practices of schooling referencing notions that learning must be efficient. In one interview, a Vietnamese teaching assistant who helped to teach an adult ESL course also pointed to the importance of "efficient learning." He said:

> I mean, I do, I do understand, I do agree that, yea, the instructor should speak only English because it's a multiethnic population in there. There's a Brazilian, Portuguese, uh, Vietnamese, Spanish, you know, uh, Japanese, Chinese, there's a lot, you know. But I figure, I think that, I mean, majority of them in there are Spanish too, but if there's a word that totally, no matter however you can do it, just say the word or point them out to the word and they'll, you know, they'll understand it more—learning is more efficient, you know. (Interview Transcript, 12.14.05)

Central to this study was the marginal placement of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Such placement reflects a managerial efficiency bias within the logics of schooling and normative center/periphery valuations. Just as other marginal groups are often placed on the periphery or in out-of-the-way spaces, the logics of social ordering are apparent.

Paralleling school and district curricular funding and placement practices, "special areas" teachers, typically teachers of "enrichment" courses such as physical education, music, and art, were placed in portable classrooms. The Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers referred to themselves as "special areas" teachers as well and were often conceived of and treated as "non-essential." As noted earlier, the resourced spaces were often those within the main building. When asked about resources for their own classrooms, one Vietnamese teacher said,

We don't get any (laughs). We get older editions, materials, we get old computers that don't work. But we make do. Somehow, we make do…. So far, like, up to this point, we've always used older edition textbooks. Books that classroom teachers don't use anymore. Um, any materials that we could get our hands on. It makes it challenging to align with the [DIGs] because the [DIGs] go day by day and you have to use certain, read certain stories from certain textbooks. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

As for Vietnamese-English bilingual resources, in addition to the handmade worksheets and posters I saw in my observations, this teacher too said,

Those are out of our pocket. We order them on-line. We just kind of search for them sometimes. Like [*Thi*], she goes to [a larger metropolitan area several hours away]. They have a big community there. She buys things from the stores down there. Um, a lot of things that are bilingual, it's out of our pocket. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

Although the new administrator was in her third year at the campus when I asked her this same question, her response revealed a disconnect between "management and labor," another mark of scientific management as discussed by Taylor. She said,

We don't have Vietnamese resources at all in term of readers, math books, we don't. We don't have any of that…. But I'm gonna guess that it's because they're not available. The Vietnamese teachers, if they were available, they would be coming to me saying let's buy them and we'd buy them. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

Mir, Mir, and Upadhyaya (2003) argued that critiques of organization as rationalized control fail to recognize one crucial point. They wrote:

Taylor's gift was to perpetuate a process of appropriating indigenous knowledge that had marked industrialization since its beginning and continues even today. In Taylor's own words, 'managers assume…the burden of gathering together all of the traditional knowledge which in the past has been possessed by the workmen and then of classifying, tabulating, and reducing this knowledge to rules, laws, and formulae' (Taylor, 1911: 36). In modern times, this same process of 'incorporating' local knowledge into global knowledge, and then discrediting local knowledge, is evident in many arenas. (p. 58)

Once again exemplifying the deployment of such logics is the principal's discrediting the local knowledge within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program describing it as operating in a way that "goes against everything philosophically that this district believes in" (Transcript 01.13.06). At the same time, the district's director of bilingual education seeks to co-opt the program as a model for the rest of the district. However, through hybrid place-making, the Vietnamese community attempts to contest and subvert these predominant place ballets.

In their hybrid place-making efforts, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers transform uniformly prefabricated portable units. In rooting these practices in their heritage culture, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers visibly and legibly announce their difference, their otherness. In setting down stakes and constructing a space of greater permanence, through laying down of brick and building more homely spaces, they refuse administrative whims of displacement that frustrate teachers in their attempts at creating contiguity and coherence based in belonging. It is not only through material refusal that the VLC teachers and community resist hegemonic pressures to assimilate and homogenize. The Vietnamese community too resists through the appropriation of school and district policies and practices.

Because the administrative gaze is diminished in some ways as a result of the distance between the main building and Vietnamese program portables, the Vietnamese teachers have greater flexibility in their work and ability to respond to the district's demands, the Vietnamese community's demands, and the school's demands. In one instance, the district's director of bilingual education requested that the VLC program teachers make their classrooms available to district media personnel to record

instructional practices for the district's media library. She decided to send the camera crew the following day, a Friday. However, the director wanted the media crew to capture English language instruction and not instruction for Vietnamese Culture Day. Accordingly, the teachers adjusted their teaching to accommodate this request. They too decided to move culture day to the beginning of the following week knowing that this might be problematic for the principal. But again, the distance between the administrative offices and the program portables afforded these teachers greater latitude in enactments of spatial practices not necessarily accounted for in the choreographed place ballet of school. As noted earlier, attempts to standardize classroom instruction through the use of Daily Instructional Guides too was disrupted by the larger work of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers. One teacher said,

> ...at least in my classroom, and I'm, I'm pretty sure it's similar in the other Vietnamese teachers' classrooms, instead of going day by day, we look at the big objectives of what the [DIGs] um, requires students to learn for specific grade levels and we tailor it to that. (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

Other instances of spatial practices that did not reflect a citation of Tayloristic norms were the continual interruptions throughout the school day by parents who often brought with them needs of their own family or the community that the Vietnamese teachers would attend to. In centering the work of building a strong community, the Vietnamese teachers could not afford to abide by Tayloristic principles that undermined this work. In working on the periphery of the school, these teachers appeared able to subvert Taylor's principles of dynamic deskilling of workers necessary to disciplined labor including the separation of planning and doing, suppression of worker's activities and involvement in the preparation and organization of his/her own work, and control of task performance

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through standardization and monitoring systems. Subverting the school's bureaucratic monitoring systems regarding expenditures was essential in their ability to be responsive to the community in a timely fashion. Further, for the Vietnamese teachers, their lack of concern regarding monitoring practices of the administration in their professional evaluations significantly unraveled the binds of disciplined labor.

In appropriating ambiguous school transfer and language policies, a critical mass of students was achieved such that material and human resources were available to conduct the work of serving the Vietnamese community in a multitude of ways reaching far beyond the scope of a language program. Because the community's desires and needs were central to the program, the ways in which the place was de-centered by the school's "Taylorism of perception" was subsumed to an interest in how the program and community centered itself through spatial practices rooted in geographies of desire. Although the majority of students in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program came from distances far beyond the school attendance zone and largely from low-income families with parents working multiple jobs, geographic constraints, constraints of efficiency, appeared not to pose insurmountable obstacles for this community. Through a reterritorialization of this space, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program resists sedimentation within existing spatial and social arrangements. Shields (1991) suggested,

> It is thus possible to disrupt the closely woven fabric of social practices and conventions through interventions at the level of spatial practice. Resistance in the form of reterritorialisations of space, abrogations of the private property system (as in squatting, particularly in the context of Third World barrio communities), or denials of pragmatic conventions such as just sitting on the floor rather than using benches (a tactic often used by disenchanted youth) is possible. The resulting counterspaces, even if momentary, present an ever-shifting ground on which power and constraint is exercised by state and society. (p. 54)

Still, the Taylorism of perception that has infiltrated schools has material affects for all involved. The efficiency bias such perceptions embed in the organization and accountability measures of institutions often lead us to unreflectively treat each other as dead objects to be ordered and manipulated. The spatial practices enacted within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, though, recognized the emergence of critical subjectivities within the community. Common alienating practices of schooling made plain an imminent critique of a lived reality in opposition to abstractions of policies regulating the schooling of vulnerable "Others."

(Counter)Representations of Space

Lefebvre's second dimension of spatial production, dominant discursive representations of space or *conceived* space, were also reflected in the accounts given of Pecan Springs Elementary School and the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Among the representations of space employed around the school were categories of 'essential/non-essential' curriculum, 'special areas'/'regular' classroom teachers, 'home-school'/'transfer' students, the differences delineated around limited English proficient students and 'smart' students, and efficient administration of school. These representations of space not only provide labels and categories in which to slot individuals, they too are associated with particular social and spatial practices.

In an exchange between the campus administrator and the Vietnamese program teachers described earlier, the principal explained that it was her responsibility to look after the welfare of the whole school and that facing over-enrollment problems, the principal's primary responsibility was to the "home-school" student population. In clearly

delineating her loyalties, the principal is able to unreflectively and systematically determine who may be cast out from the community whether it be undisciplined "transfer" students, cigarette-smoking parents, or property destroying adolescents. Instead of representing the school as one that values different linguistic and cultural heritages, the assistant principal, a Latina, called the school "an LEP school." Such representation relies on normalized deficit notions. This was seen in the incident of one child being characterized as "smart" because she learned English so quickly that she no longer needed to be in bilingual education classes. During one meeting regarding the overenrollment at Pecan Springs Elementary, the district Associate Superintendent commented on the quiet of the school as an illustration to the parents present of what a good administrator their principal was. She said, "There are over a thousand students on this campus, but you'd never know it" (Researcher Fieldnotes, 02.22.06). As noted in the ethnographic narrative of the study, the school's 'essential' program of study was housed in the main brick building whereas the marginalized 'non-essential' curriculum was taught in the prefabricated portable units. One Vietnamese teacher, although cognizant of the disparity in resources available through proximity to students' regular homeroom teachers, the library, the courtyard, the faculty lounge and working area, was resigned to this placement explaining that "Somebody has to be out here…" (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06). The Taylorism of perception that animated efficient spatial practices as demonstrated earlier too imbues these representations of space and the social relations within the school.

These categories of essential/non-essential and home-school/transfer students are instrumental in spatial ordering aimed at producing what Foucault called a "hierarchical

and efficiently visible organization" (Foucault, 1984, p. 19). Although those within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program do not assert an explicit oppositional and public discursive representation of this, it is clear that their understanding of this place is only partially circumscribed by the district's representation of who may inhabit these spaces and what practices are (in)appropriate within them. The Vietnamese teachers described this space both as a space of marginality that was under-resourced and as one teacher described, a space that, because of its marginality, robbed the teachers and students of instructional time. They appeared to rationalize this (dis)placement though in normative citations of schools as orderly and quiet when suggesting that they were too loud to be allowed in the more public central spaces. Yet, counter-representations of this space were apparent as well.

This marginal space was a "refuge" and "comfort zone" for recent immigrant students with greater place-dependencies. Contrary to the overwhelming discourse of efficiency, the Vietnamese teachers suggested that "we would never get anything done if we went through them [the campus administration]" (Personal Communication, 2005). These undisciplined laborers conceived of their own unruly practices as efficient in conducting the work and tasks they'd set for themselves to serve their community. At the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year, the Vietnamese program teachers described their relationship with the school principal and administrative office as less tense and more trusting because

> It not that the principal don't like us or was unhappy with us. This year she is happier with us because we beginning to work with the school. The whole school is working together and that make the principal happy. (Interview Transcript, 11.02.05)

The program teachers have begun to raise their level of visibility on the campus and to increase the sense of a campus cohesion with a unitary function and goal. They have done so through additional work including bus duty before and after school, monitoring classrooms and administering exams during TAKS testing, as well as through increased interactions with the front office through the new Vietnamese parent liaison. However, the space of the Vietnamese portables remained a space that allowed counter representations. It is a space where some teachers tell the students that "We can never be Americans," to question the students "Who are we?" and expect the response, "We are Vietnamese!" It is a space that reminds Vietnamese students that they are "the only Vietnamese here" and of their responsibility to "take care each other like a big family" as they are a vulnerable population on the school campus. In this space, they are no longer outsiders. In this space, they may *conceive* of themselves as a big family negotiating uneven ground. Counter to the managerial representation of this population as transient because of their second citizen status as "transfer" students, in this space, they instead are powerful and able to come and go as they so please.

Representational Space of the "Spatial Imaginary"

In contesting the existing spatial and social arrangements, those within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program sought to expand the space of representation, or *lived* space. In enacting alternative spatial practices not aligned with those in a district with intensified performance accountability measures and bound to practices of geographic efficiency, these teachers contest the dynamic de-skilling and re-skilling of teachers as "'classroom managers' or as supervisors of a predetermined classroom

production process" (Carlson, 1986, p. 22). Rather than being disciplined as docile teachers managing narrowly defined student performances (e.g., standardized exams, TAKS, benchmark tests), these teachers understand themselves to be cultural producers involved in a myriad of spatial practices and performances. They understand their work in this way because the lived space is imbued with diasporic meaning "addressed not to the intellect but to the body" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 235). Consequently, those involved with this program root their practices and representations not only in a discourse of professional teachers, but also in the needs and desires of their linguistic and cultural community. In discussing the development of "commonplaces" in San Francisco, Glidden (1998) examined the lived experiences of an Italian immigrant in North Beach. Although this Italian enclave provides a sense of home and a more stable space in which Mario may ground himself, still "to the immigrant whose heart remained at home, an Italian neighborhood afforded only someplace to survive, not thrive" (p. 178). The resistance to enclosure of the representational space through hybrid place-making allows those within the Vietnamese community openings in which to thrive.

In the accounts provided, the lived space appears to open up within the portables of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Perhaps the uneasiness of being perceived and conceived of as simply a language program with access to performances of an exotic other to diversify the schooling experience on the one hand and living as vital connections to social, cultural, political, and economic resources for the Vietnamese community on the other allows a perceptual space lesser dulled and determined by administrative new managerialist conceptions. For the Vietnamese Language and Culture program faculty, experiences of the professional order within schools distorts the

representational space. In educational literature and research, those referred to as "leaders" are typically those in formally authorized positions (e.g., principals at the campus level, superintendents at the district level). Increasingly, we talk about teacher leadership. Yet, the way in which a teaching assistant of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program described his own position in the community indicated that parents and community members authorized him as a leader. He said,

> I think that working here, you're not only a teacher, a mentor, or whatnot, but you're a, you're an icon I believe, a figure for the community. You know, I mean the community really supports you here and you really feel it, you really feel that you're being pushed (laughs), pushed beyond and being that support, like you know, like a leader pretty much. So, if you ever want to know what it feels like to be a leader for, you know, the Vietnamese community, um, just work here, you'll find out, yeah. (Interview Transcript,12.14.05)

The lived space described by this teaching assistant does not cohere with common conceptions of making photocopies of worksheets and handouts for teachers, of assignments to cafeteria duty, and of monitoring hallways to watch for delinquent students. In this one significant way, the space of representation expands beyond how we have largely chosen to represent school leaders.

Representational space too was distorted in the practices of (mis)placing students according to English language fluency. In their efforts to categorize and place students through language surveys, assessments, and monitoring systems that facilitate an apparently easy representation, representational space is presumed to be disciplined into passivity. Yet, the lived experience described of little prekindergarten students unintentionally creating disjunctures in the efficient management of space and resources suggests that lived space is continually providing opportunities for other ways of knowing and doing manifested in the seemingly most mundane of activities.

For this language and culture program, the representational space, or the spatial imaginary, is inscribed with macro level discourses around language policy and monolithic conceptions of nationalism as well. The demographic trend of a growing language minority population in the United States has been met by a political climate ensuing from the "English-only" movement. This struggle over languages is not a debate over linguistic codes; rather, language is tied up in identity politics and struggles over an uneven terrain of power. Schmidt (1998) wrote, "on the question of language policy for the United States, it is nothing less than national unity that is at stake" (p. 163). Although forms of social control promoting social efficiency and assimilationist policies through a one nation, one language stance are not as overt as in the past, the effects of uneven power relations and the violences of managing difference through neo-Tayloristic mechanisms informed by clear delineations of insiders and outsiders remain.

Radhakrishnan (1993)suggested, "in our own times, whether we like it or not, the dominant paradigm of identity has been 'the imagined community' of nationalism" (p. 753). This imagined community of nationalism plays out in the ways in which

> …the First World finds no problem or contradiction, experiences no sense of shame or guilt, while it insists on a dominant role for itself in projects of identity reconstruction the world over. Unwilling to accept a non-leaderlike role, much less exclusion from Third World projects, the First World mandates a seamless methodological universalism to legitimate its centrality the world over. (pp. 750-751)

For the subaltern, an imagined community of nationalism has significant consequences. Takaki (1998) and others presented discussions around the politics of reception regarding Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. Takaki wrote of the Vietnamese:

> "The presence of the Vietnamese refugees," explained Chuong Hoang Chung, a lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley, "is viewed as a threat, such as being cheap labor when there is a scarcity of jobs. They

are also viewed as a threat in places where the scarcity of low-income housing forces blacks and refugees to compete." On the Gulf Coast of Texas, Vietnamese fishermen have been targets of Ku Klux Klan demonstrations and threats. Competition between Vietnamese and white fishermen has erupted in ugly confrontations and incidents of violence. "There's too many of them," a white fisherman declared, "and there's not enough room for them and there's going to be lots of hard feelings if they don't get some of them out of here and teach the ones that they leave how to act and how to get along. I think they ought to be put on a reservation somewhere or...in a compound to teach them our laws and our ways, the way we live, our courtesy as a people." (p. 454)

Notions of threat to a unitary way of knowing through a single language, through regulations and policies aimed at universality, have not receded with time and efforts at "tinkering toward utopia." To preempt the chaos of difference, we use "multiculturalism" to appease liberal-minded educators while at the same time intensifying the use of standards attached to high stakes accountability measures that cannot but homogenize, reduce, and objectify (Valenzuela, 2005).

The separation of these categories is an artificial but useful heuristic. Lefebvre suggested that these dimensions are always already bound up with one another. However, he too suggested that the third dimension, representational spaces, have been treated as passive and consequently is seen as insignificant to the study of social relations and cultural production. For those within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, the interplay of dominant spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces commonly allows the violence of being treated as though the Vietnamese teachers and students are allowed at the school because of the campus administrator's generosity. Yet, through hybrid place-making, what Infinito (2003) suggested becomes more apparent in the description and analysis of place-making within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. That is, "education can play a role both in the

constraining processes of normalization and in the productive processes of self-creation and freedom" (p. 159).

Performance and Performativity

As discussed earlier, Lefebvre's production of space and theories of performance are used because their epistemological underpinnings are complementary in the privileging of process and dynamic unbound understandings of culture. Additionally, both encourage a closer examination of the everyday. Lewis (2003) argued that "to understand the contemporary production and reproduction of racial ideology and racial structures, we must look to the day-to-day events and arenas where ideologies and structures are lived out" (p. 284). More broadly, philosopher of education, Kohli (1999) proposed linking analytic work on performative utterances with post-structuralist accounts of performativity offered by Judith Butler. In so doing, this may provide those within critical education studies "a theoretical context for understanding the power of language in producing educational subjects" (p. 325).

Beyond dramaturgical notions of performance, Lyotard (1984) provided an account of performativity that "refers to a concept that provides new insights into the modern condition: that is, where we are now, and in the bleak and devastating revelation which the condition has for us as human beings and as educationalists" (Marshall, 1999, p. 310). Marshall went on to suggest that "in this condition, the demands of performativity mean not the pursuit of educational ideals, like personal autonomy, or emancipation but, instead, the subsumption of education under the demands of efficiency for the total social system" (p. 310). This sense of performativity is explored by Stephen

Ball who asserted that educational reform efforts are embedded in three interrelated policy technologies: the market, managerialism, and performativity. When deployed in concert, these technologies provide "a politically attractive alternative to the state-centred, public welfare tradition of educational provision. They are set over and against the older policy technologies of professionalism and bureaucracy" facilitating the alignment of public sector organizations with "methods, culture and ethical system of the private sector" (Ball, 2003, pp. 215-216). Elements of these technologies delineated by Ball included architectural forms, functional tests and procedures, relations of hierarchy, strategies of motivation, and mechanisms of reformation or therapy. Further, Ball wrote:

> Central to its functioning is the translation of complex social processes and events into simple figures or categories of judgement. What one wants to attempt here is to 'get behind' the objective facade of this aspect of public sector reform and its technical rationalities of reform to examine the subjectivities of change and changing subjectivities which are threatened or required or brought about by performativity. (p. 217)

The logics of this narrowly defined account of performance permeate schools informed by and pressured to conform to a Taylorism of perception regarding the architecture of places and representations of space. Lyotard's redefinition of performance as outcomes oriented to explain modernity is referred to as performativity which "has to do with the efficiency of a social system in which the goal of knowledge is no longer truth, just or any other enlightenment narrative, but rather system efficiency" (Anderson, 2005, p. 214). Exemplified by the "perfect storm" described by the district's superintendent earlier where accountability measures have intensified through No Child Left Behind legislation, inputs in the form of material and human resources have been scaled back, and as the visibility of educational performances of schools, districts, and states is heightened

through comparative measures widely mediatized and publicized, what Anderson explained as performativity is apparent:

> Lyotard's principle of performativity involves optimizing performance by maximizing outputs and minimizing inputs. Thus, outcomes-based education has created a culture of accountability (i.e., performance criteria, performance indicators, performance management, etc.). As Ball (2001) pointed out, a culture of accountability becomes a performance culture. The need to be constantly accountable increases our visibility and requires that we align our performances with external accountability criteria. Ball calls this ongoing requirement to perform for others, *fabrication,* and argues that a culture of performativity creates a need for fabricating performances. (p. 215)

Although it is imperative to recognize and understand the performativity that Lyotard, Anderson, and Ball point to in the management of schools and school people, it too is important to examine instances of resistance through performances more broadly defined. From an anthropological perspective Pineau (2005) argued that "In effect, performance reframes the whole educational enterprise as a mutable and ongoing ensemble of narratives and performances, rather than a linear accumulation of isolated, discipline-specific competencies" (p. 23).

In the account of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, performances were understood to encompass both this narrowly defined performance—performativity as conceptualized by Lyotard—but also more broadly conceptualized performances rooted in the linguistic and cultural heritage that served to address needs of this diasporic community. Although the teachers reported over and again that the academic success of the students came from parent support, I observed constant interruptions of the "sacred space" of learning which appeared to contradict this claim. But as I come to understand the location and history of the community, these disruptions reveal ways in which the teachers, students, and community are engaged in broadly conceived performances.

In my portrayals of those involved with the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, the polyvocality performance theories mean to privilege is no doubt incomplete. The relations between elder and youth are informed by performances of unquestioned respect. Consequently, the younger teachers involved in this study may have had much more to say but were unable to do so particularly when the audience they largely play to are recent immigrant parents who often look to traditional performances (e.g., Confucian orders of relation and hierarchies) as indicators of trustworthiness. My relations with these research participants too were constrained by Confucian conventions of (in)appropriate behaviors and performances between elder and youth, man and woman, Vietnam born and U.S. born, education practitioner and non-practitioner. The voices of the "regular" home-room teachers were not presented in this study and neither were the voices of the students and parents explicitly sought after as the scope of this study did not provide for this. However incomplete though, Pineau suggests that "by its very nature, the performance paradigm is multivocal and counterhegemonic" (2005, p. 33). In the following sections, I employ Conquergood's terminals of performance as analytics to understand the broader performances of place-making employed by the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers and community.

Conquergood's Terminals of Performance: Poetics, Play, Process, and Power

In his discussion of poetics, Conquergood suggested that *poetics* refer to those "cultural fabrications where ambiguity and artifice are most conspicuous" (1989, p. 83) of which he included rituals, festivals, spectacles, dramas, narratives, metaphors, games, celebrations. These were seen throughout the account of the Vietnamese community and

the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Beginning with the legend of the dragon children, there are narratives we tell ourselves about ourselves that remind us, as Conquergood wrote, that "cultures and persons are more than just created; they are creative" (p. 83). The newspaper account regarding what it means to be Vietnamese as more than knowing the words, but knowing the stories and histories behind those words points to one means by which we construct our human realities. In this account of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, students and parents were told that they could never be "Americans," the Vietnamese students and teachers were housed on the margins excluding them from the mainstream. Such poetics inform the performances we enact for ourselves and others. These many and varied stories we tell ourselves are narratives delimiting who we can and can not be.

More conspicuous instances demonstrating Conquergood's poetics included the festivals hosted by the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Lunar New Year celebration which worked to both create the Vietnamese community as a cultural "Other" and served as a public performance of cultural pride, heritage, and artistry. This more public performance of culture, though, remained within the realm of the theatrical and non-threatening. With regard to multicultural education, culture is often presented through a sanitized and politically impotent additive model inclusive of the four "f"s: food, festivals, fashion, and folklore. As illustrated in the account of the VLC program, it was the everyday performances that both buttressed and threatened the social order.

The everyday cultural fabrications noted within this project came primarily from teachers' voices and my observations of interactions between student and teacher, teacher

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and teacher, and teacher and administrator. The rituals pointed to through the narrative account included the everyday rituals of respect between elder and youth, of bowing and reporting to elders (I too, a grown woman, would seek out the program director whenever I arrived and departed to report my arrival and departure bowing in deference). Similarly, the "constructed nature of human reality" was apparent in the relationships of the Vietnamese teachers. One teacher explained the artifice of the elder-youth relationship that prevented the development of a more collegial relationship between some of the teachers. She said:

> …when I was doing my student teaching with the other teachers, you know, we, it was, even though I was a student teacher, but they treated me as a colleague, like, as one of them. Whereas, in the Vietnamese culture, you know that the older you get the more respect you get, correct? That's just how I grew up…. I couldn't ever treat Dr. Chat like a colleague…. I couldn't do it because she's older, she's much older. So, I would treat her like, someone like my mom, you know. (Interview Transcript, 01.18.06)

Another younger teacher explained that although there is a difference between the ways in which she chooses to discipline students and the ways in which the older Vietnamese teachers discipline students that she finds problematic, she cannot address this issue because she is younger and instead:

> I practice what I think is best practice and hopefully they see the difference between my practice and theirs and, you know, try it out. Because, it's, I don't feel like, at least now, I'm a novice teacher and um, that's one aspect of it, but culturally, as a younger person, you don't correct an older person. It's considered disrespectful and *hỗn* [impudent]… (Interview Transcript, 12.17.04)

One veteran teacher explained that had one of the younger teachers taken on the responsibilities of the program director after her retirement, the Vietnamese community would not have accepted it.

> She [*Cô Tiên*] indicated that this was very important and explained that in Vietnamese culture, it is very important to have a particular order and succession of individuals. Because she has been there the longest after *Dr. Tộc*, and because she is one of the older teachers, she feels that this transition has been made easier. She suggested that had [one of the younger teachers] taken over the responsibilities, the parents would not have been as supportive. (Researcher Fieldnotes, 11.02.05)

The social order is supported by a particular ritual and ceremony of living. This was true not only within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, but also in performances of the "prudent subaltern" (Scott, 1990).

Employing Scott's terms in his chapter "Performing school in the shadow of imperialism: A hybrid (Coyote) interpretation," Gallegos (2005) wrote:

> "prudent" subordinates will generally perform complicitly in what he [Scott] calls the "public transcript," which includes institutional settings such as schools, not because they buy into the rules and explanations of the dominant culture, but rather for fear of the repercussions associated with open defiance. (p. 111)

As with Gallegos's "colonized youth," performances of deference drawn from the public transcript were offered those who occupied spaces of "legitimate" authority—school and district administrators—as the VLC parents and teachers enacted the "prudent subaltern." In a number of instances, the former program director announced her great admiration for the principal whose sway with the district's director of bilingual education and the superintendent was what persuaded each to visit the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Announced strategically, this was conveyed to the principal when the VLC program teachers were asking to be released from responsibilities with school committees and afterschool training sessions. Constructing their human reality, this nod to formal power reinforced notions that positioned the Vietnamese students and teachers as second-

class citizens. In one interview, *Dr. Tộc* talked about negative perceptions around the Vietnamese community. She said,

> …they treated us like, 'why you here?' okay, 'why you come to this country? We don't want you here.' So, they [the students] fought a lot. In 1983, when I came to teach, not only did I have to teach them that we were guests here, that we weren't born and raised here, we are guests…. {I had to visit the other classes to talk with the other students to explain why the Vietnamese were here.} To explain that we wanted to join with those here to build up America, we were not here to beg for food or anything else. {That we were not waiting for handouts. Then I told them that this country has no natives, that the Indians are the only natives. I would tell them that they were just like me. But they were lucky that their parents came earlier so they can claim this as their country, but me, I just arrived.} So, I will claim this as my country too. We will claim this as our country too. But wait until we have the right to do so. (Interview Transcript, 11.05.04)

Recognizing the social order and arrangements to which they are subject, the public performances enacted were performed in accord with Scott's "prudent subaltern." At the same time, the program director, *Dr. Tộc,* enacted the performances of Conquergood's "trickster" in ways that disrupted the social order as well.

Of Conquergood's second terminal of the performance paradigm, *play*, Pineau suggested that as a theoretical construct, it is aligned with power and politics and "promotes a critique of instructional norms and traditions" (p. 29). Conquergood asserted that "by playing with social order, unsettling certainties, the trickster intensifies awareness of the vulnerability of our institutions" (1989, p. 83). In the accounts provided, the program director, *Dr. Tộc*, embodied this sense of play in disrupting the efficient functioning of the school.

As noted earlier, *Dr. Tộc*, is a small Vietnamese lady in her mid-seventies. She has three daughters to whom she is clearly devoted. The extended trips she would take every month, that inconvenienced and disrupted the normal functioning of the school and

seemed to drive the principal mad, were trips she would make to visit her daughter and grandchild. A vulnerability of the institution was exposed through the simple pleasure of a grandmother spending time with her grandchild. The brazenness of her noncompliant behavior was rooted in her being a "stubborn old waterbuffalo" who couldn't care less if she received a poor evaluation; it was enabled through her refusal to be disciplined and managed through the institution's Taylorism of perception.

For Conquergood, play too is associated with improvisation and experimentation. The constancy of parents stopping in, the phones ringing continually, demands made on the teachers to attend to numerous needs with immediacy require improvisational performances. The Daily Instruction Guides which hope to standardize instruction across the school district through the performance management of teachers and administrators too are made vulnerable to the mundane and the everyday. Resistance to dominant forms need not arise through momentous revolutions instigated by masses of rebels fed up with the "father's no," our lived space—produced through and productive of the discursive as well as nondiscursive—speaks not to those places within that understand abstractions but also to the materiality of our being. So, when the division of bodies in space is undermined by a four year old child's curiosity over the whereabouts of his Vietnamese classmates and decides to line up with them when it is time for them to go to the portables, he inadvertently pushes back on disciplinary boundaries. When pre-kindergarten children are asked to demonstrate their fluency in English and remain mute, they too have unknowingly pushed back against the "banality of evil" (Arendt). Ang-Lygate wrote of Trinh T. Minh-Ha's "inappropriate Others":

> the term *inappropriate Others* [is used] to describe those who resist definitions of their Otherness by others and insist on defining difference

from their own perspectives. She claimed that when an inappropriate Otherness is articulated, it is often perceived as a threat to hierarchical relationships of power and subsequently rejected—not by direct opposition (because this would admit the existence of a different perspective), but through a silent denial or distortion of such realities. (1996, p. 385)

Such a distortion of reality is demonstrated in the campus principal's explanation that although there were students who came from outside the district by way of policy appropriations, the parents were good enough to "do the right thing" and move their families into residences within the district conforming to district policy. The redefinition and appropriation of district policies meant to regulate student enrollment at Pecan Springs Elementary School's Vietnamese Language and Culture program occurred in the everyday practices of a community whose commitments were to a "struggle for betterment" (Oakes, 2000).

My discussions of *poetics* and *play,* foregrounded process-centered performance which Conquergood suggested alerts us to "the irreducible and evanescent dynamics of social life;" that these encompass all the "forces that resist closure" (1989, p. 83). In exploring everyday place-making centered on both the materiality and representations of life through ethnographic methods, these *process* performances that resist closure were also apparent in daily activities. This terminal is associated with the emergent, temporal, contingent, provisional, indeterminate dynamic, and destabilizing. It is intimately connected with the poetics that inform the construction of our human realities. Do (1999) argued that within the Vietnamese American community "there is a dire need for linguistically competent and culturally sensitive counselors, teachers, social workers" and other professionals. In my observations and conversations with the VLC program teachers, the poetics, the fabrications of the community were suggestive of an enactment

of the curricular space as a community center rather than a traditional language instruction program. Process performances were informed by the poetics of teachers admonishing their students to "take care of one another like a big family" and claims that theirs was a responsibility to provide "social services."

> Dear (1997) wrote that,
>
> In attempting to subordinate space and its contradictions, the capitalist mode of production thereby *produces difference.* The resulting uneven geographical development consists of *dominated* spaces (i.e. those transformed by technology) instead of *appropriated* spaces (i.e. natural space modified to serve the needs and possibilities of a group). (p. 57)

Conquergood's fourth terminal of performance, *power*, "invokes politics, history, ideology, domination, resistance, appropriation, struggle, conflict, accommodation, subversion, and contestation" (1989, p. 83). Throughout this study, there were many moments which invoked all of these. In understanding dominant relations of power, one teacher suggested in a moment of inspired trickery to appropriate the power and authority of the "American" teachers to discipline and silence the Vietnamese community during the Lunar New Year Festival. Politics of identity, politics of being the other Other on a multilingual campus, efficient management ideologies that attempt to streamline these particular students into the mainstream, struggles and conflict surrounding all these issues were prominent throughout. Yet, through acts of hybrid place-making, the space of the portables was transformed into an *appropriated* space modified to serve the needs and possibilities of the Vietnamese community. Even given the dominance of disciplinary technologies to measure, order, and manipulate, there were a number of significant incidences where the campus and district accommodated the VLC program teachers and

parents. This terminal was exemplified in the ways in which the VLC program teachers and community came together to appropriate and subvert language and transfer policies meant to fragment, disperse, and normalize.

Living an Ethic of Hybridity

I do not intend to present an uncomplicated tale of subaltern heroes. Although there are implications that may be traced through this account of a subaltern Other creating distortions and subversions that matter, there too are contradictions and violences within the program that cannot be neglected. Although the struggles of this subaltern collective in creating spaces of difference must be commended, there too were troubling instances of internal colonization and disciplinary techniques deployed within the program.

In one class observation, the differences between American and Vietnamese behaviors toward parents and student preferences for one tradition over the other were discussed. Amerasian students who had on other occasions enthusiastically participated in conversations sat back in their chairs, arms folded across their chest, and remained silent. Although many of the Vietnamese teachers recognized the difficulties and problems of "maintaining" culture in a dislocating context, the idea of "authentic ethnicity" is unknowingly perpetrated upon these hybrid students. When one teacher reprimands students and tells them that "We can never be Americans" and then asks them in a call and response manner "who are we?" and answers "We are Vietnamese. So, don't forget your language," dichotomies of self and other are reinforced for these students whose lived experience does not conform to these words. And yet, the principal's

suggestion that "what is good for one culture is good for all cultures" is just as problematic in pointing to universalism operating as imperial particularism (Beiner, 1995). This lived hybridity is not limited to experiences "imposed" on students from above. The teachers were compelled to perform themselves as concrete abstractions stemming from American informed notions of "professionals" as well as diasporically conceived "leaders" of the Vietnamese community.

The development of exclusionary ethnic enclaves does not resolve issues of heterogeneity within democratic spaces; nor does a multiculturalism that stems from what Radhakrishnan calls "metropolitan" hybridity. He asserted

> …whereas metropolitan hybridity is ensconced comfortably in the heartland of both national and transnational citizenship, postcolonial hybridity is in a frustrating search for constituency and a legitimate political identity…. When metropolitan hybridity begins to speak for postcolonial hybridity, inevitably, it depoliticizes the latter and renders its rebellion virtually causeless. (1993, p. 753)

The intersections of times and spaces in which many of us find ourselves are uneasy unstable ones. De Certeau (1997) suggested that culture in the plural "endlessly calls for a need to struggle" (p. 139) and that "any pluralization of culture must be based on a respect and a tact that *welcome the unknown* through collective and singular experience" (p. 152).

bell hooks (1990a; 1990b) might suggest that those in the Vietnamese Language and Culture program have chosen the margin as a space of radical openness. That it is within such spaces that counterhegemonic discourses and practices may take place. However, although the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers and community were able to enact counterhegemonic practices, neocolonial techniques of othering persist. As with Lowe's conception of hybridity as an "uneven process through

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which immigrant communities encounter violences" and "survive those violences by living, inventing, and reproducing different cultural alternatives," the Vietnamese Language and Culture program presents instances of surviving these violences through establishing and expanding a program that resists cultural colonization. The cultural alternatives this program has invented through a diasporic and hybrid rather than a territorially-based understanding of the spatial serve to resist closure of spaces of representation. Also, as Lowe indicated, hybridization is not the free oscillation between chosen identities. The students of this program are asked to be both good American citizens and students as well as good Vietnamese children. One teacher asked, "what does Vietnamese mean to them [the students] when they don't even know, or some of them don't exactly know where Vietnam is, don't exactly know what that whole culture and tradition is? It's just a word to them" (Interview Transcript, 2004). Yet, in explaining the importance of Vietnamese cultural mores and traditions, one student says of herself and her classmates in unaccented English that these are important because "we belong to Vietnam." Contradictory understandings of their place in the world are not without pain. However, neo-Tayloristic practices that pervade schools and aim to silence and standardize appear more painful still. Disrupting myths that undergird extensive language loss and prevailing notions around appropriate forms of nationalism which buttress uneven minority-majority power relations requires a sustained and intimate interrogation of such relations. The questions raised by Conquergood are critical. He asked,

> How are performances situated between forces of accommodation and resistance? And how do they simultaneously reproduce and struggle against hegemony? What are the performative resources for interrupting master scripts? (p. 84)

Perhaps in embracing this both/and orientation in "real places [that] retain complex, local identities" (Glidden, 1998, p. 180), we may reveal possibilities of radical openness and political opportunity. Perhaps such examinations of power may better illuminate how practices of hybrid placemaking are able to open up 'third spaces' (Bhabha, 1994) of opportunity and political choice.

Discussion and Implications

The importance of schools in the education of minority populations is underscored by a number of scholars (Banks, 1995, 2002; Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1993; Gollnick, 1995; Johnson, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999, 2005) including Apple (1981) who illuminated the role of schools "and the overt and covert knowledge within them— [which] play in reproducing a stratified social order that remains strikingly unequal by class, gender, and race" (p. 131). This maintenance of an inequitable social order has been recorded by education historians (Spring, 2001a, 2001b; Tyack, 1974) who argue that schools have been systematically used as tools of forced deculturation initially for the advancement of Western religions and then as a servant of the state in the assimilation of 'good' citizens. As minority populations grow and assert their desire for a truly democratic space to educate their children and demand recognition and respect for different voices and cultures, it becomes increasingly clear that the system cannot maintain itself as is and satisfy this growing outcry for social justice.

Demographic trends in the United States show that all segments of the population are growing at more rapid rates than is the White population which showed a growth rate of 4 percent between 1990 and 1999. This constitutes a decline in its percentage of the

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total population from 76 percent to 72 percent. The Black population showed a 14 percent increase for the same period while the American Indian and Alaska Native population increased by 16 percent. The second fastest growing population for this period was the Hispanic population with growth rate of 40 percent while the fastest growing group, with a growth rate of 45 percent between 1990 and 1999, was the Asian and Pacific Islander population (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000). The vast growth in the Hispanic and Asian American populations results from both increased birth rates and an influx of immigrants to the U.S. Additionally, between 1990 and 2000, "the U. S. population under age 18 increased from 63.6 million to 72.3 million, the largest numerical gain since the 1950s. Minorities accounted for 97 percent of this increase" (Kent & Mather, 2002, p. 12). In a report commissioned by the Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students, Kindler (2002) reported that there were an estimated 4,584,946 limited English proficient (LEP) students enrolled in public schools in the 2000-2001 school year making up almost 10 percent of the total student population in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. Further, Kindler (2002) reported "since the 1990-91 school year, the LEP population has grown approximately 105%, while the general school population has grown only 12%" (p. 3). Consequently, language of educational instruction becomes a critical issue for newcomers and linguistic minority students. Moreover, literature asserting the links between language, identity, and culture suggests the need to examine not only linguistic rights of minority populations but also cultural and collective rights of ethnic minorities. However, in a climate of anti-immigration and English only movements, such a reexamination becomes extremely contentious and

debates around bilingual education policies and linguistic minority rights have intensified.

The intensification of assimilationist pressures through reauthorizations of the Bilingual Education Act illuminates the sociopolitical context surrounding debates on language of instruction in schools and, more broadly, the political climate of a nation confronted with an increasingly plural society of enormous linguistic diversity. Since policies around language of instruction are made at the state and district levels, there have been varying responses to the steady increase in the language minority population segment; however, attempts to dismantle bilingual education have been intense. These efforts include the passage of California's Proposition 227, Arizona's Proposition 203, the English-only movement initiated by proposed legislation in 1981 and the adoption of English as the sole official language in 22 states as of 1999. Rassool (2000), May (2000; 2001), and Schmidt (1998; 2000) argued that this movement is undergirded in part by notions of nationalism as suggested by Schmidt (2000) who wrote "On the question of language policy for the United States, it is nothing less than national unity that is at stake" (p. 163). These sentiments create and fuel a dichotomization and divisiveness around those considered 'good' patriots desiring a unified nation and those who would promote pluralism at the risk of dividing a nation. These either/or values around language use and maintenance inform wider social and political practices of culture and identity.

In the literature around identity, language, and culture, Galindo (1997) and others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Foucault, 1977b; Freire, 1993) asserted that the struggle over languages is not a debate over linguistic codes; rather, language is tied up in identity politics and struggles for power. Because language is so intimately tied to culture and

identity, linguistic forms of domination and suppression are not limited to linguistic hegemony. Rather, such acts are implicated in establishing racial, cultural, gendered relations of power that are often perceived as natural. Bankston and Zhou (1997) argued that the dominant theoretical approach to immigrant adaptation tends to portray American society as a linear hierarchy, with outsiders at the bottom. They wrote,

> As children of immigrants adapt to their new environment, they gradually lose their distinctive cultural traits and become transplanted into the cultures and social structures of American society. This division into insiders and outsiders…placed immigrant youth in the situation of 'marginal men,' individuals in the process of moving from the outside (immigrant society) to the inside (mainstream society). (p. 509)

This dominant theoretical approach is simplistic and reductionist. In writing about the cultural production of the educated person, Levinson and Holland (Bradley A. U. Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996) suggested that schools are often sites of intense cultural politics where individuals may become bound more tightly to "systems of class, gender, and race inequality" (p. 1). Drawing from Bourdieu and Passeron, they wrote,

> This process of schooling imposes a kind of "symbolic violence" on nonelite students, in which "instruments of knowledge…which are arbitrary" are nevertheless made to appear universal and objective. Such symbolic violence has a stultifying effect upon its recipients. As they develop a sense of their social position, and the relatively degraded value of their own cultural-linguistic resources in given social situation, nonelite persons also tend to develop a "sense of their social limits." (p. 6)

This case study affirms and resists this notion of symbolic violence imposed on nonelite students. Although they are continually spatialized both in the material and social order as marginal and Other, in many instances, the development of a "sense of their social limits" were developments in dynamic relation to particular scripts. In this instance, the public scripts the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers and parents performed helped to produce spaces for hidden scripts of subversion and contestation.

Implications for Educational Leadership

The leadership literature, both within and outside of education, is replete with varying definitions of leadership, sets of leadership principles and functions, metaphors and models of leadership. These reflect developments in organizational and administrative theory from structural-functionalism, interpretivism, radical humanism, and radical structuralism among other theoretical frames. Yukl (2006), though, suggested "Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization" (p. 3). Elsewhere a colleague and I discussed the growing trend in educational leadership of movement away from conventional notions of heroic leadership toward models of distributed leadership (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006). In that discussion, we noted that leadership theory has historically been dominated by accounts of focused leadership (Gronn, 2002) characterized by typologies and frames emphasizing essential traits, effective behaviors, interpersonal influence, situational contingencies, and meaning management (Crow & Grogan, 2005; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). However, the past decade has seen renewed interest in

> dynamic, organizational views of leadership . . . as a social influence process [that] permeates organizations rather than residing in particular people or formal positions of authority. (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002, p. 167)

Given this renewed interest, it is important to explore what such process oriented leadership frameworks reveal as well as what they might conceal.

Yukl (2006) asserted,

An alternative perspective that is slowly gaining more adherents is to define leadership as a shared process of enhancing the capability of people to accomplish collective work effectively (Heifetz, 1994). According to this perspective, leadership processes cannot be understood apart from the dynamics of the social system in which they are embedded. (p. 449)

In their discussion of distributed leadership, Spillane and Orlina (2005) highlight the importance of time and place in characterizing leadership and leadership practices. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of understanding leadership as the interdependencies among leaders, followers, and situations in the service of the organization's core work. They went on to define leadership as follows,

Leadership is reserved for those activities that administrators and teachers either design to influence others, or that others understand as intended to influence them, in the service of the organization's core work. (p. 159)

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond urged leadership theorists and researchers to examine "how school leaders sustain those in-school conditions that foster successful schooling" (2004, p. 4). Offering a framework through which to examine this question of how, they looked at tasks, task enactments, and the social and situational distribution of these tasks. Following this frame, in examining the design artifacts, organizational structures, and language (these comprise what Spillane et al. refer to as the situation) as well as the leaders and followers within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, these helped to demonstrate the ways in which leadership is distributed in organizations. However, Spillane et al.'s conceptualization of distributed leadership failed to address political dimensions which were central to determining the organization's core work as well as how that work would be accomplished, particularly with regard to the VLC program.

In the account of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program at Pecan Springs Elementary School, the school principal appeared to accept and enact school leader-as-hero notions. In an interview, she talked about what principals do:

> …whoever's gonna follow me is just gonna take this campus to the next level, which is what principals do. We go to new campuses and we bring our strengths and we take that school to the next level and then someone follows and that's really what it's all about. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

She went on to describe the traits and behaviors she embodied as a leader:

> It takes someone that's high energy and has a good rapport with people and is well-networked within the district, cause I. You know, if this campus needs something, I can tell you (snaps fingers) like that who in the district I need to go to to start that conversation with (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

In talking about the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, the principal described the program director in these terms as well. She said:

> …Dr. [*Tộc*]'s a hero in our community, I mean, she is, she's just a tremendous hero…. Without Dr. [*Tộc*]'s vision this, I don't believe that this whole program would even be in place, I really don't. And she had a dream and she made the dream come to reality and she's gonna make sure it continues. And I, I believe that if um, something were to happen to her and she was no longer blessing this world with her presence, that her dream is still gonna always go on. I really do believe that and that to me is a hero. (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06)

These notions of leaders taking schools "to the next level" and of the kinds of characteristics and qualities needed to do so align with traditional conceptions of leadership noted earlier. Yet, within the Vietnamese community, such discussions of heroes were not to be heard.

Time and again, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers spoke of how they depended not just on the commitment of each of the other teachers, but that they too needed the support of the parents and community. The willingness and

commitment of parents to enroll their children at Pecan Springs, appropriating both district transfer and language policies (in Spillane et al.'s terms, design artifacts) and to provide transportation to and from a school that was oftentimes not the child's home school facilitated the sustainability of the program. Additionally, teachers often said "we ask and they [the parents] come," speaking to the community's responsiveness to the program teachers' needs. Taxed by the demands of their teaching duties which were compounded by their sense of responsibility to the community in translating documents, translating at important meetings, assisting families in attaining housing, employment, citizenship, general equivalency degrees, etc., parents were called on to write and sign letters to petition the school district for additional resources for the program. The letters were sent to the district superintendent and the following year, the program had an additional position and a half to fill as they chose; this would become the parent liaison position. The business community too supported the program through donations to the program fundraisers and celebrations in the form of food, festival props, and clothing. Making use of the marginal structures (another design artifact), the portables, the Vietnamese community's practices too were facilitated in their ability to avoid the administrative gaze. Absent the students' high levels of achievement on performance accountability measures, it is arguable that the program would not have had the same degree of freedom to accomplish the larger work of the community. Thus, leadership emanated from multiple sectors of this community toward objectives determined from both within and outside the community. In Spillane et al.'s terms, leadership practices were "stretched over" leaders, followers, and situations.

Although Spillane et al.'s framework for examining leadership is instructive, it too fails to escape the problem of conflating management with leadership as Foster argues many frames of leadership often do. In examinations of the work around distributed leadership, Spillane et al. claim that theirs is simply a descriptive tool. However, in the applications of this version of distributed leadership, the descriptions are largely of those in formally designated roles of authority engaged in practices meant to manage. Two examples of this are the centrality of the use of student assessments as a leadership tool and the deployment of peer review as a method of governmentality and coerced self-management (see Maxcy & Nguyễn, 2006). In these uses of distributed leadership, the social systems of accountability and discipline are left unquestioned. The politics of accounting and governmentality are neglected.

As Foster (1986) argued, many perspectives on leadership tend to conflate leadership with management and often fail to articulate the political dimensions of leadership. Advocating a critical approach to the study of educational administration and leadership, Foster suggested that even those who foregrounded the political "make the mistake of seeing leadership as a property inherent to individuals rather than as an act performed within a social context" (p. 181). Furthermore, he asserted "we have to consider how the concept [leadership] has become so closely identified with the social system within which it is used, an aspect of leadership the political approach does not fully appreciate" (p. 182). Although Spillane et al. attempt to address this through discussion s of the importance of time and place, they fail to seek to describe what questions of consequence (Clegg and Hinings & Greenwood) might reveal. In neglecting the political and cultural dimensions, Spillane et al. presume a static social structure.

They too fail to account for significant practices of leadership surrounding the Vietnamese Language and Culture program.

For the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, a broader array of performances were attended to inclusive of actors both within the school and outside of the school: teachers, community leaders, district officials, and parents. Because they served a recent immigrant community, the teachers acted not only as teachers to the children of the community, but also as linguistic and cultural translators, counselors to families adjusting to a new country with different values and mores, surrogate parents to children whose parents work multiple jobs at minimum wages, resources for parents to find employment, housing, health care. Negotiating all of these involves the politics of being the other Other on a school campus, the politics of being immigrants in a time when multiculturalism has been rendered useless as a vehicle for shifting uneven relations of power. These subjectivities cannot be taken for granted by this community. The prudent subaltern understands that often the important question is not "who should speak?" but rather "who will listen?" (Spivak, 1990). These are both politically charged questions, but representation may be of small consequence to a community of recent immigrant families who are simply trying to survive the disjunctures of diaspora.

As detailed in the article on distributed leadership frames, it appeared that for the Vietnamese community, leadership in accomplishing the work of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program was spread over multiple actors who were not limited to those in formal roles. Instead of conventions of leadership distribution which retain values of efficiency and new managerialism, leadership within the VLC program appeared to be more deliberatively considered and understood as operating within a

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broader arena of struggle. Theirs was a struggle over alienated labor whereby critical subjectivities might emerge and where those involved in schools may understand themselves as not only performance and classroom managers, but also as cultural producers involved in the production of identities and social arrangements.

One Vietnamese Language and Culture program teaching assistant described an encounter with a parent at a local home repair store. The parent was confused and flustered at not being able to find the items on the list her husband had provided her with; it was written in English. She approached *Thầy Nghĩa* and asked him to help her with her shopping list. He chuckled when retelling this story, but went on to describe how this incident pointed to an understanding of those who work in the VLC program as "leaders" of the community and as "icons" of sorts. As noted earlier, traditional characterizations of leadership do not account for this teaching assistant's self-ascribed leadership. Clearly, this understanding of leadership is one that centers responsiveness to the community's desires and needs and not simply the attainment of predetermined goals and objectives from articulations voiced elsewhere. The strong community, the celebration of heritage culture and language, the performance on accountability measures of the students, the public displays of cultural identity and difference, the subversion of Tayloristic principles of management, all point to the need to reconsider leadership in cultural and political terms that might serve to instill an ethic of reciprocal accountability and to inform more radically democratic orientations. As argued elsewhere (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006), distributed leadership may appear to be a more democratic alternative to more conventional forms of leadership, but in their failure to attend to the politics of how leadership is distributed and with what consequences to whom, they are far too

susceptible in becoming tools toward antidemocratic managerial ends. Crucially, Bottery (2006) argued that economic globalization has led to "the expansion of private-sector business interests, not only in the commercial arena, but into the public sector as well. When this happens, private sector values—primarily those of efficiency, effectiveness and economy—usually become the criteria of success, and other values like care, trust and equity increasingly become second-order" (p. 7). In unreflectively and uncritically characterizing leadership practices, the danger of displacing values of care, trust, equity, and of particular importance to this study, the value of difference, is exacerbated and we may unwittingly perpetuate an inhumane technocracy.

Thus, the implications for educational leadership derived from this study are twofold. First, it is important to leverage recent models of leadership distribution which move away from traditions of focused leadership within formal roles of legitimated authority. However, even given such frames as those of Spillane et al.'s, the leadership definition retained a division of those who may and may not be leaders. Although they emphasize that leadership may be practiced by those in formal as well as informal roles of authority, it is clear that those in informal roles only extends so far as teachers. This research study found leadership practices enacted from within multiple arenas and articulated by parents, students, and teaching assistants. In enlarging our frame of understanding to those informed by performance theories and in attending to lived space compared to conceived notions of leadership, we may find many more interesting things to study and inform our practice (D. Foley, 2005).

In considering leadership practices, we too must not neglect to ask the questions of consequence that Clegg and Hinings and Greenwood admonished us to. As

demonstrated, models of distributed leadership still hold the possibility of instrumental administrative uses that perpetuate antidemocratic orientations to schooling. Dominant orientations regarding the distribution of leadership failed to raise questions of consequences along political and cultural dimensions. They presupposed social structures of accountability and government rationality as given and thus left unquestioned the uni-directional accountability of schools where students, teachers, principals, and district level administrators are held accountable to higher ups on pre-specified and narrowly defined performance measures articulated from elsewhere. In contrast, there appeared to be a reciprocal accountability within the Vietnamese community. The community held the teachers and school personnel accountable not just to meeting state standardized performance objectives, but also to attending to the community's social and cultural needs. Likewise, the teachers held the community accountable in ensuring the survival and sustainability of this vulnerable program.

Implications for Educational Policy

Traditional orientations to policy and policy analysis often privilege legitimated governing bodies authorized to decipher the public good and to then formulate statements of intent and action. However, public policy generally and educational policy in particular, emerged over the last century as a result of trends "toward greater rationality and efficiency in the administration of vast public enterprises" (Bradley A. U. Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 4; Tyack, 1974). Shore and Wright (1997) asserted that such an instrumentalist view conceives of policy as

> …a tool to regulate a population from the top down, through rewards and sanctions. According to this conception, policy is an intrinsically

technical, rational, action-oriented instrument that decision makers use to
solve problems and affect change (p. 5).

As discussed earlier, not only does such a Taylorism of perception move us toward

enactments of policy through technocratic practices aimed at predetermined ends, they

too tend toward fragmentation and homogenization. In both the formulation and

implementation of public policies, there is often a problematic assumption of a unitary

"public." Of more contemporary conceptualizations of policy where a multilateral

approach is assumed to provide for negotiations amongst differing stakeholders,

Levinson and Sutton (2001) suggested that,

> in this conception, less powerful actors—students and their parents, and
> even teachers—are seen as adjusting their actions and expectations to a
> *fait accompli,* "challenging" the coherence of educational policy
> (Fuhrman, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993), or at best "resisting"
> policy directives through footdragging or deliberate inaction. (p. 5)

Through such characterizations, the value of polyvocality is undermined and subaltern

voices are often vilified as unpatriotic and anti-nationalist.

In her critique of Habermas, Fraser (1990) argued that his notion of the public

sphere views multiple publics as a sign of "fragmentation and decline" rather than an

advance towards democracy. She too is skeptical of ideal speech spaces where

individuals are free to make claims in the absence of relations of power. She wrote,

"public spheres themselves are not spaces of zero degree culture, equally hospitable to

any possible form of cultural expression" (p. 69). She argued, "declaring a deliberative

arena to be a space where extant status distinctions are bracketed and neutralized is not

sufficient to make it so" (p. 60). She evidences this through accounts of subordinated

social groups including women, workers, people of color, and others who have

constituted alternative publics, what she calls *subaltern counterpublics*. In using this term

she desired to

> Signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of
> subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which
> in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their
> identities, interests, and needs. (p. 67)

In the following sections, both the efficiency bias emanating from a Taylorism of

perception and the tendency toward homogenization and standardization are discussed

through accounts presented of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program. Following

Levinson and Sutton, I argue that it is of paramount importance to counter traditions

within the study of policy and policy analysis that focus on either policy formation or

policy impacts and which conceptualize policy making and implementation as linear

processes. Such conceived accounts continue a managerial and administrative tradition of

an inputs-outputs based approaches characterized as apolitical. Along with Sutton and

Levinson (2001), I argue that it is critical to understand policy in the everyday, policy

that is lived and appropriated; in their terms, "policy as a practice of power" and "policy

in practice."

In the accounts provided of the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, the

district policies and practices regarding student transfers adhered to efficiency measures

and means. School attendance zones were based on geographic proximity within a district

already stratified by race and income. Within the context of this "perfect storm" the

superintendent was strapped by diminishing resources and intensified accountability

measures. Consequently, he encouraged parents to keep their students in neighborhood

schools when the cost of transferring them into higher performing campuses was

prohibitive. Yet, the parents of thousands of pre-kindergarten students were asked to bus

their children to underutilized spaces to alleviate the costs of over-enrolled schools. Likewise, language policies also corresponded with principles of efficiency whereby students were appropriately placed in particular curricular spaces according to levels of English proficiency. The children perceived as 'smart' were those able to be tracked into the mainstream classrooms with the most expedience. However, as was illustrated through the foregoing accounts, the students within the VLC program came from distances beyond the school attendance zone as well as the district's boundaries. They too resisted "correct" language placements because it was "just a part of the culture and the way that it is" (Interview Transcript, 01.13.06). As suggested earlier, the lived space of those within the Vietnamese Language and Culture program contested technocratic efforts to dominate the space and instead appropriated it to meet the needs of the community and to open up other possibilities. As Levinson and Sutton argued, "Studies of appropriation in general can be a lever against unexamined assumptions in policy formation, because they show how policy in practice differs from policy as conceived authoritatively" (2001, p. 16).

Concerns of this district to insure that high mobility populations are receiving standard curricula are not insignificant matters. However, in looking at this low-income and linguistically isolated population (typically markers of high mobility students), it is important to recognize the distances from which the Vietnamese Language and Culture program students travel and the commitments of parents to allow students to start and finish this program of study. Further, measures of creative non-compliance enacted by the teachers and parents shifted the terrain so even though they find themselves on the material margin, they have reterritorialized the space of the portables as the center. In

fostering geographies of desire they are able to subvert pseudo-natural geographic boundaries born of political and economic efficiency.

Finally, with demographic trends shifting toward increasing ethnic and language diversity in schools, it remains imperative that we interrogate moments of inclusion and exclusion. As was noted earlier, culture in the plural "endlessly calls for a need to struggle." At the time of this writing, the United States Senate is considering a comprehensive immigration reform bill that has already passed through the House of Representatives.[30] If passed in the Senate, this bill would make it more difficult for legal immigrants to become citizens of the United States, all immigrants who enter the U.S. to work would be subject to deportation and imprisonment, a broad and retroactive employment verification system would be created in the absence of legal channels by which needed workers could pursue lawful employment, the definition of smuggling would expand to include anyone who aids or transports undocumented immigrants. Additionally, with the revisions made to the bill in the House of Representatives, the bill would also permit the construction of a wall between the United States and Mexico, eliminate the diversity visa lottery system, and authorize all state and local police to enforce federal immigration laws. In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, he details a shift in disciplinary techniques that coincided with dramatic growth in the population. Discipline through physical domination shifted to discipline through techniques of normalization and divisions of bodies in space. The current political and social climate is

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[30] This bill was introduced by the House Judiciary Committee Chair, the Republican Representative Jim Sensenbrenner from Wisconsin in December of 2005. It was introduced as the "Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" (H.R. 4437) and passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 239-182 (National Council of La Raza, retrieved from http://www.nclr.org, 03/22/06).

contentious and painful. It raises questions of how disciplinary techniques may shift once again given a refusal of increasing numbers of "Others" to be disciplined in standardized and particularized ways. Is the building of a wall to exclude the beginning of moves toward more concrete violences?

Assimilationist pressures for English language learners to sacrifice their heritage languages to language shift and eventual extinction point to policies that facilitate linguistic hegemony. These policies are fashioned into language which claims to preserve social harmony and national unity and which provide disadvantaged students with equality of opportunity through expedient transitions into English language usage. However, decisions around language use and instruction are not simply matters of a unified nation or efficiency in schools. The linguistic field or the discourses around language are about relations of power and, ultimately, disciplining subjects. Thus, an examination and analysis of practices surrounding bilingualism and multiculturalism would help to reveal mechanisms of power facilitating the (re)visioning and modification of current relations of force. Foucault (1977b) wrote,

> …the problem is not so much that of defining a political 'position' (which is to choose from a pre-existing set of possibilities) but to imagine and to bring into being new schemas of politicisation. If 'politicisation' means falling back on ready-made choices and institutions, then the effort of analysis involved in uncovering the relations of force and mechanisms of power is not worthwhile. (pp. 189-190)

Techniques and technologies concerning relations of force are powerful such that we are socialized, disciplined, and governed into a complicitous (re)production of power relations. In order to challenge institutional inequities, we cannot work from suppositions that language does not affect identity formation and cultural maintenance or that one language will preserve the nation. We must look for and create ruptures in the prevailing

common sense notions of nationalism, we must raise our consciousnesses through practices of reflexivity, we must learn to imagine otherwise so that the reproduction of uneven relations of power and social arrangements does not become the inheritance of those who strive to honor their heritage languages and cultures while also struggling to thrive in a new cultural complex.

In recent efforts, Sutton and Levinson (2001) and Walford (2001; 2003) contributed to the expansion of research around educational policy through edited volumes of ethnographic studies. Levinson and Sutton (2001) suggested that within the study of policy the

> conventional distinction between policy formation and implementation as distinct phases of a policy "process" (Hill, 1993; Lewis & Wallace, 1984) implicitly ratifies a top-down perspective, unnecessarily divides what is in fact a recursive dynamic, and inappropriately widens the gulf between everyday practice and government action. (p. 2)

Along with these researchers, I contend that a socio-*cultural* lens through which to examine everyday practices may diminish the divide between lived experience and government action. Further, I argue that a socio-*spatial* approach may encourage new ways of understanding and new perspectives that reveal how policies are lived and appropriated. With regard to the Vietnamese Language and Culture program, the ways in which hybrid place-making forestalled enclosure of the lived space points to the promise of such an analysis of policy in practice. Shore and Wright (1997) concluded that the task for anthropology is

> …to unsettle and dislodge the certainties and orthodoxies that govern the present. This is not simply a question of 'exoticizing the familiar'. Rather, it involves detaching and repositioning oneself sufficiently far enough from the norms and categories of thought that give security and meaning to the moral universe of one's society in order to interrogate the supposed natural or axiomatic 'order of things'. (p. 17)

This suggests another implication for educational policy stemming from this study, that is the need to reconsider the pseudo-natural geographic boundaries we create through policies of administrative efficiency. When the question of efficiency for whom is raised with regard to this Vietnamese community, the language and transfer policies examined were ones of further dispersion for these students. Had these policies been left uncontested, it is unlikely that the critical mass necessary to create the program and to maintain sufficient resources would have been achieved. Finally, exclusions of Others at any level (micro and macro) have implications for all social relations. The United States has adopted a "non-discrimination" model regarding this. That is, the government "aims at integrating disparate groups into a single national culture, based on a common language, shared history, and political institutions" (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 11). Although this study does not provide solutions for problems raised in the study, it does suggest a different orientation. The political theorist, Bonnie Honig (2001), proposed that instead of asking how we solve the problem of difference or foreignness, we ought to ask the more expansive question of what problems might difference solve for us(2001). In doing so, we may disrupt the violences (knowingly and unknowingly) perpetrated upon difference and otherness.

Concluding Thoughts

Over the last several decades, the Asian American population has increased dramatically[31]. Between 1980 and 1990, there was a 108 percent increase (3,500,000 to

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[31] Between 1960 and 1999, there was an eightfold increase in the Asian American population from 0.5% to 4.0% (Park & Chi, 1999).

7,274,000) in the Asian American population in the United States. During the same time period, there was only a 6 percent increase in the White population, 13 percent in the African American population, and 53 percent in the Hispanic population (Takaki, 1998). The Chinese represented the largest Asian American subgroup according to the 2000 U. S. Census data with 23. 8% percent, followed by Filipinos at 18.1% percent, Asian Indians at 16.4%, Vietnamese at nearly 11%, Koreans at 10.5%, and the Japanese at 7.8% percent. Even with this dramatic population increase, Park and Chi stated that there was still a dearth of literature on the education of Asian-American students. Moreover, Trueba (1998) asserted,

> To the extent that Asian Pacific Americans in the United States retain a clear and strong ethnic identity, and to the extent that they retain their culture and linguistic heritage, they will be able to play the most delicate and crucial historical role ever given to any other group of Americans, a role that will determine the place of U.S. democratic institutions in the world of the twenty-first century. (p. xv)

The ways in which we understand and enact differences through spatial practices, representations of space, and the "spatial imaginary" have implications for the boundaries we assert, the spaces we create for hybridity, and what these mean for democratically engaged schools.

Earlier I recounted a piece of my own personal history and suggested that the dimming of public attention regarding the Vietnam/American War and its aftermath has limited our ability to see that the history of Vietnam does not begin "when Americans appear on the scene" and neither do the struggles end once given refuge in the United States and abroad. Radhakrishnan wrote,

> Exhilarated by its many recent victories, the First World is in a state of countermnemonic innocence, freely and unilaterally choosing what to remember and what not to remember from the pages of history. We heard

President Bush proudly declare that the memories of Vietnam have been effectively and legitimately buried in the sands of the Gulf War. (1993, p. 750)

Again, although this study privileges place-making, the importance of history and the complications of being situated at intersections of particular places and particular times must not be underplayed. This study is not simply a study of Vietnamese place-making, rather, it is a study of our humanity. With Lowe (2001), I contend that

…the history of U.S. colonialism and war in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, and the racialized immigration from these sites obliges American studies to rethink the history of the United States as a history of empire. (p. 272)

For diasporic communities such as the Vietnamese, the pain of living in exile has special meaning for place-making in spaces where technologies that promote internal colonization are acutely felt.

In describing Asian American lives, Lowe (1996) conceives of two senses of hybridities that complicate notions of identity development. She writes of the sense of hybridity that involves a "free oscillation between or among chosen identities" and what she calls a material concept of hybridity in which the way "histories of forced labor migrations, racial segregation, economic displacement and internment are left in the material traces of 'hybrid' cultural identities" (p. 82). She goes on to write,

These hybridities are always in the process of, on the one hand, being appropriated and commodified by commercial culture and, on the other, of being re-articulated for the creation of oppositional 'resistance cultures.' Hybridization is not the 'free' oscillation between or among chosen identities. It is the uneven process through which immigrant communities encounter the violences of the U.S. state, and the capital imperatives served by the United States and the Asian states from which they came, and the process through which they survive those violences by living, inventing, and reproducing different cultural alternatives. (pp. 196-197)

The Vietnamese Language and Culture program presents instances of surviving these

violences through the establishment and expansion of the program. The cultural

alternatives this program has invented through a diasporic understanding of the lived

space and improvised spatial practices serve to both facilitate a considered negotiation of

the U. S. context and to honor Vietnamese cultural and linguistic heritage. However, as

Lowe indicates, hybridization is not the free oscillation between chosen identities. These

students are asked to be both good American citizens and students as well as good

Vietnamese children. The Vietnamese teachers are asked to be both good American

professionals as well as good Vietnamese teachers. How each invents and negotiates

hybrid ways of being through poetics and improvisational playful performances is

important to an understanding of how *dominated* spaces may become instead

appropriated spaces where vulnerable "Others" may thrive rather than simply survive.

> Dear (1997) wrote,

> In the production of urban space, state political power dominates at all
> scales. Power plays a pivotal role in maintaining the dominance of the
> core over the periphery—Lefebvre's centrality thesis—and in connecting
> the punctual to the global. Today, centrality aspires to *total* control despite
> the prevailing anarchy of fragmentation which inhibits the appearance of a
> new mode of production by the selling of space parcel "by parcel, by a
> mere travesty of a new space." (p. 57)

Of primary importance to this work is the realization that the dominance of the core over

the periphery in this instance is nominal in many ways. In *The Location of Culture,*

Bhabha wrote,

> I do not mean, in any sense, to glorify margins and peripheries. However,
> I do want to make graphic what it means to survive, to produce, to labor
> and to create, within a world-system whose major economic impulses and
> cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your
> country or your people. Such neglect can be a deeply negating experience,
> oppressive and exclusionary, and it spurs you to resist the polarities of

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power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery. (1994, p. xi)

Perhaps the Vietnamese Language and Culture program provides us glimpses into this reaching "beyond and behind." Although the program is placed at the margin of the campus, they do not operate as though the core dominates their lived space. Rather, recognizing the fissures within the faulty one-dimensional vision of school performance and accountability and the inadequacy of an efficiency based mode of managing and administering school- and district-level policies, the Vietnamese community is able to enact "subversions that matter." What Kondo suggested of these subversions is that,

For those of us who occupy one or more marginal sites, work in the academy, in community organizations, on stage and screen, in the streets, continues a legacy of guerilla warfare, where there is no position beyond complicity or enmeshment in the dominant. Knowing this, we must still try to shift and dis-orient existing networks of power, using the means at our disposal. At stake is the hope that these interventions, however small, will enable subversions that matter. (p. 39)

Rather than fighting for the center, the Vietnamese Language and Culture program teachers and Vietnamese community treat the school as the moving center from which to conduct the important work of the community.

The alienation of labor through disciplinary techniques is not novel. Neither is the problem of difference or alterity for democratic societies. However, concrete abstractions increasingly constrain lived experience. Arguably, this pervasive encroachment is extensive as at no other time in history. The categories and divisions we create are ubiquitous and unyielding. At the time of this writing, immigration reform is underway, the news is a constant mill of stories about "immigration crackdowns" featuring stories of fear of deportation, students being pulled out of schools for fear of government raids and round ups. A newly released video game called "Border Patrol" has as its objective the

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prevention of illegal immigrants from crossing the border by any means necessary. Post 9/11 anti-immigration legislation and anti-bilingual education legislation mark moments where our Taylorism of perception has pushed us toward more insidious acts of unreflective, inhumane treatment of one another. There are calls to make concrete abstractions of the pseudo-natural boundaries that existed to the north and the south of us. The building of a wall between Mexico and the United States, the criminalization of immigration and acts of assistance to illegal immigrants turned to felonies clearly mark the territory and distinguish true patriots from others.

Place-making in the everyday allows us a window into the production of space that both endangers and re-enlivens engagement of difference. I do not present hybrid place-making as a solution to problems of policy and practice. Rather, I offer it as one means of revealing and opening up possibilities and opportunities for political choice; I offer it as an alternative to categorization and unreflective treatment of individuals; I offer it as an argument for reading lived space as multiple, shifting, and processual. Through these, it is my hope that we come to know hybridity as ubiquitous, and through this knowing, that we may see others' struggles as our own struggles. In so doing, we are less likely to treat one another unreflectively, we are less likely to draw divisions and create boundaries that serve only to disengage our humanity.

CHAPTER SIX

MEMORY, RESEARCH, AND REFLEXIVITY

Memory and representation

My mother is all of four feet five inches tall. She was given the name *Lệ Thu* because she was born on a rainy autumn day. It means autumn tears. She was born in South Vietnam a couple of months premature and gravely ill. Her Buddhist family was persuaded by a neighbor to convert her to Catholicism that her sins might be forgiven and her life given over to God to decide her fate. So, my mother grew up a practicing Catholic.

Growing up, I remember my mother burning incense every morning. The kitchen counter space was cleared so that a humble offering of fruit, rice, crackers, or simply tea was made to the laughing Buddha. A small cup of *gạo,* uncooked rice grain, used to hold the incense sticks was placed before the offering. As the incense burned down, a new one would take its place throughout the day. I would *chắp tay lạy*, form a lotus blossom with my two hands, and ask the laughing Buddha to keep my father healthy and strong and my family safe and happy. Above the counter space sat a ceramic figure of the laughing Buddha with children on his lap and climbing on his back, in the living room was a small figure of *Bồ Tát Quán Thế Âm*, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and a rosary with pale green beads also hung on the adjacent wall. In making a new life in the United States, our family regularly attended the Episcopal Church that sponsored and helped to resettle my family, the tiny house that served as a small Buddhist Temple, and a large majestic Catholic Church located in downtown San Antonio. It was when my maternal grandfather

passed away that my mother pursued a deep understanding of Buddhism. I was in my early twenties at the time and I can't help but wonder if this is when my mother's attribution of the meaning of my name really emerged rather than at my birth.

Perhaps it was not the purposeful consideration of a name to guide me in this world that motivated my mother to name me *Thu Sương*, but rather the coincidental convergence of a name and the troubled and complicated process of sense- and place-making that could potentially alleviate the pain of postcolonial hybridity. Perhaps as the confusion and bewilderment of being in a foreign place absent family and friends gave way to forming new friendships with those sharing common experiences of abrupt and harsh displacement; as the lack of a language to negotiate the world around her gave way to accented English and an emerging cultural understanding of this new context; as the overwhelming need and drive to simply survive subsided with stable employment and having put their three children through college; and with the death of my grandfather, who since 1979 my mother and father had worked tirelessly to sponsor to the United States and who finally arrived in Texas in 1990, having come through all of this, my mother may have arrived in a space where she could make greater sense of her (un)(dis)location. Perhaps the image of Avalokiteshvara that my name was to evoke was more about the compassion and mercy that we, my mother, my family, others similarly displaced needed in living through the pain and loss accompanying displacement and its attendant violences and in beginning again, in creating a sense of home on foreign soil. The production of representations is subject to shifting places and unstable memories. The multiple readings surrounding the seemingly simple story of my naming may

illuminate how space and time are implicated in both the construction and readings of our narratives.

The project of describing my provisional understanding of how a Vietnamese American community struggles over the composition of their lives and the lives of their children began with my own angst in trying to find my place in the world. The stories and legends of origin and greatness we tell ourselves provide a centripetal force that keeps us from coming undone, from being scattered asunder even within a condition of neither here nor there, a condition of diaspora and painful postcoloniality. What are the consequences when such centripetal forces lessen over time and the production of space appears to adhere to new and encroaching logics?

I began this dissertation with a legend of the origin of the Vietnamese people. I end it with possibilities of composition that hint at different forms, different constellations and combinations, different spaces of belonging/hybridity. Though the story I provide here of my mother's coming to a new understanding of my name is not as flattering, not as apparently purposeful as that presented in the proem, the meanings emerging from the pain of loss and placelessness, that attempts to transcend a physical place, that desires remembrance as well as compassion, may illuminate other ways of knowing and ordering the world that are more kind and more just. Perhaps in developing our sensitivities to the *lived* spaces we inhabit and opening ourselves to the possibilities that the concrete abstractions we've endowed with such power are mere myths we may resist the dispersions that capture us and conceal our humanity, that serve to order the world for surplus and profit, that continue to other for the purpose of political, cultural, and economic exploitation. Perhaps in doing so, we may experience a hybrid place-

making that can transform conceived spaces into third spaces of opportunity and political choice.

A Qualitative Study

A qualitative research design was employed in this study as a close examination of social interactions within a particular context was of primary interest (Hatch, 2002). Although quantitative data are utilized to complement the qualitative study, quantitative research methods were not used. A qualitative approach was more appropriate and useful to this study because quantitative research methods traditionally aim to predict and control whereas qualitative researchers "have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists" (Stake, 1995, p. 37). Additionally, "In qualitative work, the intent is to explore human behaviors within the contexts of their natural occurrence" (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). In this case, the human behaviors explored revolve around the spatial practices involved in negotiating educational services for a low incidence Vietnamese linguistic minority population through a population specific program. These practices were examined within the contexts of their natural occurrence at a public elementary school.

Conducted as a qualitative case study drawing upon critical ethnographic methods, this study was interested in "process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (Merriam, 1998). As a result, a case study method was most suitable to an in-depth examination of this program, a single "bounded system" (Merriam, 1998). In Stake's (1995) outline of case study research, he explained that this form of research has traditionally used classical

anthropological and sociological noninterventionist methods. That is, case study research tries "not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case, not to test, not even to interview" (p. 12). The epistemological foundation of such research requires a disinterested observer looking for objective truth within a stable unchanging reality. However, because the aim of the researcher was to reveal power laden assumptions of the taken-for-granted with an understanding that "reality" is multiple and unstable, a postmodern critical framework was used drawing from critical ethnographic methods.

Foley (2002b) stated that most critical ethnographers use conventional in-depth research techniques of traditional ethnography regardless of their theoretical orientations. These techniques include conducting prolonged, systematic fieldwork involving "participant observation, key informants work, and extensive interviews" (p. 140). However, the critical ethnographer is not concerned with producing universalizing portraits of a culture as in traditional ethnography. Rather, critical ethnography is interested in "producing focused, well-theorized ethnographies of societal institutions or subgroups" (p. 140). Additionally, Foley contended that critical ethnography must have an "emancipatory intent" as discussed by Habermas, or Lather's "catalytic validity" so as to change consciousness. To attain these goals, the "critical ethnographer has to begin breaking with the conventional scientific ethnographic practice of being a detached neutral observer" (p. 140). As my intent was to raise consciousness around the practices of educating low incidence linguistic minority children and to trouble the problematic assimilationist, essentializing, and deficit underpinnings of current associated policies and practices, critical ethnographic methods were chosen to conduct the study.

Important to the rationale presented here is an understanding of current conversations between criticalist and postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial discourses. In their article, "Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research," Kincheloe and McClaren (2003) offered out a reconceptualization of critical theory that is informed by the "post-discourses" of the latter part of the twentieth century. They asserted that the postmodern, conceptualized both as an era and as a cultural form, needs to be addressed by critical theorists and researchers in their reformulations of a critical theory that now recognizes "that claims to truth are always discursively situated and implicated in relations of power" (p. 466). Although Kincheloe and McClaren acknowledged that a unitary version of such a conversation around postmodern critical theory is an impossibility, they strove to present aspects of commonality found therein.

Kincheloe and McClaren's reconceptualization of critical theory includes: (a) critical enlightenment; (b) critical emancipation; (c) the rejection of economic determinism; (d) the critique of instrumental or technical rationality; (e) the impact of desire; (f) a reconceptualized critical theory of power (hegemony); (g) and consequently, a reconceptualized critical theory of ideology and linguistic/discursive power; (h) a focus on the relationships among culture, power, and domination; and (i) an examination of the role of cultural pedagogy in critical theory.

Critical enlightenment, as discussed by Kincheloe and McClaren (2003), is understood to be the uncovering of competing power interests and the revealing of particular social arrangements and processes by which power plays operate. The second aspect of a reconceived critical theory, critical emancipation, involves regaining power to control our lives in accordance with a justice-oriented community. Kincheloe and

McClaren caution that the idea of emancipation must be considered carefully as a critical theory reconceived in the postmodern recognizes the impossibility of ever being completely emancipated from the sociopolitical context that produces us. Further, critics call into question the arrogance of an expert, authoritative researcher making efforts to emancipate "others."

The third facet of a reconceptualized critical theory is the rejection of economic determinism for critical theorists involves the rejection of orthodox Marxist notions where economic underpinnings dictate the nature of all other aspects of human existence. This rejection does not negate the significance of economic factors in the shaping of everyday life, rather, it allows a shift to an understanding that there are multiple forms of power and that economic power cannot be isolated from these other forms. The critique of instrumental or technical rationality addresses the concern of critical theorists that researchers may engage themselves in the technical dimensions of research at the expense of the "humanistic purpose of the research act" (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2003, p. 438). Instrumental/technical rationality privileges method and efficiency over purpose and so separates methods from the values involved in the production of knowledge. Through such rationality, research is conceived of as neutral. For the critical theorist, this is "one of the most oppressive features of contemporary society" (p. 438).

What Kincheloe and McClaren called the impact of desire is the critical theorist's new appreciation for poststructural psychoanalysis. Whereas traditional psychoanalysis viewed the individual as rational and autonomous, poststructural psychoanalysis does not separate the psychic from the sociopolitical realm. This allows critical theorists to explore the interplay among "power, identity, libido, rationality, and emotion" and helps

researchers to "gain a new sensitivity to the role of fantasy and imagination and the structures of sociocultural and psychological meaning they reference" (pp. 438-9). The reconceptualization of power within critical theory emphasizes a need to examine its ambiguities through detailed study and analysis including not only its oppressive capacities, but also its productive functions. Of particular importance to critical theorists is Gramsci's notion of hegemony. This notion of hegemony understands dominant power to be exercised not only through physical force, but also through social psychological attempts to obtain consent to domination through various cultural institutions. Kincheloe and McClaren write,

> The hegemonic field, with its bounded sociopsychological horizons, garners consent to an inequitable power matrix—a set of social relations that are legitimated by their depictions as natural and inevitable. In this context critical researchers note that hegemonic consent is never completely established, as it is always contested by various groups with different agendas. (p. 440)

Related to this conceptualization of hegemony is the reconceptualization of ideology.

For critical theorists, hegemonic formations cannot be separated from the production of ideology. Ideological hegemony involves the "cultural forms, the meanings, the rituals, and the representations that produce consent to the status quo and individual's particular places within it" (p. 440). This conception of ideology diverges from earlier delineations of ideology which suggested a monolithic, unidirectional force imposed on passive individuals (Mills, 1997). Ideology reconceived is understood to work through a more "subtle, ambiguous, and situationally specific form of domination" (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2003, p. 441).

Regarding language, critical theorists have come to recognize it as an unstable practice that is implicated in constructing the world. Language can no longer be seen as

transparent representations or approximations of the world. Rather, critical theorists must study "the way language in the form of discourses serves as a form of regulation and domination" (p. 441). When language is read as transparent and endowed with one true meaning, or when dominant discourses are not contested, particular hegemonic and ideological messages remain undisturbed in the consciousness of individuals. Consequently, power dynamics can then be taken for granted reflecting a status quo of naturalized power relations.

The last two considerations for a reconceptualized critical theory involve culture and cultural production. "Critical researchers have argued that culture has to be viewed as a domain of struggle where the production and transmission of knowledge is always a contested process" (p. 441). Thus, Kincheloe and McClaren submit that counterhegemonic cultural research must have the ability to "link the production of representations, images, and signs of hyperreality to power in the political economy" and the capacity to then delineate the "highly complex effects of the reception of these images and signs on individuals located at various race, class, gender, and sexual coordinates in the web of reality" (p. 442).

Lastly, cultural pedagogy, defined as the ways particular cultural agents produce particular hegemonic ways of knowing, is argued to be highly developed in Western societies. It is through this sophisticated cultural pedagogy that these societies have, to varying degrees, "capitulated to this corporate pedagogical threat to democracy" (p. 443). Accordingly, this reconceptualized version of critical theory underscores the importance of exposing the processes that constitute cultural pedagogies.

This interpretation of critical theory illuminates critical research methods drawn from ethnographic and postmodern methods (Giroux, 1993; Kincheloe & McClaren, 2003; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Usher & Edwards, 1994) and the aptness of its use in exploring the mechanisms and relations of power involved in negotiating, developing, and providing educational services to this low incidence linguistic minority group. Moreover, the above delineation of a reconceptualized critical theory informed by postmodern challenges helps shape the research questions and methods used in this study.

In Carspecken's (1996) *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, five stages for critical qualitative research are described. Although Carspecken's conceptualization of critical ethnographic research has been criticized (see Anderson, 1994) as too formulaic, the research design that this study followed subscribes to the first three of these stages with an understanding that these stages cannot be isolated into discrete modes of research and that there is a fluidity between the three interweaving and overlaying one with the other. The research design also diverges from Carspecken's last two stages which focus on describing system relations and using these to explain the research findings. Rather than describing system relations as Carspecken advocates, the research design adopted and modified modes of analysis from Fairclough's (1995) model of critical discourse analysis to help explain the research findings. Carspecken's first three stages include the compilation of the primary record, preliminary reconstructive analysis, and dialogical data generation.

The first of these three stages is well-aligned with traditional qualitative methods described by others (Denzin, 1997; Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) including thick descriptions, the use of field journals, and observations. This compilation

of the primary record adheres to techniques used to establish trustworthiness, or in Carspecken's terms "support objective validity claims of the researcher" (p. 88). These techniques include the use of multiple recording devices and multiple observers, a flexible observation schedule, the practice of prolonged engagement, use of low-inference vocabulary, peer-debriefing, and member checks.

The second stage, preliminary reconstructive analysis, describes the process whereby a researcher begins to make speculations with respect to the meanings of interactions recorded in the primary record. In particular, Carspecken writes of this process as the teasing out of "normative and subjective references" and the articulation of "normative themes tacitly referenced in consistent ways" (p. 93). This reconstructive analysis will be further detailed in the following section on data analysis procedures. It is important to note that this reconstructive analysis—the interplay of theory and empirical data that involves both inductive and deductive processes—occurs repeatedly for the duration of the research project.

The third stage, dialogical data gathering, considers the use of interviews and other ways of generating dialogical data. This stage is both a means of further data collection as well as a method of meeting validity requirements with regard to both the compilation of the primary record as well as in stage two preliminary reconstructive analysis. Through dialogic data gathering techniques, interviews and focus groups, the researcher may member check what is in the primary record and facilitate reconstruction by participants to compare with the researcher's reconstructive analysis.

The following sections outline how the site and participants were be selected, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, limitations, and a brief discussion of self-reflexivity and partial insider research.

Site and Participant Selection

Critical case sampling was used in the identification of an information rich case and participants who are able to provide insight into issues central to the study (Patton, 2002). The campus selected merits interest due its uniquely diverse student population. Because this campus serves approximately 50% Hispanic, 20% African American, 20% Southeast Asian, and 10% White students, it faces challenges of serving a low-incidence linguistic minority population (approximately 200 Vietnamese students) within a multicultural setting. Additionally, 75% of the Vietnamese student population is identified as economically disadvantaged and 72% are designated limited English proficient. Despite these statistics, this subgroup has experienced great success with regard to performance accountability measures.

The selection of participants for the study involved two techniques including critical case sampling as those most directly involved in providing language (English as a Second Language [ESL]) instruction to this low incidence linguistic minority population were selected for observations and interviews including five faculty members and two teaching assistants. Purposive sampling was then used in the selection of other members of the campus and community who provided insight into the dynamics of negotiating educational services for the Vietnamese student population including the campus principal. Individuals were selected based on voluntary participation, indications of the

potential for "information rich" interviews based on comments of the Vietnamese ESL

teachers, observations of faculty and campus advisory committee meetings, and informal

interviews with faculty members.

The primary informant involved in this study, a teacher in the Vietnamese

language and culture program, is a close friend of fourteen years and facilitated my

access to the research site as described in the first chapter.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was primarily qualitative in nature and utilized

standard ethnographic techniques of fieldnotes from participant observations, informal

conversations and semi-structured interviews, document review, and researcher field

journaling (Carspecken, 1996; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Thomas,

1993). Student performance data, finance and staffing information obtained from the state

education agency will also be used to complement the qualitative data collected. These

multiple sources of data provide the study with greater trustworthiness (Denzin &

Lincoln, 1998).

Merriam (1998) cautioned that case study research is ambiguous with "no set

procedures or protocols that can be followed step by step" (p. 20). This is part of the

strength and appeal of case study research as it allows the researcher flexibility and

sensitivity to research participants, research site, and context. With regard to interviews, I

intended on conducting between two and five hours of interviews with each faculty and

staff member of the Vietnamese language program during the 2004-2005 academic year.

However, as the research ensued, I found that this was a great imposition to participants

who were constrained by the extraordinary degree to which they were responsible for the supervision of students throughout the day and late into the evening. One of the research participants, a half-time teacher also owns and runs several small businesses, two other participants arrived at school every day at seven in the morning and left every day late in the evening and were constantly engaged in different activities with students for the duration of that time. During the 2005-2006 school year, all participants were interviewed. Each interview lasted between a half hour and two hours. Depending upon participant availability and initial interviews, follow-up interviews were conducted. Each interview was audio taped and transcribed. Copies of these transcripts will be maintained in a secure location for at least three years after the study. In addition to these semi-structured interviews, data was also collected through informal conversations. I engaged in numerous informal conversations with all participants between classes, at different events, before and after team meetings, and whenever else opportunity arose. Patton (2002) wrote, "The strength of the informal conversational method resides in the opportunities it offers for flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and situational changes" (p. 343). A limitation to this method is that informal conversations may require a greater amount of time to collect and may make analysis more difficult due to the fragmented nature of this kind of data.

Over 100 hours of formal classroom observations were conducted in the classrooms with varying amounts of time devoted to each teacher depending on their full-time or part-time status. These observations were divided between regular language arts instruction on Wednesdays and Vietnamese language and culture instruction on Fridays. More than 150 total hours of observation were conducted of classroom teaching, the

afterschool program tutorials, twice-weekly Vietnamese Language and Culture program teacher team meetings, three of seven monthly campus advisory committee meetings, the yearly meeting of the school's language assessment and placement committee, events organized and sponsored by the Vietnamese program faculty and staff including the annual Mid-Autumn festival, the annual Lunar New Year celebration, parent-teacher meetings. Field notes were written up during and subsequent to these observations.

As noted above, to ensure trustworthiness multiple sources of data were used including public documents (public state data records, newspaper articles, radio transcripts), interview transcripts, and fieldnotes. Additionally, interviews were "member-checked" allowing those interviewed to review and approve their comments. Prolonged engagement with the research site and participants was also used to enhance trustworthiness. Finally, a fourth method of peer debriefing was used in establishing and enhancing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

Data analysis progressed through description, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). However, it is important to note that in qualitative studies a process of abduction is typical where data collection and analysis are imbricated dialectically informing one another (Huberman & Miles, 1998). Critical discourse analysis was initially employed in order to reveal subjective and normative patterns, which although often accepted as natural by participants, are socially and historically constituted (Thomas, 1993). Although critical discourse analysis is traditionally associated with sociolinguistics, Fairclough (1995) asserted that there is a "need to bring together critical

discourse analysis of discursive events with ethnographic analysis of social structures and settings, in the search for what some have called a critical ethnography" (pp. 9-10). Consequently, this study focused not on sentence structures, turn taking, or other aspects of language and grammatical theories, rather, this study viewed language and texts as social semiotics facilitating an orientation to "mapping relations between language (texts) and social structures and relations." However, as my fieldwork progressed and I worked between theory and experience, my analysis shifted toward what I call a critical socio-spatial analysis drawing primarily from Henri Lefebvre.

Based on Fairclough's work, a textual analysis provides (1) a description of texts including public school documents, print media, documents generated through participant observation, interview transcripts, other spoken texts, and the geopolitical landscape, (2) an interpretation of the relationship between discursive practices at the campus level and the texts, and (3) an explanation of the relationship between these discursive practices and wider sociocultural practices related to educational services for low incidence linguistic minority populations. For Fairclough (1995), texts are "social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction" (p. 6). The relationship between texts and sociocultural practices is mediated by discursive practices (the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of texts). I set out with a focus on texts and discursive practices associated with the concept of place to analyze the data using reconstructive analysis as described by Carspecken using Habermas's validity claims to tease out and articulate normative and subjective patterns consistently displayed at the site (Carspecken, 1996). Again, as my work progressed I shifted toward a critical socio-spatial analysis using

Lefebvre's three dimensional theory of spatial production. It is important to understand this shift as complementary and not oppositional to work analyzing texts and discourse. However, as I made sense of what I observed in the field, it became apparent that in using critical discourse analysis, I could easily fall into the trap that Lefebvre cautioned against, that is conflating the spatial with semiotic signs. The patterns and regularities deciphered were then refined and coded into emerging categories and subcategories as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and finally, integrated into a larger theoretical scheme to interpret essential features and relationships among phenomena.

Limitations

As the research project presented here is a case study, the objective was not to generalize. Rather, the case study approach allows for greater detail and an in-depth examination of the complexities of every day practices and relations. It "offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Although case study research provides for rich, thick description and analysis there too are limitations to this research method. As Merriam (1998) cautioned, case studies may oversimplify or exaggerate situations and can be read as total/izing accounts. This study should not be read as such, but as partial, contingent, socially, culturally, historically and spatially constructed and situated.

Other limitations within this study include constraints of time and material resources limiting the scope of the study and thus preventing a thorough examination of other crucial sites of policies and practices around this population. For instance,

examining how parents, community members, and students understand their place in the program, school, and district is critical to a more complete portrait of educational experiences of linguistic and cultural minority populations. Limitations of case study research also include those around the degree of researcher sensitivity (Merriam, 1998). As the instrument of research, my own sensitivities and biases came to bear on what was (im)possible for me to see, what was privileged, and what was neglected. Furthermore, questions of partial insider research also arose in this study with considerations of how my own Vietnamese background and upbringing influenced the study of this Vietnamese Language and Culture program.

Reflexivity and Partial Insider Research

Regarding ethnography, Denzin (1997) asserted that self-reflexivity is "no longer a luxury" and that "The writer can no longer presume to be able to present an objective, uncontested account of the other's experiences" (p. xiii). With the linguistic and reflexive turn in qualitative research (Coffey, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; D. Foley, 2002a, 2002b; Segall, 2001), such self-reflexivity must be practiced not only in ethnographic work, but in research generally. Foley (2002a) wrote that,

> Turning in on ourselves in a critical manner tends to produce an awareness that there are no absolute distinctions between what is 'real' and what is 'fiction,' between the 'self' and the 'other.' Methodologicially, this means that we are forced to explore the self-other relationships of fieldwork critically if we are to produce more discriminating, defensible interpretations. (p. 144).

To the degree that one employs self-reflexive measures in the conduct of research, trustworthiness in data collection and analysis may be enhanced. Because there is no "escaping the physical and mental presence" of the researcher (Coffey, 1999) and

because of an increased acknowledgement and acceptance of this oppositional stance to presentations of objective and realist interpretations of research, it is important to explore the self-other relationship both in the field and within the texts we produce.

In his article on the reflexive turn, Foley (2002b) argued for more reflexive epistemological and narrative practices that would "make ethnography a more engaging, useful, public storytelling genre" (p. 469). Ethnographers such as Coffey and Behar too agree with this approach to understanding and conducting ethnographic and qualitative research. Coffey wrote,

> Autobiographical writing reacts against the *insularity* of intellectual, academic or disciplinary writing. Rather than speaking only to itself, the autobiographical product has a wider appeal. Furthermore it works against, rather than contributing to, the alienation of the writer from the reader. (p. 133)

Drawing on and adding to the work of Clifford and Marcus, Sherif (2001) explored the relationship between "self" and "other" through fieldwork as a partial insider in Egypt. Although insiders studying their own cultures are able to offer "new angles of vision and depths of understanding" they too are "constrained in their research and analyses both by boundaries imposed by and through the anthropological discipline and by personal, gendered experiences in the field" (p. 438).

Challenges to and possibilities of more self-reflexive research were encountered throughout this study. The Vietnamese form of addressing one another depends on gender, age, social standing of each in relation to the other. Before entering the field, I gave careful consideration to how I would refer to myself in the field. Knowing that my presentation of self is of great import, I considered my desire to be perceived as a researcher first and foremost and decided that I would refer to myself in the third

person—a formal but still respectful mode of presenting myself. Despite this, the program director, *Dr. Tộc*, called me *"Con,"* or child. This form of address referenced my partial insiderness as a much younger Vietnamese woman rather than my desire to be seen as a serious researcher. One morning, during a break between the second grade and first grade classes, *Dr. Tộc*, *Cô Trang*, and I were sitting on the floor of *Cô Trang's* portable classroom sorting through and organizing large plastic tubs of cloth and costumes in preparation for the annual Lunar New Year festival. The costumes were sorted for performances according to the appropriate grade level, gender, and size. Each costume was folded and stored in a plastic bag with a child's name and grade level written in permanent marker on it. It was during this morning of sorting, folding, labeling and storing that *Dr. Tộc* began to refer to me as *"Nhỏ"* meaning small or tiny. Although meant as a term of endearment, it too seemed even more diminutive to me and even less the serious researcher I wanted to be. Compounding this sense of vulnerability as a professional and as a researcher, one of my first encounters with the Vietnamese program teachers began with queries into the level of my Vietnamese proficiency. Being raised in San Antonio, Texas by a mother who brought her children up in the tradition of "being seen and not heard" and where opportunities for learning Vietnamese were hard to come by, my Vietnamese is halting, uncertain, and marked by a Texas accent. Upon hearing my response, the two older women offered that I should spend time with them to improve my Vietnamese. This querying of my language (in)abilities would continue throughout the study by students I worked with in the afterschool program. My poor proficiency in Vietnamese was apparent to the students who observed my frequent consultations of Vietnamese-English dictionaries in assisting them with their Vietnamese spelling

homework and in their journaling exercises. Parents too questioned me about my background, whether or not I was born in Vietnam, when my family arrived in the states. Some politely praised my Vietnamese as being "good for someone born in the states." In part, my Vietnamese fluency was a commentary on my family and upbringing—was I brought up decent, or was I left to the vagaries of American life.

Coffey (1999) wrote, that "Fieldwork is necessarily subjective and personal" (p. 68) and that the impact of personal characteristics and looks on the conduct of fieldwork is significant (D. K. Kondo, 1990). She argued that physical characteristics may influence access, field roles and field relationships. I was not the only young Vietnamese person helping to tutor in the afterschool program. Local high school and university students, some of whom were alumni of the program, also volunteered their time. The differences in physical appearance between me and a number of the other volunteers were striking. Many of the college students dressed in gangster hip-hop fashions wearing baggy jeans, caps cocked to the side, hair bleached and died blond and red and styled into spikes. My own quiet style of dress, waist-length straight black hair, and lack of foundation, powder, lipstick, eye make-up may have facilitated my access to more open field relations within larger strained relationships between an older generation of Vietnamese immigrants and a younger generation of U.S. born Vietnamese Americans.

Increasingly researcher positionality is foregrounded in writing up research studies, particularly in qualitative research. Often, this has involved the provision of lists of one's gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, political bent and so on. However, in my reflexive ponderings on how my "self", my "other", my hybridities and the self of others in this study were engaged with one another, how we position one

another, how we perform for one another, I become less convinced of the utility of such lists and their ability to point to the "infinitely layered and interwoven" and provisional nature of research, researcher, and researched. Coffey (1999) wrote, "In researching, constructing and writing the lives of others we are engaged in negotiating and writing ourselves" (p. 47) and I become more convinced of the growing importance of personal recollections and narratives in the reflexive practice of constructing texts and performances for and with others to clarify how our subjectivities, or subject positions come to bear on the research and field.

Yet, as Denzin (1997) cautioned, "Current cultural critics of ethnography, and cultural studies, however, have yet to seriously interrogate and question their own license to gaze, let alone write about what they gaze upon…. That is, many appear to justify the gazing eye of the voyeuristic cultural critic by appealing to the politics of resistance that they attempt to write" (p. xix). Additionally, Coffey (1999) wrote,
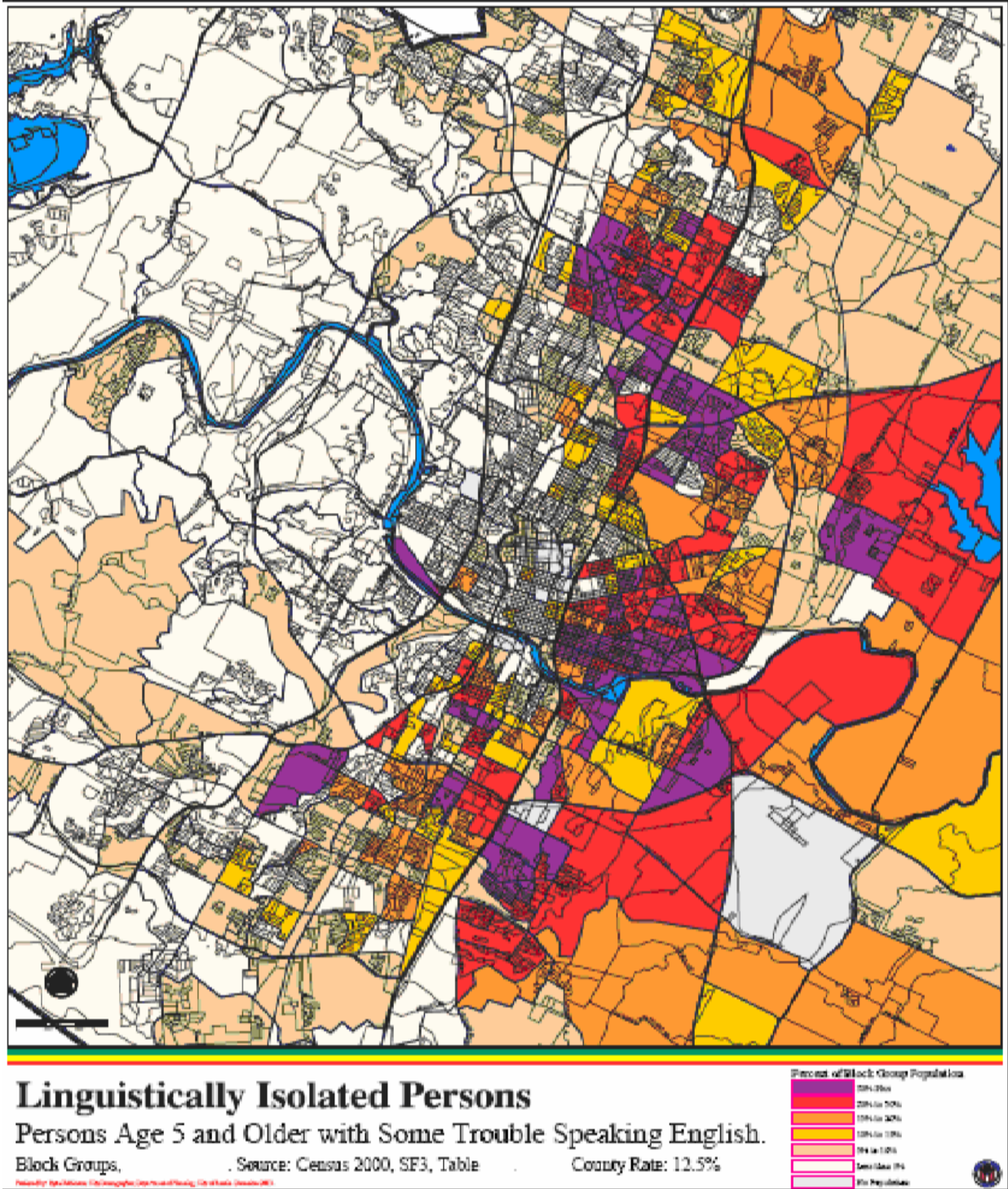
> The boundaries between self-indulgence and reflexivity are fragile and blurred. There will always be the question of balance between the voice of ourselves, as knowing subject/object and the desire to recognize and reveal the voices of others. (p. 132)

In my desire to expose injustices, in calling on that which we "cannot not want," in self-disciplining to the regulatory compulsions of academe in order to legitimize and justify my license to gaze, I present these violent abstractions (Lefebvre, 1991). In researching communities of resistance, particularly those from vulnerable populations, I must weigh my responsibilities as a researcher who is called on to contribute to the production of knowledge against my responsibilities to a vulnerable community. In doing so, I have made judgments regarding what to withhold and what to reveal here. The narratives presented here are easily read as a tale of vulnerable others working against dominant

forces of oppression/democracy. Perhaps instead of revealing what "nefarious" acts of disobedience were enacted here, of working *within* and *against* regimes of truth, it is more fruitful to consider how those within the program work *between* these to serve their community.

APPENDICES

Appendix A City Map of Linguistically Isolated Household Concentration

Linguistically Isolated Persons

Persons Age 5 and Older with Some Trouble Speaking English.

Block Groups,   . Source: Census 2000, SF3, Table   .   County Rate: 12.5%

Appendix B City Map of Low-Income Household Concentration
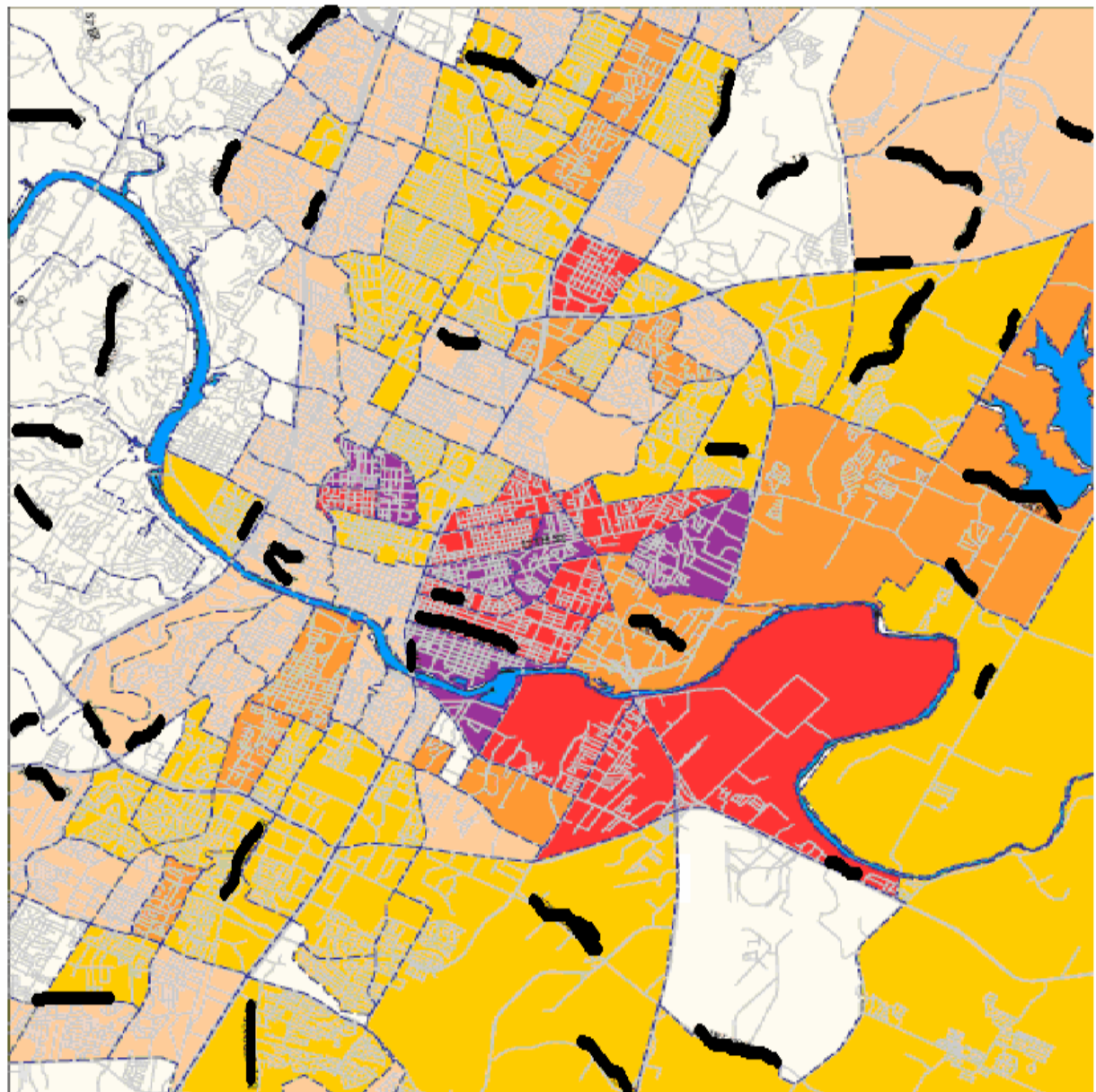
Low-Income Home Owners

Low-Income Owners as a Share of Total Home Owners.
Low-Income is Defined here as Median Family Income
at or Below 50% of County Median Family Income.
County Median is: $58,555; 50% is: $29,277.
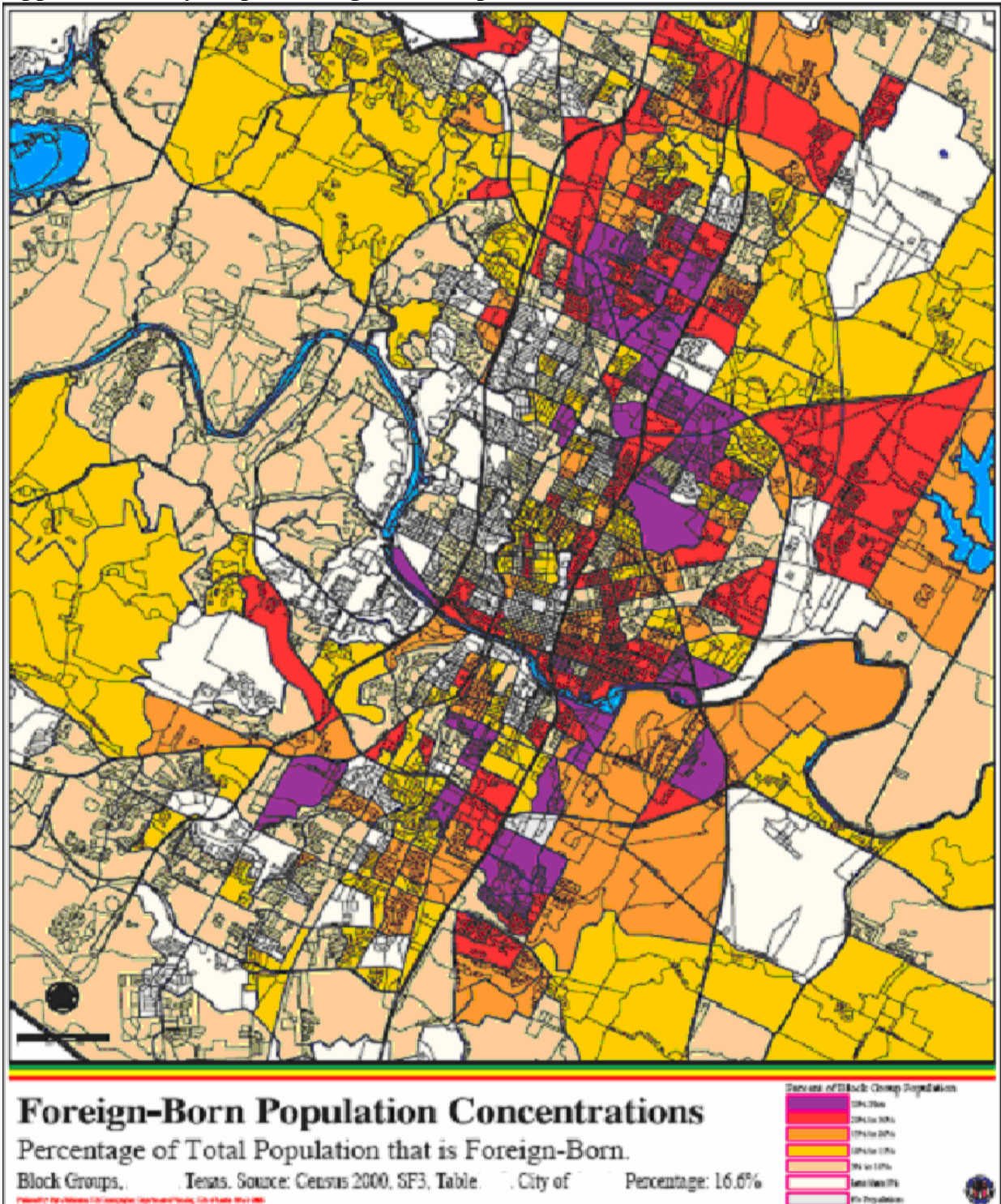Census 2000 Data; SF1, Table

Share of Home Owners
50% or Greater
40% to 50%
30% to 40%
20% to 30%
10% to 20%
Less than 10%

Appendix C City Map of Foreign-Born Population Concentration

Foreign-Born Population Concentrations

Percentage of Total Population that is Foreign-Born.

Block Groups,   Texas. Source: Census 2000, SF3, Table.   City of   Percentage: 16.6%

Appendix D City Map of Asian Population Concentration Change from 1990 and 2000

Changing Asian Landscape
Asian Population Concentrations, 1990 and 2000.
, Texas. 1990 Census and Census 2000 Data.

1990 Population

Percent Asian
20% Plus
15% to 20%
10% to 15%
5% to 10%
0% to 5%
No Population

2000 Population

Percent Asian
20% Plus
15% to 20%
10% to 15%
5% to 10%
0% to 5%
No Housing Units
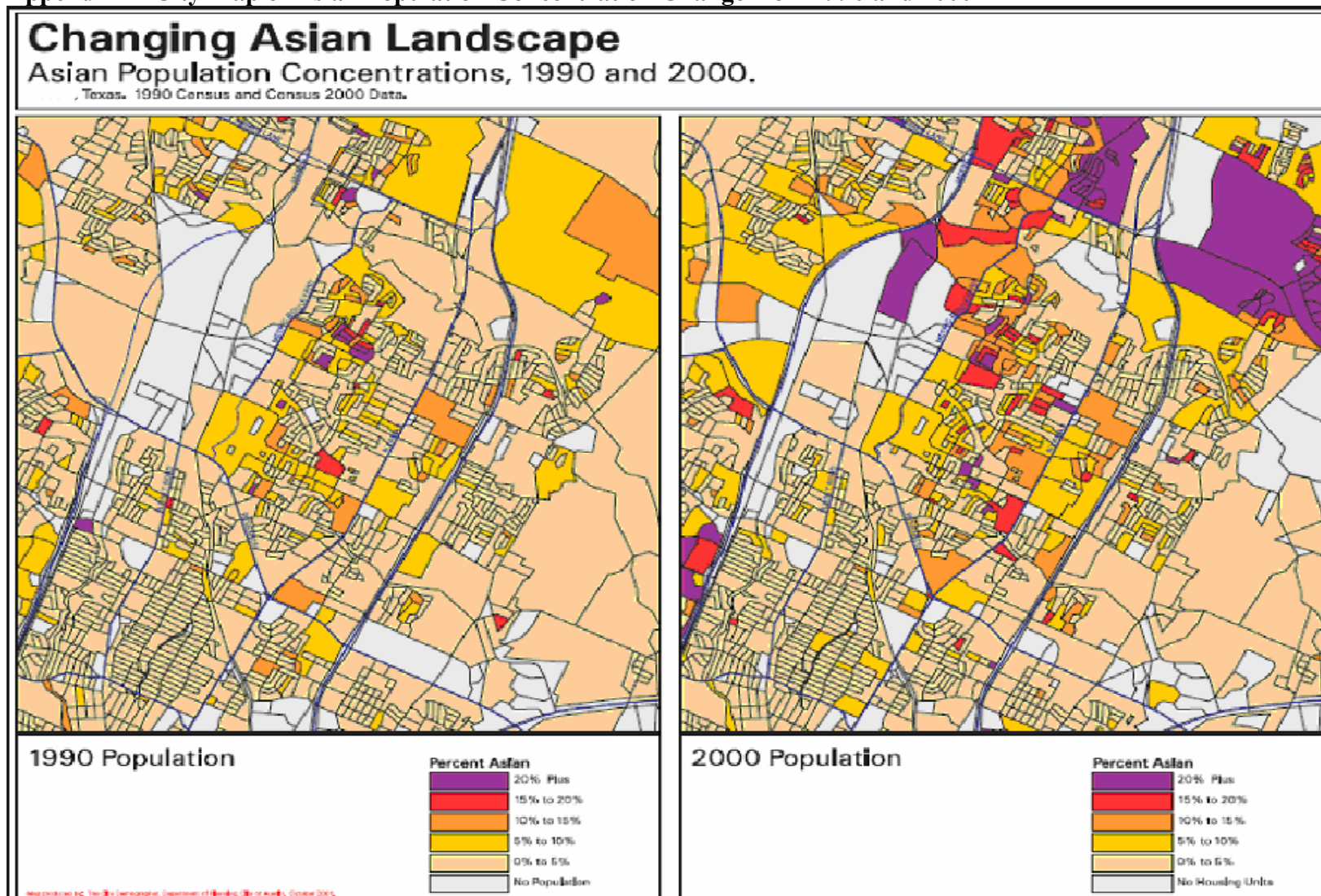
Appendix E City Map of Asian Population Concentration

Asian Population Concentrations
Percentage of Total Block Population that is Asian, 2000.
Census Blocks, Texas. Source: Census 2000, SF1

239
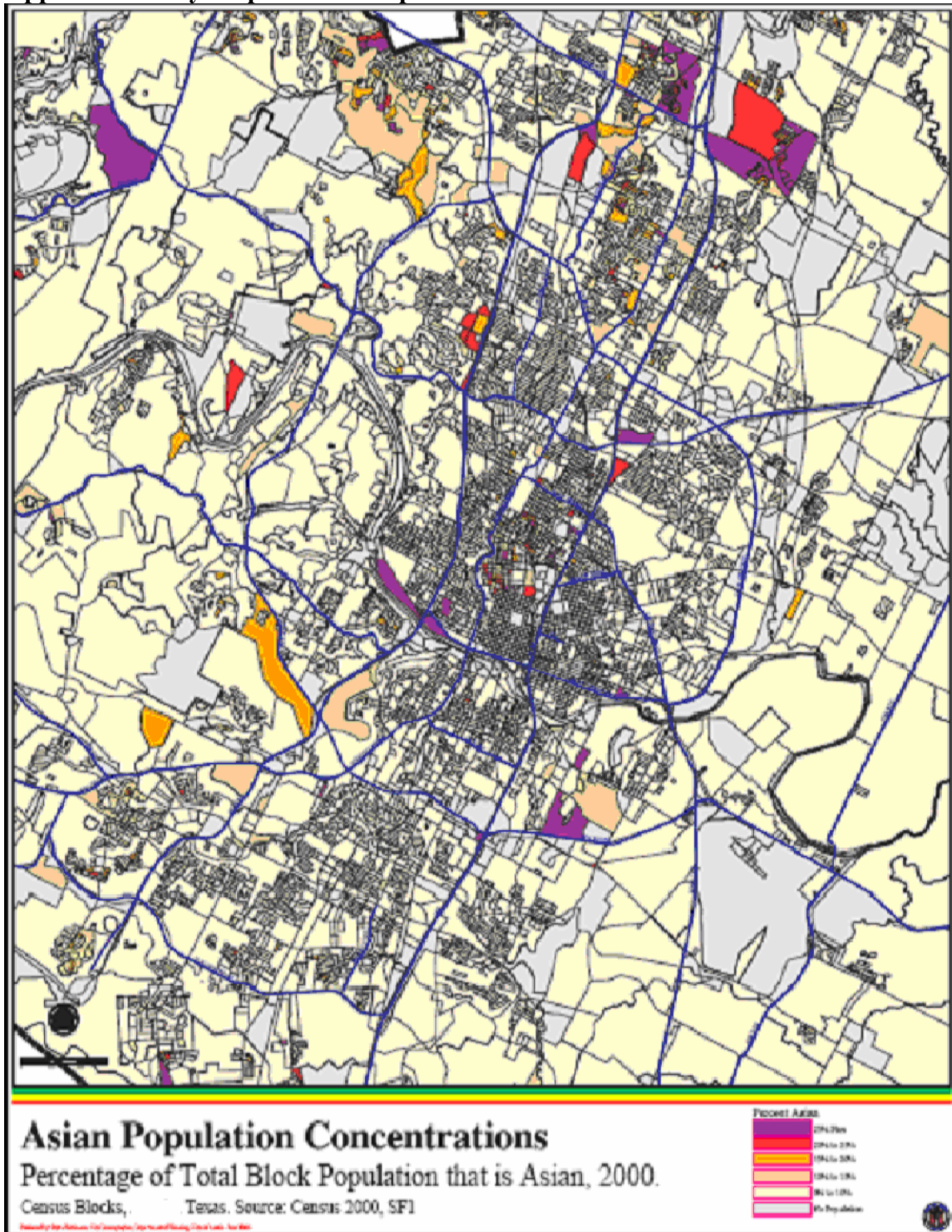
Appendix F Texas Independent School District Testing Schedule for 2005-2006

Month/Year	Testing Date	Test
August 2005	Testing Window (Aug. 16-Sept. 23)	TPRI, Tejas LEE for Grade 3
September 2005	Testing Window (12-16)*	TEA Fall Study
	24 (Saturday)	ACT
	Testing Window (Sept. 26-Oct. 21)	TPRI, Tejas LEE for Grade K
October 2005	8 (Saturday)	SAT
	8 (Saturday)	Credit by Exam
	Testing Window (17-18)	ITBS/Logramos Grades 5 and 8 (optional)
	18 (Tuesday)	TAKS Exit Level ELA (retest); TAAS Exit Level Writing
	19 (Wednesday)	TAKS/TAAS Exit Level Mathematics (retest)
	20 (Thursday)	TAKS Exit Level Science (retest); TAAS Exit Level Reading
	21 (Friday)	TAKS Exit Level Social Studies (retest)
	22 (Saturday)	ACT
November 2005	5 (Saturday)	SAT
	12 (Saturday)	Credit by Exam
December 2005	3 (Saturday)	SAT
	3 (Saturday)	Credit by Exam
	10 (Saturday)	ACT
January 2006	Testing Window (24-26)*	Field Tests: TAKS Grades 4** and 7 Writing; TAKS Grade 9 Reading; TAKS Grades 10 and Exit Level ELA; SDAA II Grades 4, 7, and 10 Writing and Grade 10 ELA SDAA II Grades 3-9 Reading; Grades 3-10 Mathematics
	28 (Saturday)	SAT
February 2006	11 (Saturday)	ACT
	21 (Tuesday)	TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading
		TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 1)
		TAKS Grade 9 Reading
		TAKS Grades 4** and 7 Writing
		TAKS Grades 10 and Exit Level ELA
		TAKS—I Exit Level ELA
		TAKS Exit Level ELA (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Writing
		SDAA II Grade 4 and 7 Writing
		SDAA II Grade 10 students receiving ELA instruction at level 10 ONLY
		SDAA II Grade 10 students receiving Writing instruction at levels K-9
	22-23 (Wednesday and Thursday)	TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading (make up)
	22 (Wednesday)	TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 2)
		TAKS Exit Level Mathematics (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Mathematics
		SDAA II Grade 9 and 10 students receiving Reading instruction at level 9 ONLY
	23 (Thursday)	TAKS Exit Level Science (retest)
		TAKS Exit Level Reading
		TAKS Grade 10 ELA (make up)
		SDAA II Grade 10 students receiving ELA instruction at level 10 ONLY (make up)

Month/Year	Testing Date	Test
	24 (Friday)	TAKS Exit Level Social Studies (retest)
March 2006	Testing Window (6-8)	TAKS Grades 5 and 6 Spanish Math Field Test
		TAKS Grades 5 and 6 Spanish Reading Field Test
	Testing Window (20-24)	TELPAS;
		RPTE II Field Tests (Grades 2-12); LEP Student Field Tests
April 2006	1 (Saturday)	SAT
	3 (Monday)	TAKS LAT Grade 5 Mathematics
	4 (Tuesday)	TAKS Grade 5** Mathematics
	5 (Wednesday)	TAKS Grade 5** Mathematics (make up)
	8 (Saturday)	ACT
	17 (Monday	TAKS LAT Grades 3-4, 6-8, and 10 Mathematics
	18 (Tuesday)	TAKS Grades 3**, 4**, 6**, 7, 8, and 10 Mathematics
		TAKS Grade 5** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 1)
		TAKS Exit Level ELA (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Writing
		SDAA II Grades 3-10 Mathematics
	19 (Wednesday)	TAKS Grades 4**, 6**, 7, 8 Readings
		TAKS Grades 3** and 4** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 1)
		TAKS Grade 5** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 2)
		TAKS Exit Level Mathematics
		TAKS-I Exit Level Mathematics
		TAKS Exit Level Mathematics (retest)
		TAKS Grades 3**, 5** Reading (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Mathematics
		SDAA II Grades 3-10 Reading
		TAKS/SDAA II Make Up Tests Window****
	20 (Thursday)	TAKS Grades 3** and 4** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 2)
		TAKS Grades 5**, 8, 10, and Exit Level Science
		TAKS-I Grades 5**, 8, 10, and Exit Level Science
		TAKS Exit Level Science (retest)
		TAKS Grade 9 Mathematics
		TAAS Exit Level Reading
		TAKS/SDAA II Make Up Tests Window****
	21 (Friday)	TAKS Grades 8, 10, and Exit Level Social Studies
		TAKS-I Grades 8, 10, and Exit Level Social Studies
		TAKS Exit Level Social Studies (retest)
		Last Day to Complete TAKS/SDAA II Make Up Tests****
May 2006	Testing Window (1-12)	AP Exams
	Testing Window (1-12)	ITBS/Logramos Grade 2 (optional)
	Testing Window (1-12)	ITBS/Reading 1st Campuses
	6 (Saturday)	SAT
	16 (Tuesday)	TAKS Grade 5** Mathematics (retest)
	17 (Wednesday)	TAKS Grade 5** Mathematics (make up)
June 2006	3 (Saturday)	SAT
	6-8 (Tues-Thurs)	Credit by Exam
	10 (Saturday)	ACT
	27 (Tuesday)	TAKS Grade 5** Mathematics (retest)
	28 (Wednesday)	TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading (retest)
		TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 1)
	29 (Thursday)	TAKS Grades 3** and 5** Reading—Dyslexia Bundling (Day 2)

Month/Year	Testing Date	Test
July 2006	11 (Tuesday)	TAKS Exit Level ELA (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Writing
	12 (Wednesday)	TAKS Exit Level Mathematics (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Mathematics
	13 (Thursday)	TAKS Exit Level Science (retest)
		TAAS Exit Level Reading
	14 (Friday)	TAKS Exit Level Social Studies
* State-mandated activity that will affect most campuses. **TAKS testing includes English and Spanish versions where applicable. ***District-mandated activity that will affect most campuses. ****These tests include Grades 3-4 and 6-8 Mathematics, Grades 3-8 Reading, and Grade 10 Mathematics.		

Black—State-mandated test

Red—State-mandated test (make up)

Green—Other tests

Appendix G Letter to District Requesting Additional Translator Position

████████████
████████████
████████

November 8, 2004

Dear ██████████:

Over the past twenty years the Vietnamese program at ██████████ Elementary School has been expanding and continues to grow. It began by serving seven refugee students in 1983 and today serves approximately 200 students, 20% of the total student population at ██████████. Because of this growth, the Vietnamese program faculty is writing to request your consideration in allocating an additional part-time position to assist with translations and communications between parents, community members, and the program.

We believe the program has demonstrated its effectiveness through the academic achievement of its students. The Vietnamese population at ██████████ comprises the overwhelming majority of students classified as Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the nearly 200 Vietnamese students at ██████████, 75% are classified as Economically Disadvantaged and 72% are designated Limited English Proficient. These kinds of statistics are traditionally indicators of an at-risk population. However, since the Texas Education Agency began reporting performance data for the Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup in the 1994-95 school year, the performance of this subgroup at ██████████ has shown a high level of achievement even with dramatic increases in the number of students participating from year to year. For example, in the 2001-2002 school year, the Academic Excellence Indicator System reported that 82.4% of the 186 students in the Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup participated in the TAAS exam with passing rates of no less than 94.4% on all exams. The following year, the school's Asian/Pacific Islander subpopulation increased to 204 students. Of this number, 98.7% took the first administration of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and maintained a high level of performance with passing rates of no less than 90% (except in science, 75%, five percentage points higher than the district average). This is due in no small part to the dedication of the students and the staff of the Vietnamese magnet program. However, in addition to normal teaching loads, the stress on approximately 7% of the teaching staff interacting with and supporting 20% of the school population is growing.

Beyond the regular responsibilities of classroom teachers, the program staff invests additional time through the provision of afterschool tutoring, translations and communications around academic instruction, discipline and health related issues, as well

as community events. Not only does the Vietnamese team provide services for the ████████ community, the team is also frequently called upon by other schools and community leaders to translate important information and to attend meetings to serve as translators. Unexpected events also compound the demand on the program's staff. For example, after a child went missing for several hours earlier this month, an urgent request to translate a letter to parents was made concerning children walking home. The school wanted to remind parents of strategies they could use to keep their children safe. The immediate need for this letter created strain on the Vietnamese program staff as we recognize the importance of timeliness but are constrained by teaching duties.

Further, the Vietnamese team believes that much of our success comes from the commitment of the parents and community. In order to build strong relationships with those who support the program and school, the team has also invested in strengthening these ties through the provision of ESL and GED courses for adults. Extracurricular activities are organized for students as means to motivate students and to develop their social skills. These endeavors enhance parent and community involvement (as exemplified in the numbers of former students returning to the program to volunteer as tutors and mentors), create a cohesive school community, and result in high levels of academic achievement.

The composition of the Vietnamese team will shift dramatically next year. Two veteran teachers will retire leaving the team with three novice teachers and one veteran teacher. Although the two outgoing veteran team members are both half-time teachers, they dedicate a significant amount of additional time to accomplish the goals of academic success and the expansion of an inclusive and supportive school community. Because of this and because of the many additional responsibilities for translations to keep parents and the community informed and involved, the team feels that to maintain a high level of student performance and to support the novice teachers in attaining a solid teaching foundation, additional staffing is needed particularly as state accountability demands increase. Thus, we are requesting that an additional part-time position for the Vietnamese program be allotted for the purpose of creating and translating documents as outlined in the attachment and to act as the locus for communications around the program. We appreciate your consideration in this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

The Vietnamese program staff at ████████ Elementary

Cc:
████████ ISD Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools
████████ ISD Bilingual Education Director
████████, Principal

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Attachment: Vietnamese Magnet Program responsibilities
Translations include but are not limited to:
- monthly newsletters;
- notifications from the nurse regarding immunizations and various health forms;
- notification of community events;
- notification of school fundraising events;
- parent surveys from the district;
- nine week calendars from homeroom teachers;
- parent opinion surveys;
- informational notes regarding different groups and programs such as Americorps, Marathon kids, Healthy choices, ███ Enrichment;
- school contracts;
- supply lists;
- dress codes;
- nutrition guidelines;
- information regarding TAKS;
- immunization records requests;
- notification of public forums;
- notification of televised school events;
- and health fair notifications.

NOTE: Because word for word translations often are not coherent, interpretation of letters, notes, newsletters, etc. require a significant amount of time. We estimate that it takes at least one hour to translate one page of text. Additionally, diacritic markings are incredibly important in Vietnamese. The process of including these markings with present technology slows down the translation process further.

The Vietnamese team provides spoken translations for:
- PTA meetings (both for the campus as well as other campuses);
- ARD evaluations (both for the campus as well as other campuses within the district);
- Individual parent concerns (both for the campus as well as other campuses);
- daily calls from parents informing the school of student absences;
- messages relayed from the nurse to parents to pick up sick children;
- messages relayed from the cafeteria to the parents regarding lunch money;
- employee concerns and questions from Vietnamese custodial staff.

The Vietnamese team is also often called upon by homeroom teachers to:
- administer different assessments (benchmark exams, DRAs) to students of the program who are more comfortable with the Vietnamese program staff;
- to discipline students;
- to relay information to parents;

- to conduct parent-teacher conferences (Parent conferences are also an extra responsibility the team takes on as the Vietnamese program teachers interact with greater numbers of students at the school due to individual teachers serving multiple grade levels. Each full time teacher teaches at least three different grade levels requiring greater investments of time to address parent concerns and to keep parents informed of their child's progress).

The team also provides extracurricular activities including:
- martial arts training;
- dragon dance training;
- soccer.

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