

ASSIMILATING THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS?
The Importance of Networks in Assimilation Trajectories

by

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Abstract

The assimilation outcomes of second generation youths have been hotly debated amongst scholars (Alba et al. 2011, Haller et al. 2011). While the outcomes are contested, it is undeniable that ethnic organizations play a central role in the second generation's assimilation trajectory. Zhou and Bankston (1998) suggest that participating in ethnic religious institutions promotes upward assimilation through instilling an ethnic identity onto youths. My research on the greater Seattle area Vietnamese Buddhist youth organizations uncovered similar mechanisms that led to Zhou and Bankston's overall quantitative findings, but also uncover the importance of resource brokering and networks. Based on 43 in-depth interviews, I find that organization participation promotes upward *and* downward assimilation, and the friendships formed inside ethnic organizations play a crucial role in assimilation outcomes. My project shows that participation in Buddhist youth groups instills a Vietnamese-American identity on youths and, in turn, this ethnic identity can lead to upward assimilation only if the individual is part of a peer network that promotes normative values. Downward assimilation can be associated with youth group participation if the youths enter peer networks that promote deviant behaviors. These deviant peer networks can supersede the positive effects of the youth organization's overall influence on the individual.

Preface

Ethics approval was received from the University of British Columbia' Behavioral Research Ethics Board. The study was deemed as minimal risk and was initially approved on August 15, 2011. The certificate number is H11-01365.

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be interviewed for this project.

Dedication

To my parents and six sisters: Chi Chi, Chi Ba, Chi Ti, Chi To, Mo, and Be.

Introduction

The immigrant population's growth in recent decades has raised questions about whether and how their children, the second generation, will integrate into American society. Social scientists have framed second generation integration in terms of assimilation, an inevitable linear process wherein each subsequent generation represented greater adjustment to the host society. The second generation will eventually become an accepted part of the American mainstream (Gordon 1964, Handlin 1974, Higham 1955). Current perspectives on second generation integration have evolved and are varied. Some scholars adhere to the segmented assimilation framework in which the second generation will assimilate into different segments of American society based on structural barriers and prejudices (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993). Other scholars believe that the outcome between immigrant and mainstream culture is less dichotomous, and that immigrants and the American mainstream will eventually coalesce as lifestyles and patterns gradually become similar over time (Alba and Nee 2003). Points of contention exist, but both sides believe organizations linked to the broader institutional and cultural environment play a prominent role in integrating immigrants into their new society, or in preventing them from doing so. An often overlooked structural factor is immigrant non-profit organizations. Immigrant non-profits play an important role for the first generation, since they often serve as the mediating force between structures of the state and the individual immigrant. Immigrant organizations such as churches and temples create a buffering zone between an immigrant's native country and the host country, provide opportunities for ethnic interactions, serve as a support network, and serve as a venue for social mobility (Chen 2008, Moody 2009). The literature's focus has primarily been on the effects of immigrant non-profits on the first

generation. The role of immigrant non-profits for the second generation has not been examined. Consequently, immigrant non-profits play an important yet undefined role for the second generation.

One of the few projects to study the effects of immigrant institutions on the second generation was the classic study by Zhou and Bankston (1998) of second generation Vietnamese in the New Orleans area. Zhou and Bankston found that religious participation consistently makes a significant contribution to ethnic identification. They hypothesized that church participation plays an indirect role in the assimilation process by instilling an ethnic identity onto its youth members. According to the researchers, the Vietnamese identity in turn facilitates upward assimilation into American society by increasing the probability that youths will do well in school, set their sights on future education, and avoid deviant behaviors (Zhou and Bankston 1995). This quantitative study is important because it suggests that religious organizations play a significant role in the upward assimilation trajectory of the second generation. Nonetheless, this study does not adequately explain why some second generation youths downwardly assimilate even though they participate in religious organizations.

My qualitative study will examine how immigrant religious institutional participation can promote upward *and* downward assimilation trajectories amongst second generation youths. I will investigate Zhou and Bankston's hypothesis while building on their study's theoretical implications. Using 43 in-depth interviews, my research project centers around three questions: 1) What role do religious organizations play in their members' lives? 2) Do religious organizations lead to upward assimilation via instilling an ethnic identity onto the youths? 3) How do peer networks formed at youth groups affect assimilation trajectory? More specifically, my research project looks into the role played by Seattle area Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups

in assimilating second generation Vietnamese. This research will engage with sociological literature found in the sociology of immigration and networks, as well as with interdisciplinary research on Asian Americans and religious studies.

I conceptualize Buddhist youth groups as resource brokers, since these groups can offer members resources, support, and friendships. I argue that these three aspects of attending a youth group can lead to upward assimilation if the individual decides to take advantage of being a member and if their peer groups are comfortable with accepting the organizations' resources and support. The individual's decision to take advantage of group membership and the consequent effects of attending Buddhist youth groups vary, depending on the vitality of the specific youth group and the compatibility between the youth group and the member's family. For the former, there is much heterogeneity between organizational resources and support amongst youth groups. And for the latter, youth groups play a more influential role in the individual's life if the youth's family encourages youth group membership, if the individual's family is Buddhist, and if the family is actively practicing Buddhism. Second generation youths attend youth groups for a shorter period of time, and the effects of youth group participation are less, if their family's priorities are not compatible with the youth group's goals. I suggest that the incompatibility of the youth group's goals and the family goals negate the youth group's role in integrating the second generation.

Using the case of Vietnamese Buddhist youth group members in Seattle, I illustrate how religious organizations play an important but non-uniform role in the assimilation of second generation Vietnamese youths. Participation in youth groups can lead to upward or downward assimilation, depending on the different cliques formed in youth groups. I argue that peer networks at youth groups can play a more pertinent role in determining assimilation patterns than

youth groups instilling an ethnic identity onto an individual. Different peer networks seem to only form in larger organizations. It is more difficult for cliques to form in small youth groups because the members are closely supervised by the youth group leaders, because smaller groups usually promote a more unified identity, and because it is naturally harder for smaller groups to fraction into numerous, entirely dissimilar sub-groups. For larger organizations, sub-groups form on the basis of homophily. People of the same age, gender, and socio-economic class usually congregate together. Similarly to Bankston and Zhou's study, my qualitative research project also shows that participation in Buddhist youth groups instills a Vietnamese identity and, in turn, that this ethnic identity can lead to upward assimilation if the individual is part of a peer sub-group that promotes normative positive values, such as high academic achievement and refusal to consume drugs and alcohol. In other words, social networks can operate as positive or negative forms of social capital – if we use assimilation as the measure.

In sum, in this article I explore the role of youth group participation and peer networks in the assimilation outcomes of Vietnamese-American youths. To be clear, the results are suggestive rather than conclusive. I have chosen a qualitative research design to investigate the specific mechanisms in which ethnic youth group participation affects the assimilation of youths. I start by discussing the major camps in the assimilation literature, and detail where they diverge and converge. I then discuss the role that immigrant organizations are believed to play in the assimilation process. I argue that immigrant organizations such as youth groups should be redefined as resource brokers. A brief review of the Vietnamese-American history will follow, along with the reasons why Vietnamese-Americans and Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups are of interest to sociologists. In this section, I discuss the goals of the youth groups, as well as how they treat their members. After data and methods, I will discuss the main findings of the study

and end with the discussion and conclusion section. The discussion will include this study's implications and the conclusion will outline future potential research projects.

Literature Review

Assimilation and Institutions

It is pertinent to understand how the second generation integrates and interacts with American society, since they make up 11% of the American population (Census 2010). As a form of integration, assimilation is a contentious area of research because it is a fluid concept; assimilation's definition and specifications have evolved steadily as American society has changed with its increased experience of immigrants (Alba and Nee 2003). The term was coined and widely accepted by social scientists in the early 20th century, then later discredited in the mid-20th century, only to be rescued from the dustbin of history in the early 21st century (Alba and Nee 2003, Brubaker 2001).

The first interval was ushered in by the Chicago school sociologists of the early 20th century, who had a firsthand look at the diverse effects of immigration on America. Robert Park and E. W. Burgess (1921) famously defined assimilation as a “process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups... [and] are incorporated in a common cultural life” (1921: 735). The Chicago school's conceptualization became the integral pivot for American social scientists studying immigration, ethnicity, and even race relations. In *Assimilation in American Life* (1964), Gordon elaborated on a lucid multidimensional conception of assimilation that was testable. Gordon's definition, in broad strokes, was predicated on the belief that assimilation was inevitable - immigrants would eventually assimilate to their new society- each subsequent immigrant generation represented a new state of adjustment to the host society. Gordon's definition of assimilation differed from the Chicago school because Gordon took a normative stance in which “they” become like “we”, while the Chicago school shied away from pushing normative values onto assimilation (Alba and Nee 2003).

The early conceptions of assimilation came under fire in the mid-20th century (Rumbaut 1997). Critics inveighed against the concept as a normative stance, claiming that it was empirically inaccurate as some immigrants did not assimilate as expected (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Rumbaut 2003). The early conceptions of assimilation also proved to be inaccurate, as immigrant groups assimilated at different rates, ethnic enclaves were starting to be documented (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1992, Portes and Jensen 1992), and racial and class inequalities complicated assimilation's linear trajectory in a way early scholars did not foresee (Gans 1992, Portes and Rumbaut 2001). These criticisms pushed the concept of assimilation to the margins of history (Glazer 1997, Glazer and Moynihan 1963, Hirshman 1983).

Legacies by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and *Remaking the American Mainstream* by Alba and Nee (2003) are two seminal works that re-legitimized the assimilation paradigm. The former outlined how immigrants coming from different backgrounds- carrying varying amounts of social, human and economic capital- are incorporated into their new society in different ways, and how recipient communities vary in their reception of immigrants. The authors elaborate on "segmented assimilation", which hypothesized that rather than integrating into one mainstream community, immigrants integrate into different segments of American society. Consequently, some newcomers will experience downward assimilation, or integration to the underclass, as they lack the capital and favorable circumstance to be socially mobile in American society, while others will experience upward assimilation, or integration into the middle class, because they have the necessary resources. Segmented assimilation explains why some immigrants groups are successful and others are not. Segmented assimilation is the hegemonic concept in the immigration literature (Stepick and Stepick 2010, Haller et al. 2011), which became a lightning rod of criticism in *Remaking the American Mainstream* as Alba and Nee argued that segmented

assimilation pivots on problematic assumptions; these include the beliefs that racial boundaries are intransigent, and that the American underclass culture equates with urban black culture (Alba and Nee 2003). Instead of seeing assimilation in a negative light, Alba and Nee decide to take a non-normative tone to explaining why assimilation is still a useful concept. Inspired by the Chicago school's definition, Alba and Nee define assimilation "as the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences. Individuals' ethnic origins become less and less relevant in relation to the members of another ethnic group typically.... and individuals on both sides of the boundary see themselves more and more as alike..." (Alba and Nee 2003: 11). Building from the new institutionalism literature, Alba and Nee conceptualize assimilation as a conscious decision, as some individuals might feel they can benefit from actively assimilating. At the same time, the decision does not necessarily have to be conscious because it can occur as an unintentional result of practical strategies undertaken in pursuit of goals. Consequently, assimilation can be an individual action or an emergent phenomenon seen at the macro level.

The dialogue between the segmented assimilation and non-normative assimilation camp has been fierce. Nevertheless, both assimilation camps agree that organizations linked to the broader institutional and cultural environment play a prominent role in the assimilation process. An example of such organizations is ethnic non-profit organizations. Ethnic non-profits serve as the mediating force between mega-structures of the state and the immigrant individuals. The organizations serve to bridge the gap between the macro and micro, creating a space where individuals can fashion their identities and create meaning in their lives.

One such organization is Gia Đình Phật Tử (GDPT), or the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association, which is the umbrella organization that Seattle Vietnamese youth groups are

affiliated with. The GDPT plays an oversight role for the majority of the Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups in America. It regulates youth groups and makes sure that they fall in line with the GDPT's charter. The GDPT has the power to revoke a specific youth group's affiliation, thereby delegitimizing the youth group. The Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association was created in 1964, in Vietnam, by devout Buddhists who were concerned that the dharma was being lost amongst the youth in Vietnam (GDPT 2011). The organization was brought to America in 1975 by Vietnamese immigrants. Among the GDPT's many stated goals, is instilling Buddhist values, such as filial piety, compassion and mindfulness in daily life, in the Vietnamese youths (GDPT 2011). The youth groups that are affiliated with GDPT tend to be concomitant with Buddhist temples because they share a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, the youth group is legitimized by the Buddhist temple while raising the profile of the host temple as more members join and become part of the local Buddhist community. There are over 100 youth groups in the United States, with the majority situated in California and Texas (DeLengocky 2011). The statistics are not surprising, since these two states boast the highest numbers of Vietnamese. Washington State has approximately seven youth groups, which are loosely affiliated with one another and occasionally co-host events. The GDPT community in Washington was vibrant in the early 1990s because it served as a place for 1.5 and first generation children to congregate, but membership dropped as youth groups entered the 21st century (GDPT 2011). Consequently, the GDPT is an appropriate organization for this research project because it serves as the mediating force between mega-structures of the state and the second generation.

The Role of Religion in the Immigrant Experience

The role of religion in the immigrant experience also makes Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups an ideal case study for examining the importance of religious organizations in

assimilation trajectories. As Hirschman (2004) aptly explains, “the centrality of religion to immigrant communities can be summarized as the search for refuge, respectability, and resources” (1128). The trials and tribulations of immigrating to a new country have been well documented in the immigration literature (Gordon 1964, Handlin 1974, Higham 1955). New immigrants face numerous hardships and distress as they have to adapt and change to fit in with the host society (Hirschman 2004). Consequently, religious institutions serve as a place of refuge. Mosques, temples, synagogues, and churches serve as ballast for immigrants that can help make sense of a new, seemingly immoral society. Inside these institutions, ethnic beliefs and traditions are still valued and immigrants feel safe.

Ethnic religious institutions augment the status and sense of self-worth of immigrants because they are places where immigrants are valued and where ethnic culture is celebrated. Religious services and get-togethers can serve as places where immigrants can network, find employment opportunities, learn the latest news, and uncover new opportunities for their children (Bloemraad 2006, Chen 2008, Moody 2009, Zhou and Bankston 1998). As a result, ethnic religious institutions can promote socio-economic mobility, as well as psychological wellbeing, amongst its immigrant members.

Concurrent with the importance of religion to the general immigrant population, religion is central to the Vietnamese second generation in America. Bankston and Zhou (1996) state

Religious institutions are... "foci" of social networks, and the ethnic religious institutions is a focus of the network of ethnic social relations. The linkage to the ethnic network provided by the religious institution is a more important means of influencing behavior than any specific program sponsored by the institution (31).

Religion as a link to the ethnic network is important to the second generation because strong ethnic networks can promote upward assimilation, even if the second generation youth live in disadvantaged areas. Zhou and Bankston (1996, 1998) believe that participation in Vietnamese religious institutions promotes an ethnic identity amongst the second generation that can guide them away from the negative influences of their immediate environment (downward assimilation) and lead to upward assimilation. In other words, religion and religious institutions play a crucial role in the experiences of immigrants in general, and in the assimilation process of the second generation in particular.

Religious Ethnic Institutions as Resource Brokers

The importance of religious and ethnic institutions in the lives of immigrants suggests we can define religious ethnic institutions as resource brokers. The term “broker” has been used by network scholars. Burt (1992, 2001) defines brokers as individuals who can bridge the gap between two separate networks (figure 1). Resource brokers are valuable because they can provide the two separate networks with desired resources. A resource is defined as any symbolic or material good beneficial to an individual (Lin 1999, 2001). Types of resources include economic and social capital, information, credentials, or a material good (Bourdieu 1985, Coleman 1988, Portes 1998, Small 2009, Zhou 2009). An example would be a high school counselor who is in touch with high school students and prospective colleges. Robert Chaskin and associates (2001) define organizational brokers as community-building organizations that connect separate organizations to one another to promote a level of community (figure 2). Moving to and from different units of analysis, Small (2006) extends the concept of resource brokers further by identifying a broker as organizations that connect individuals to organizations rich in resources (figure 3). In addition to connecting individuals to organizations, resource

brokers also connect individuals to other individuals and to the ethnic community at large. I extend Small's conception by including different units of analysis. We should study how organizational resource brokers connect individuals to other individuals, organizations, and the ethnic community at large (figure 4). Potential resources are not only tied to certain organizations, but can derive from relationships formed with individuals inside the organization and from the ethnic community.

Vietnamese Immigration and the Vietnamese-American Population

The Vietnamese second generation is interesting to social scientists for pertinent reasons. The first reason is the recentness of immigration from Vietnam. The majority of Vietnamese in America came recently as war and political refugees (Phan 2005, Thai 2008). The Vietnamese immigrants came in three waves, starting in 1975 and ending in the early 2000s. The first wave of immigration occurred promptly after the fall of Saigon. This wave mainly consisted of well-to-do, highly educated individuals. The second wave occurred around 1978 and lasted until the mid-1980s. This wave came about as the communist regime started to punish the southern Vietnamese who had been affiliated with America. Punishments caused many to flee, in an exodus of over two million Vietnamese on unsafe and crowded boats. The third and final wave occurred from 1980 to 2000, as many individuals were released from re-education camps and subsequently sponsored by the U.S. government to come to America. These last two waves consisted of individuals who had low human and economic capital (Zhou and Bankston 1998). Consequently, the majority of Vietnamese-Americans are either first or second generation (Phan 2005). The coming of age of second generation Vietnamese-Americans is exciting for sociologists because we are able to carefully document their integration into American society. The Vietnamese-American population is also of interest because of the population's sheer size. According to the 2010 Census, the Vietnamese population is the 4th largest Asian community in

the United States, at 1.6 million (Delengocky 2011). The third reason the Vietnamese second generation is of interest to sociologists is the divergent outcomes of the Vietnamese American population. Scholars have duly noted the remarkable bifurcation of Vietnamese Americans. Bankston and Zhou (1997) have derived the “valedictorian and delinquent” hypothesis that suggests Vietnamese American youths are actually moving in two opposing directions in their adaptation to American society. In sum, there is an assumption amongst scholars studying religion and immigration that attending religious organizations is a positive experience for second generation youths and can lead to “valedictorian” (upward assimilation) outcomes. The assumption is problematic because some organizational members do become “delinquents” i.e., they downwardly assimilate. My research unpacks the effects of “negative” social capital on second generation youths (Portes 1998, Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993), and the impact of peer groups formed in ethnic organizations on assimilation trajectories.

Data and Methods

Data for this article come from 43 in-depth interviews with generation 1.5 and second generation Vietnamese-American Buddhists and from participant observations of four youth groups located in the greater Seattle area during the summer of 2011.¹ I interviewed only Vietnamese-Americans who identified as Buddhists to control for religion in assimilation outcomes, and since mixed ethnic origins complicate identity in different ways (Harris and Sim 2002, Jimenez 2004), I did not include Vietnamese Americans of mixed ethnic ancestry in the sample to avoid conflating unique identity processes owing to multiple ethnic backgrounds with the identity processes of Vietnamese-American who consider themselves to be “unmixed.” To understand the effects of youth group participation, I interviewed youth group and non-youth group members. I conducted twenty three interviews with current and ex-members of Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups based in the greater Seattle area, and another twenty interviews with Vietnamese Buddhist youths not affiliated with Buddhist youth groups. Of the twenty three interviews, twelve were with current ex-members, and eight were with current or past youth group leaders. It is difficult to separate current and past members, since youth group attendance fluctuates. I conceptualize active members as those who regularly attend youth group every week, knowing that the line between current and past members is blurry since some members sporadically attend youth group. The interviews with the group leaders were the most insightful because of their experiences as a leader and member, and because they spent a significant amount of time at youth group.

I interviewed an equal number of male and female members over the age of eighteen. The participants ranged from 18 to 35 years old; the relatively young age of the respondents reflects the recentness of Vietnamese immigration to America. The interviews were conducted

mostly in English, but there was some dialogue in Vietnamese when the appropriate English term could not be expressed. I interviewed people from a wide array of occupations and educational backgrounds in order to have a broad cross-section of second generation Vietnamese Americans. Most of these respondents' parents work as menial laborers, and the respondents mostly gained middle-class status through completing their college degree with the support of their family. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of participants dropped out or did not attempt to attend college. Of the forty three interviews, twelve participants were experiencing downward assimilation at the time of the interview. Seven of these participants were involved with youth groups and five were not. All seven participants involved with youth groups are male, and six of the seven are members of generation 1.5. Downward assimilation was experienced equally amongst males and females who did not attend youth group.

I interviewed members and ex-members from the four different youth groups in the Seattle area. I focused on these four youth groups because they are the largest and most established Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups in Seattle and I wanted to minimize for urban-rural location biases. I was part of a particular youth group for most of my life, and subsequently I have had social ties to the four organizations. I used snowball sampling as several youth group leaders initially put the potential participants in contact with me. After the interviews, I asked participants to give my contact information to other youth group members who might be interested in the interview. I made it a goal to minimize sample selection bias (drawing respondents from different groups of friends) by asking the youth group leaders to give my information to a diverse set of group members.

The four youth groups I focused on are: Lotus Petal, Theravada, Mahayana, and Maitreya. Lotus Petal, Theravada, and Maitreya are located within a three mile radius of each

other in Seattle, while Mahayana is located twenty minutes away in one of Seattle's suburbs. Each respective youth temple is supported and housed by a local temple. These temples provide the group leaders with the necessary infrastructure, resources, and legitimacy to operate. At its peak in the mid to late 1990s, Lotus Petal was the largest youth group in the state of Washington, with well over 80 members. Lotus Petal's large size is linked to its affiliation with the Yellow Flower Temple, the largest and most well-known Vietnamese temple in Seattle. Yellow Flower's endowment is large, since it boasts a high number of laypeople who worship at, and donate money to, the temple. Lotus Petal is a focus of Seattle's Vietnamese community, as the youth group enjoys the attention and resources Yellow Flower draws. Nonetheless, Yellow Flower dealt with major debt issues in the early 2000s that inevitably led to the decline of Lotus Petal's attendance and support. Yellow Flower's financial difficulties led to rifts inside Lotus Petal and caused the youth group to fracture. The offshoot of Lotus Petal is Mahayana, whose leaders cited philosophical differences in the direction of the youth group as the reason for the break. Mahayana became a nomadic youth group after it split from Lotus Petal. For various reasons, Mahayana could not find a permanent temple to house them. Mahayana organized activities at local churches, community centers, and the homes of their leaders. Unsurprisingly, the lack of permanent infrastructure and resources limited Mahayana's ability to boast large membership. Recently, Mahayana was relocated to a temple located in Renton, a suburb of Seattle.

Maitreya is a mid-sized youth group that was recently established, in the early 2000s. At one point in the mid-2000s, Maitreya and Mahayana were both housed in Central Temple. Central Temple created Maitreya, while inviting Mahayana to meet at its temple to raise its profile amongst the local Vietnamese community. Mahayana was eventually exiled as Maitreya became stronger and Mahayana's leaders had disagreements with how Central Temple was

treating their youth group. Theravada's history is separate from the other youth groups I interviewed. Theravada was incepted in 1999 and kept a low profile until attendance boomed in the late 2000s after Vietnamese parents were disenchanted with the transgression occurring at Lotus Petal and with Mahayana's nomadic character. Vietnamese parents were happy sending their children to Theravada because it was housed at a respectable temple and had a clean image.

From my observations, three of the four youth groups seem to be suffering from a decline in attendance. Mahayana is suffering the steepest decline in membership. Mahayana's nomadic lifestyle prior to settling in Zen Temple raised questions of legitimacy for potential members' parents. Theravada is the healthiest youth group, as the weekly meetings are well attended and there is much enthusiasm about the program. I believe Theravada's vitality is due to consistently having a temple's support, their leaders' progressive views and ability to relate to members, and their program's ability to groom group members into group leaders.

The varying size of the youth groups has implications for the assimilation trajectory of the second generation members. Larger youth groups, such as Lotus Petal and Theravada, are more prone to promoting divergent assimilation outcomes, since population concentration produces diversity in subcultures (Fischer 1975), i.e., different friendships can easily form at larger youth groups. The proliferation of subgroups whose assimilation trajectory is downward is less likely to occur in smaller youth groups, such as Mahayana and Maitreya, because group leaders can easily survey their members' activities and it is harder for small groups to fraction apart.

My project specifically studied the Vietnamese community in Washington State. According to the 2010 census (DeLengocky 2011), Washington has the third largest Vietnamese

population in America, which is dispersed across the greater Seattle area (Pfeifer 2001). I focus on Washington State because there has been a general shift in settlement patterns among recent immigrants to new destinations. Instead of traditional urban gateways such as Orange County and San Jose, Vietnamese immigrants settle in suburban areas like greater Seattle (Waters and Jimenez 2005). The Vietnamese population in Washington State has increased 44% from 2000 to 2010. The 44% increase is second only to Florida, Texas, and Georgia's Vietnamese population growth (DeLengocky 2011).

I had an interview script and asked each respondent the same initial questions, although there was deviation in follow-up questions depending on the respondent's answers. Interviews lasted between thirty-five minutes to two hours, and took place in locations where the respondent felt comfortable. I tape-recorded, and then manually transcribed all but four of my interviews. For the four interviews I did not tape record, I took notes during and after the interview. I analyzed the interviews using ATLAS.ti, a software package that allows users to attach coding categories to pertinent parts of the transcripts in order to compare coded portions of text across interviews. Analysis and data collection were simultaneous processes in my project. I began analyzing my interviews during data collection in order to explore in future interviews theoretical insights and research themes that I had identified in previous interviews (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Shiao and Tuan 2008).

Findings

Youth Groups Instilling Vietnamese-American Identity

My research project shows that participation in Buddhist youth groups promotes a bi-cultural Vietnamese-American identity. All 23 of the members I interviewed felt more “Vietnamese” while and after they attended youth group. This Vietnamese identity combines with an American identity that is promoted at school and creates a unique bi-cultural experience that differs from their parents’ Vietnamese identities. The Buddhist youth groups’ promotion of a bicultural identity is dissimilar to Zhou and Bankston’s claim that organization participation instills a strictly ethnic (Vietnamese) identity into the youths. Zhou and Bankston do not adequately account for the importance of peer interactions inside youth groups and the youth’s embeddedness in the Vietnamese community *and* American society at large. At youth group meetings, members and leaders formally and informally discuss and resolve issues pertaining to dual cultures and identities. These interactions make the youths cognizant of their bi-cultural identity. In addition, these youths are part of the local Vietnamese community and the American society at large. Their identities are formed through their environment and consequently, the members form a bi-cultural identity. When asked how her youth group molds her life, Layla, a 34 year old ex-member, answers

It always made me cognizant of my dual identity, being bi-cultural. I always have to remember that you’re different from everybody... you know, you’re American at school but you’re Vietnamese when you come home, you have to learn all these rules and traditions and things. And that’s what I appreciated from GDPT because on Saturdays, it was that reminder. The most important thing is being with people who are in that same

boat as you because my parents, born and raised in Vietnam and coming over when they're adults, when their identities are fully formed, they have their own struggles but they don't know what I was going through: so meeting people who were in the same situation as I was, was so refreshing, and so comforting.

Layla outlines how participating in youth groups led her to feel more Vietnamese than she did before. Attending youth group was a "reminder" of ethnic heritage for her and allowed her to interact with people from the same background. Even though GDPT does not try to promote a specific identity, the Vietnamese-American identity is unintentionally promoted as the interactions between Layla and her peers are bounded by the travails of possessing dual cultures. For Layla, the experiences at youth group in addition to her school experiences crafted a unique bi-cultural Vietnamese-American identity. When asked a similar question, Lana, a 31 year old ex-member, states

When I think of my life and me becoming an adult in my early 20s, the first thing that shaped my personality and who I am today, the most primary is my family. The second most influential thing in my life would be youth group.... It was really like a multicultural experience in a very homogenous place in a lot of ways. It was a way to experience Vietnam without being there.

Many interviewees such as Lana never lived in Vietnam. Their memories of Vietnam are shaped by their parents' anecdotes and their local Vietnamese community. Attending youth group helped instill a Vietnamese identity onto the interviewees that complemented their American identity that was being nurtured at school and outside of the ethnic community.

e majority of the twenty non-attendees of youth groups identified more closely with being American than with being Vietnamese. Some of the non-attendees' parents regularly attended temple or other ethnic organizations, but the participants themselves rarely partook in ethnic activities, therefore limiting their exposure to the Vietnamese community. The limited exposure to the Vietnamese community causes the non-attendees to not strongly identify with being Vietnamese. Peter, a 21-year-old second generation college student, notes how he does not identify with being Vietnamese. When asked how he identifies, Peter answers

I know I look Asian [laughs]. But that's not what I identify as; I mean I was born in Seattle and never lived anywhere else. And at home, my parents never really pushed the traditional Vietnamese values onto me... I guess I never had a youth group or anything to remind me that I am Vietnamese. I played soccer and basketball growing up which is similar to youth group because we learn how to share but I was the only Vietnamese guy on the team...

Peter's response gives insight into how the majority of non-attendees feel about their identity. Since many of these twenty participants do not attend an ethnic organization that celebrates their Vietnamese identity, they are more likely to identify as American.

Nonetheless, some attendees do develop a bicultural identity. They find/stumble upon other mechanisms to help them form a Vietnamese-American identity. Danny, a 19-year-old sophomore in college, explains how his university's Vietnamese Student Union helped him embrace his Vietnamese identity. "Before I went to university I was pretty white... but when I joined the VSA at my school it changed my life. I mean I was speaking Vietnamese more, I was

eating Vietnamese food... It was like I found my Vietnamese side that was hiding all this time.”

Danny’s quote illustrates how mechanisms other than Vietnamese youth groups can instill an ethnic identity onto the youths. These mechanisms can be extracurricular activities, ethnic organizations, or the individual’s family.

The data show diversity in assimilation trajectories for second generation non-attendees. There is an approximately equal representation of interviewees who upwardly and downwardly assimilated. The trajectories are varied, but the data suggest that attending a Vietnamese Buddhist youth group could serve as a catalyst for either upward *or* downward assimilation. When directly asked how a youth group might have influenced his life, Anthony, a 23-year-old cellphone salesman, replies,

I think it would have made a huge factor, it would have played a huge role in the way I grew up. It seems like the people who attend youth group, they’re in a family... but at the same time, they have this support system... I grew up with kind of like a broken family...not broken family but my brother was really bad man. You know, you’re looking at someone like that and you don’t want to [be like him], it’s like a bad influence on you. If I had someone else to turn to, like youth community or something like that, I feel like I would be a little more successful. But regardless I feel like where I am... I will eventually get to where I’m trying to go, regardless of that. I felt that it might have been, it would have speed things up.

Since Anthony is a non-attendee, he does not have access to the plethora of resources offered by Vietnamese youth groups. Nevertheless, Anthony has numerous friends who attended Vietnamese youth groups, so he knows what type of resources youth groups can broker. The last

portion of Anthony's statement neatly sums up the effects of participating in Vietnamese youth groups. Non-attendees are going to have divergent assimilation trajectories, but attending a youth group could serve as a catalyst for either upward *or* downward assimilation.

Youth Groups as Resource Brokers

I conceptualize Buddhist youth groups as resource brokers since these organizations possess ties to the ethnic community, organizations, and individuals rich in resources, which then provide youth group members with access to these resources (Chaskin et al. 2001, Small 2006). My findings suggest youth groups can offer members resources in the form of information and services; encouragement and support; and friendships and connections that can promote upward assimilation. We can use Small's (2006) assumptions about resource brokers to help clarify how Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups act as resource brokers. These assumptions include Buddhist youth groups being interorganizationally networked and a site for interactions. A discussion of the types of dispersed resources will follow.

First, resource brokers are interorganizationally networked institutions. Organizational theorists believe that organizations interact with other organizations, rather than in isolation (Aldrich 1976, Powell and DiMaggio 1991), and that the interaction can take complex forms in which government, for-profit, and non-profit organizations communicate (Austin 2000, Smith and Lipsky 1993). In other words, Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups are centers of ethnic activities and are connected to other ethnic institutions. Table 1 lists the organizations that are connected to the youth groups whose members I interviewed. This includes Vietnamese private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other local temples and youth groups. The businesses that are connected to youth groups seem limited to ethnic organizations. When asked if his youth group connects him with the Vietnamese community, Napoleon, an ex-member of a local

youth group, answered, “for sure, I remember putting on events at temple (where the youth group is housed) that brought hundreds of people together. I mean we had Vietnamese singers from Vietnam come perform, businesses donating money to help build the temples, and other youth groups coming to visit our temple. It was hella crazy because a lot of people knew us in the [Vietnamese] community as youth group [members].” The attention that comes with being a youth group member stems from the interorganizationally linked nature of resource brokers.

Resource brokerage prowess varies between youth groups. Some youth groups are connected to more resources, while other youth groups, for a variety of reasons, are marginalized and lack the resources of embedded youth groups. These reasons include the youth group’s monetary resources, waning youth group membership, and the leader’s social capital and potential to access resources. When asked if his youth group connects him to the Vietnamese community, Dylan, a Theravada youth group member, answered, “It wasn’t true before the last couple of years, but now that we started a lion dance team, now that a couple of members are in Vietnamese Student Association, and now that we are more involved with TIS (Tet in Seattle), it definitely is true to a certain extent, when you come here, you definitely get involved one way or another with those outside organizations, where when we first started, it was just definitely keeping to ourselves, sustaining ourselves, sustaining temple, sustaining youth group.” As Dylan explains, Theravada does not have the resources or connections to the local Vietnamese community compared to Lotus Petal. In other words, interorganizational networks vary between local youth groups.

Second, resource brokers are sites for both formal and informal social interaction (Small 2006). Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups are establishments with a physical location, and consequently, a space for networking and resource sharing. Formal interactions, guided by the

GDPT charter, are usually between the members and leaders. These interactions manifest in Vietnamese and Buddhism classes, which usually last for an hour. In these classes, students learn Vietnamese and Buddhism, but perhaps more importantly, they learn how to interact with their peers and with Vietnamese adults in an established setting. The experience accumulated and confidence instilled from these conversations carry over to interactions in different venues, such as school and sports teams. David, a 23 year old college student, says, “It was tough in the beginning. There are so many rules when talking with Vietnamese adults and I hated learning Vietnamese [laughs]. Sometimes people would consider me disrespectful--- it got better eventually though. In weekly classes with the leaders I became comfortable talking to others.” Eventually, David became adept in conversing with adults and peers in an established setting and these interactions aided him in effectively engaging with non-Vietnamese adults and peers.

Nevertheless, not all interactions are formal or deliberate in nature. A significant proportion of the social interaction at youth groups is informal. These informal conversations are usually between youths without adult supervision. These interactions can center on positive subjects, such as higher education, or on deviant behaviors, such as smoking marijuana. These interactions might occur in the context of the youth group institution, but can be unrelated to youth groups. When asked what their favorite part of attending youth group is, many interviewees cite the social aspect. GDPT fills a void for members who did not have siblings or close friends growing up. Larry, a 33 year old real estate broker, elaborates, “I think [I enjoyed] the social aspect, the brotherly nature of the organization because I have two sisters but I don’t have a brother so to see perspective and, you know, mentoring from older males, I didn’t have that at home and when I got older I didn’t have a little brother to share my knowledge.” For Larry, attending youth group gave him a chance to interact with older males who became role

model figures, and with younger members who would eventually become Larry's mentees. These interactions, formal or informal, were important because they allowed for the transmission of knowledge between and within generations.

What resources are brokered?

Youth groups broker a remarkable range in types of resources and types of organizations. Table 1 presents the organizations, by categories, and Table 2 presents the resources brokered. Nonprofit organizations constitute the largest source of resources and most of these organizations are linked to the Vietnamese community. In terms of non-Vietnamese nonprofits, the youth groups were linked to homeless centers and shelters because youth group members volunteer at these organizations. There are not many government agencies that provide resources through youth groups. This might be because some youth groups are not registered nonprofits and do not venture outside the Vietnamese community. Private businesses constitute the second largest source of resources. These businesses range from multinational companies to local businesses and firms. The business connection to youth groups varies with youth group leaders and members' parents. On the one hand, some youth group leaders have successful careers at prestigious companies and those resources are transferred to the members over time. On the other hand, some youth group leaders are unemployed and did not go to college, so their access and potential to transfer resources is limited.

Table 2 lists the resources brokered. This list includes resources offered by the youth group itself, members in the youth group, and the Vietnamese community. The resources range from direct services to free information. The information that is given to members includes college and career advice, housing and school system information, information about recreational activities, and coping with being a Vietnamese-American. All the information is free

and comes from reliable sources, since many members go through the same journey and difficulties. The direct services are more limited and include Buddhist and Vietnamese classes, active mentoring, babysitting, camping trips and free clothing. The miscellaneous resources are diverse, but are equally important. These other resources include letters of recommendation, informal endorsements to companies, meals, employment, and internships. Perhaps the most important resource, the letter of recommendation, is utilized by many members who want to obtain higher education. The letter can serve as a means to attending a university, i.e., upward assimilation, because admission officers look for applicants who can offer diversity and community service (Stevens 2007). Table 2 makes clear that the resources accessed through the centers are potentially valuable for second generation Vietnamese American youths.

The Importance of Peer Networks in Assimilation Trajectories

Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups offer a vast amount of different resources for their members. These resources can potentially promote upward assimilation. Nonetheless, the questions turn to why do some members downwardly assimilate with these resources at their disposal? What are the mechanisms that cause resources to activate for some and not for others? Enter social networks. The social networks formed at youth group are the mechanism that activates resources for some and not for others. In other words, friendships at youth group determine whether one utilizes resources such as letters of recommendation or internships. If one's group of friends is set on attending college, then one is most likely to take advantage of the youth group's resources. On the other end of the spectrum, if one's peer networks are partaking in deviant behavior, then one is most likely not going to take advantage of the available resources. Consequently, participating in an ethnic religious organization that is a resource

broker does not necessarily promote upward assimilation, since peer networks are more important for the youths' outcomes than the effects of organizational participation.

In "Growing up American" the authors highlight the role of religious ethnic organizations in the assimilation trajectory by hypothesizing that these organizations instill ethnic identities in their members. The ethnic identity embeds the second generation youth in the Vietnamese community, and this shapes the youths' values and expectations. Zhou and Bankston's study implicitly equates the participation in religious organizations to upward assimilation. Nonetheless, not all youth group members upwardly assimilate. Several youth group members I interviewed had downwardly assimilated (sold drugs, served time in prison, and did not attempt to attend college). I therefore suggest participation in youth groups can lead to upward or downward assimilation, depending on the different cliques formed in youth groups. My interviews suggest peer networks inside Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups play a more pertinent role in deciding assimilation trajectories than the mere act of attending youth group.

Peer networks play a pertinent role in assimilation outcomes because of the strength of the ties formed at youth group. Rather than remembering the institution itself, many members note how the friendships that are associated with youth group membership influence their lives. These networks can be stronger than the effects of the youth group organization and friendships formed at school; only familial bonds rival those formed at youth groups. There are several mechanisms in place that allow for formation of deep ties at youth group. The first mechanism is the young age of youth group members. As mentioned earlier, members usually attend between the ages of seven to eighteen, a crucial period during which identities, values, and aspirations are formed. Members grow up together at youth group and consequently create lifelong friendships. The second mechanism is the commonality amongst group members and the potential to build

solidarity. Youth group members experience similar problems to those that plague Asian second generation youths. These problems include dealing with overbearing immigrant parents, being bicultural, and dealing with conflicting identities. At times, these problems are unique to second generation immigrants, and family members and non-second generation peers cannot relate.

Youth group members are able to build solidarity and navigate through the trials of being second generation Vietnamese together. Usher, a generation 1.5 ex-member, discusses the deep bond he shares with youth group friends and the mechanisms in which youth group ties become stronger than school friendships.

Interviewer: Were your friends at sinh hoat [youth group] different than your school friends, your school outside of sinh hoat?

Usher: Yeah, they were my close friends growing up.

Interviewer: How come they're different than your school friends?

Usher: I knew them for a long time, we basically grew up together. Schools change, classes change. And I guess when I was growing up I didn't really spend a lot of time hanging out with kids at school. I just go there for school and go home, really. And the only people that I considered my friends were the ones living around me at the time and the ones that I went to sinh hoat with.

Interviewer: How come you felt more comfortable around your sinh hoat friends than your school friends?

Usher: I grew up with them; they speak the same language as me (laughs). I guess that mentality just sticks... For me, I grew up--- I was ten when I came over here, or 9 or 10... but 10 in Vietnam is really different than 10 over here, you remember a lot more things... I already have an identity established as a Vietnamese person when I came over here.

When I was going to school, there wasn't a lot of Asians... When I was in middle school, I didn't feel like I belonged because I felt like I had so much Vietnamese--- So I didn't really hang out much. So by the time I got to high school, all those guys I know in middle school or earlier are mostly guys that hang out with me at Chua [youth group]. So it just happens because we're like childhood friends pretty much, it becomes more--- I associate more closely with them than other people.

As noted by Usher, these youth group bonds are strong because they share the same language, life experiences, and mentality. The data show these commonalities outweigh the commonalities amongst school friends.

The strong bonds set the stage for future assimilation outcomes. An example of how peer networks can lead to downward assimilation is the experiences of Mike, a member of youth group for 6 years, who was incarcerated several years ago. Mike got involved with drug dealing through his friends at youth group.

Interviewer: So what's your relationship like with other youth group members?

Mike: They're like family to me. I mean, they are closer than my real family, we grew up together—I met them when I was like 8 and I know they got my back no matter what...

Interviewer: Can you explain what happened involving your arrest a few years ago?

Mike: It's a long story, basically I needed a way to make money. Unlike you, my family didn't support me and I didn't have any way to buy things I needed. Me and the boys [youth group friends] decided to start pushing drugs. I mean it wasn't a big deal in the beginning but after a while it [dealing drugs] started getting deep. There were roles for all the boys, and I was the small drug dealer. I got busted because I was being reckless with

my weed money.

Interviewer: Did your youth group friends introduce you to drug dealing?

Mike: Yeah but it wasn't like we were trying to do something bad. We just need to make quick cash. I don't think they're bad people, that's why I still chill with a lot of them today.

Mike's experiences with dealing drugs illustrate how peer networks formed at youth group can shape assimilation outcomes. Mike became directly involved with drug dealing through his youth group friendships. These strong ties compelled him to break the law and deal drugs. What is interesting is that these strong ties last well after youth group participation. Instead of bitterness involving his arrest, Mike still closely associates with his youth group friends. However, members do not partake in deviant behaviors and attend youth group simultaneously. Individuals quit youth group when they start partaking in deviant behaviors. These activities are incompatible since rumors spread at youth group and members who take part in deviant behaviors are pressured to either stop participating in illegal activities or stop attending youth group altogether.

Another example of how peer networks formed at youth group can promote downward assimilation is the experiences of Jay, a 27-year-old ex-member who attended Lotus Petal for 4 years. Jay lives with his parents, earns income by fixing smartphones, and has a history of alcoholism.

Interviewer: Was there anything you enjoyed about youth group?

Jay: The friendships I made, definitely. The boys I met at youth group are probably the best thing for me. They are my brothers, we grew up together...they're ride or die for me.

Interviewer: Have they influenced your life in any way?

Jay: Yeah, definitely. For us, we share the same experiences and have the same mindset about a lot of things... [An example is the way we view school,] I mean, to be honest, I never wanted to go to college. My parents want me to attend but I knew in high school that I didn't want to. I'm just--- I'm not cut out for college, I'm not smart enough or anything. My family really couldn't understand but my [youth group] friends did. They knew that college was not meant for everybody and so they never pressured me into doing it. They encouraged me to do it big and try to start up an electronic store in Burien.

Interviewer: So why didn't you start up that electronic store?

Jay: To be honest, we [youth group friends and Jay] were too busy partying it up [laughs]. We drank like every night and went out to clubs and stuff, we lived it up you know. We had a motto, "you only live once" and we lived by it... I don't regret it because you can't take back the past but it probably wasn't the best decision.

Jay's lack of effort to pursue higher education and his bouts with alcoholism can be traced back to his peer network formed at youth group. Instead of promoting the values of higher education, Jay's friends promoted alternative means to earning money. Jay's social network suggested the idea of starting up a business but did not have the capital necessary to start the venture. Jay and his peers decided to scrap the electronics business idea in order to take part in experiences that involved instant gratification and were attuned with their "you only live once" motto. As mentioned in the earlier section, youth groups have a wealth of resources they can broker to their members. These resources can promote upward assimilation but, as we can see from Mike and Jay's experiences, the resources are not equally dispersed amongst group members as the mere act of organization participation does not activate these resources. The social networks formed at

youth group are the mechanisms that activate specific resources and, more importantly, play an active role in promoting assimilation trajectories.

Mike's and Jay's experiences detail how peer groups can play a defining role in assimilation outcomes. Nonetheless, there are several interviewees who were part of "negative" social networks but deviated from the downward assimilation trajectory. These individuals ended up pursuing higher education at community college and hold steady jobs. An example of an individual who turned his life around is Rodney, a 30-year-old casino worker who attended youth group for 5 years. Rodney was in the same social network as Mike but their paths started to deviate once Rodney turned 23 and worried about his future. When asked what caused him to stop hanging out with his youth group peers, Rodney explained

I just started to think about my family more. I mean, my mom is 72 and she's getting old. I'm the only boy in the family and so I need to take care of her but what am I gonna tell her, that I deal drugs to put food on the table? Who does that? And what if I want to get married, what do I tell my wife, that I sell weed to kids to make a living? I just grew up, man. They [my youth group friends] will always be my boys but you can't do that forever or you end up in jail like Mike.

Rodney broke ties with his peer networks formed at youth group as he decided to disavow deviant behaviors. Rodney perceived his youth group friendships as being a catalyst for deviant behaviors. Interestingly, Rodney cites Buddhism as a major catalyst for allowing him to break away from selling drugs. Rodney regularly attends Lotus Petal now, but without the influences of his peer networks.

Conversely, peer networks formed between youth group members can promote upward assimilation. Similarly to what Zhou's research on Chinese community organizations shows (Zhou 2009), peer networks can reinforce norms and positive behaviors such as holding one another accountable for actions, attending college, and aspiring to become professionals. Youth group friends can encourage positive behaviors while serving to help members overcome problems arising from being a second generation youth. Ohi's experiences attending youth group illustrate how youth groups can push one to upwardly assimilate. Ohi attended youth group for almost a decade and holds a bachelor's and master's degree from a local university. Ohi states

I look at my friends at youth group and its like wow, we are all pretty successful. I mean we all went to college and most of us went even further and obtained higher education...

I can honestly say my [youth group] friends are a big reason I decided to get a master's--- they always encourage me to do well in that.

What distinguishes the support offered by youth group peer networks and those of school friends and family networks is the youth group network's ability to give practical advice, since youth group members have similar problems. The distinction between youth group networks and family ties can be illustrated by Ohi's statement on career choices. As Ohi explains

my parents raised their eyebrows when I decided to get a master's in social work. They wanted me to get a master's or doctorate but not in this (laughs). At first I couldn't communicate to them what social work is... When I told my [youth group] friends they really encouraged me to go forward. I mean we talk about [a career in social work] not making the most money sense but they know I'm not about the money.

Networks at youth groups form on the basis of homophily. People of the same age, gender, generation, and socio-economic class usually congregate together (Kandel 1978, Kossinets and Watts 2009, Wimmer and Lewis 2010). In addition, the members' neighborhood and upbringing also influence the formation of peer groups. Members who grew up in disadvantaged neighborhoods have a higher propensity to join "negative" peer networks, since they are surrounded by deviant behaviors. Nonetheless, this was not always the case. Some members utilized "positive" peer networks and the resources from their youth group to overcome the disadvantages of their neighborhood. In addition, the immediate environment could promote the formation of strong bonds. Members who were alienated from their school and neighborhood peers bonded much closer to their peer groups at youth group. For example, Mike and Rodney's groups of friends at youth group consist mostly of generation 1.5 Vietnamese boys who grew up in disadvantaged neighborhoods. They did not have confidence in their command of English and consequently, Mike's and Rodney's peer networks shared the same discomfort of growing up in America with vivid memories of Vietnam.

Even though local youth groups operate under the mandates of GDPT, no two youth groups are similar. This is true for youth groups whose members I interviewed. Differences in youth groups, either in infrastructure or membership, lead to differences in peer network formations. Different peer sub-networks only seem to form in larger organizations. This is due to two main reasons. The first reason is the difficulty of supervising large groups. Since most youth groups lack resources and leaders, it is difficult for them to monitor different cliques. This is in contrast to smaller youth groups, where leaders can closely monitor members without spreading themselves thin. The second reason is that it is naturally harder for smaller youth groups to fraction into dissimilar sub-groups. For example, Mahayana on average only consists of twenty-

five members. It is more difficult for sub-groups to form in Mahayana youth group as opposed to Lotus Petal youth group, which is seventy members strong.

The peer networks formed at youth group can rival the bonds formed at school, but are rarely stronger than familial bonds. Familial bonds are powerful variables in assimilation outcomes (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Peer networks supplement familial ties and can further reinforce parental values, or they conflict with parental values and cause distress for the individual. The peer networks' tension with parental values is a form of dissonant acculturation, where the second generation youths learn English and American values and beliefs at a different and faster rate than do their parents (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). For example, on one hand, members who upwardly assimilate enjoy the compatibility of familial and peer networks norms, with their family and youth group friends encouraging them to do well in school and avoid drugs. On the other hand, members who experience downward assimilation might have their family preaching the values of higher education but their youth group peer networks promoting a "by any means necessary" mentality. The value conflicts cause the individual to feel distress and choose between family and friends.

Discussion and Conclusion

The assimilation outcomes of second generation youths have been hotly debated amongst scholars (Alba et al. 2011, Haller et al. 2011). While the outcomes are contested, it is undeniable that ethnic organizations play a central role in the second generation's assimilation trajectory. Zhou and Bankston suggest that participating in ethnic religious institutions promotes upward assimilation via instilling an ethnic identity onto youths. My research on the Vietnamese Buddhist youth organizations in the greater Seattle area uncovered similar mechanisms that led to Zhou and Bankston's quantitative findings, but also uncovered mechanisms that lead to additional processes which got lost in their overall quantitative picture. More specifically, organization participation promotes upward *and* downward assimilation, and the friendships formed inside ethnic organizations play a crucial role in assimilation outcomes. My project shows that participation in Buddhist youth groups instills a Vietnamese identity on youths and, in turn, that this ethnic identity can lead to upward assimilation only if the individual is part of a peer network that promotes normative values such as high academic achievement and refusal to do drugs. Downward assimilation can be associated with youth group participation if the youths enter peer networks that promote deviant behaviors. These deviant peer networks can supersede the positive effects of the youth organization's overall influence on the individual.

Peer networks formed at youth group shape individual behaviors because the peer networks' ties are remarkably strong. Members can relate to each other better than they can relate to their family members and school friends, since they share life experiences common amongst second generation Vietnamese Americans. Peer networks formed at youth group can promote upward assimilation as friends hold each other accountable, compare test grades, give each other strategies on how to succeed academically, and serve as a venue for dialogue. On the

flipside, peer networks can encourage downward assimilation as friends coerce each other into deviant behaviors. My project also highlights the unique role of youth groups for the second generation. We should define youth groups as resource brokers, organizations that connect individual youths to organizations rich in resources. These youth groups are well connected to different non-profit and private organizations and offer access to a variety of resources for youths.

Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Groups in America have a momentous task ahead of them. Since they originated in Vietnam and were brought over by Vietnamese immigrants, Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups have to establish themselves by evolving to meet the demands of their new immediate environment and their new members, the second generation. As mentioned earlier, youth groups across Washington State are failing to attract new members and subsequently membership rates are declining. Vietnamese youth groups around the nation will become obsolete at this rate. This forecasts ominous news for subsequent Vietnamese-American youths because these youth groups can enrich their lives and promote upward assimilation by offering brokering resources and support. Nonetheless, Theravada has been thriving while other youth groups are failing. It would be of sociological interest to understand the specific mechanisms that cause Theravada to buck the declining membership trends. In addition, more research should be focused on the Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups in particular, and on ethnic organizations with second generation membership in general. It would be of interest to sociologists to document these organizations' journey and adaptation to America. How do these organizations obtain legitimacy in a foreign country? Why do certain youth groups fail while others succeed? And how does the institution change to meet the needs of the second generation? Other ethnic organizations that cater to the second generation are also of interest because

different ethnic groups assimilate in various ways. It would be of interest to understand how these organizations promote or try to counteract downward assimilation. In addition, social scientists could compare how different ethnic organizations deal with their second generation members.

Figure 1**Organizations Providing Resources through Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Groups**

- Government Agencies
 - Universities and Colleges
 - Federal Tax Help
- Nonprofit Organizations
 - Vietnamese Ethnic Institutions (South Vietnamese Army, Vo Vi Nam (Vietnamese Martial Arts))
 - Homeless Centers and Shelters
 - Tet in Seattle
 - Vietnamese Student Association (Colleges and Universities)
 - Dragon Dance Teams (Local)
 - Buddhist Temples (Local and National)
 - Other Buddhists Youth Groups (Local and National)
- Businesses-
 - Engineering Companies (Boeing)
 - Technology companies (Microsoft)
 - Professional clinics (Dentist and Optometry)
 - Law Firms
 - Real Estate Brokers

Figure 2**Resources Brokered through Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Groups**

- Information
 - College and university information (free)
 - Career information (free)
 - Internship information (free)
 - Housing information (free)
 - Recreational activities (free)
 - School system information (free)
 - Sports information (free)
 - Food bank information (free)
 - Coping with Vietnamese parents information (free)
 - Coping with Vietnamese-American Identity (free)
 - Coping with being bi-cultural (free)
- Direct Services
 - Active Mentoring (free)
 - Vietnamese Classes (free)
 - Buddhist Classes (free)
 - Babysitting (free)
 - Discipline (free)
 - Camping trips
 - Clothing
- Other resources or goods
 - Letters of recommendation (free)
 - Informal recommendations (free)
 - Annual camp excursion
 - Trips to other temples
 - Trips to Buddhist camps
 - Meals (free)
 - Participation in dragon dance team and cultural dances (free)
 - Employment at other organizations
 - Internships at other organizations

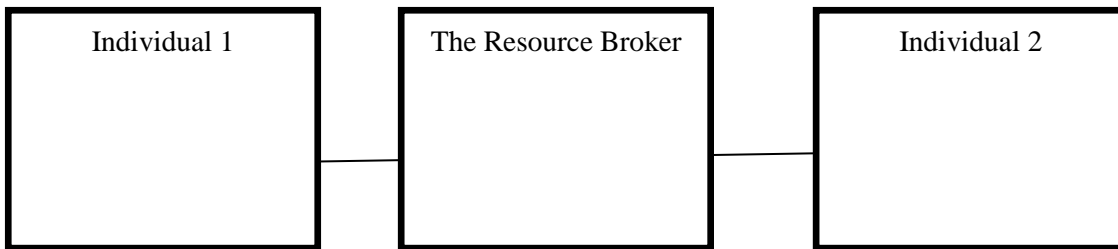
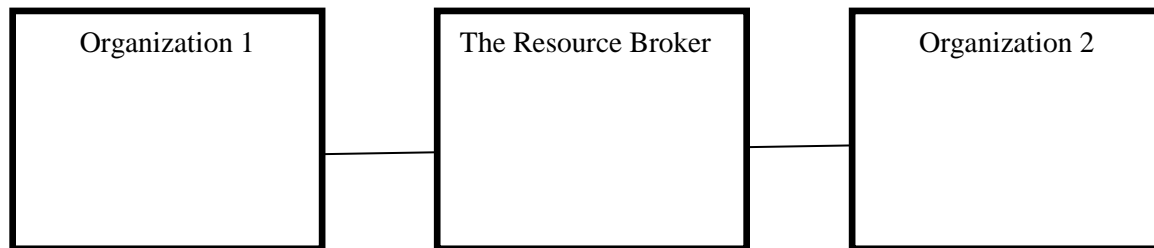
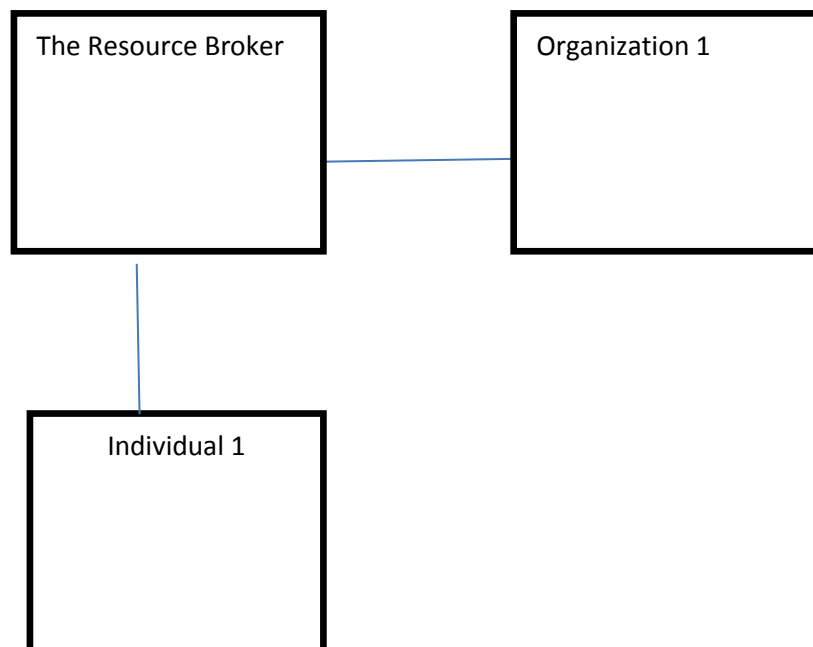
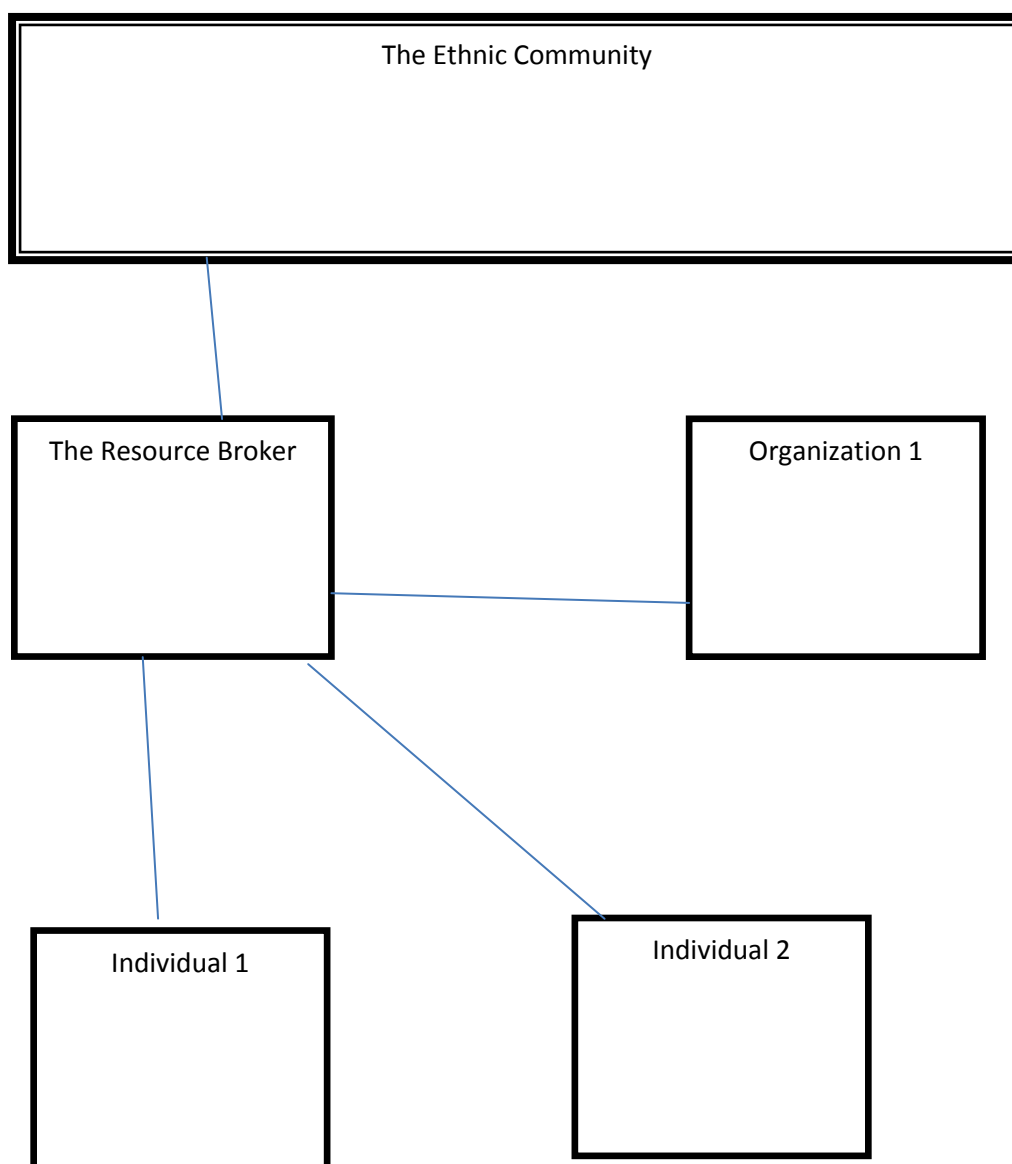
Chart 1 (Burt's Conception)**Chart 2 (Chaskin's conception)****Chart 3 (Small's conception)**

Chart 4 (Le's Conception)

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ⁱ I interviewed respondents who were either born in America to Vietnamese immigrant parents or came to America before they were ten years old.