FOSTERING COMMUNITY:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR
YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE VANCOUVER
VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY

by

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Executive Summary

Our cities are changing. Alterations and shifts in immigration policy have resulted in dramatic changes to the ethno-cultural makeup of our cities. In the late 1960's 90% of immigrants came from Europe and the United States, today over half are arriving from Asia. The majority, are settling in just three metropolitan areas. Despite this data, planners, who have seen multiculturalism and immigration as falling outside their domain, still consider their work to be technical, and not cultural. This project examines the cultural side of planning.

As the host society adapts to changes in the social geography of our cities, stereotypes and perceptions of different ethnic groups arise. Media attention has focused on youth gangs, crime and violence and created a perception of a high number of 'at-risk' youth in the Vietnamese-Canadian community. Within the context of this community, this project looks at how immigrant youth are faring in our city, investigating both the opportunities and barriers to participation. The methods used to obtain information were a literature review to examine the context of Vietnamese immigration and resettlement, as well as an in-depth review of literature on immigrant and newcomer youth integration. A focus group as well as an asset-based mapping workshop, were used to obtain information from a group of Vietnamese youth.

The first wave of Vietnamese immigrants came to Vancouver in the late 1970's. This community started off slowly but is now fairly well established, its members running well over 100 businesses, having several newspapers and magazines in print, and a wealth of organizations serving the community. However, this community has not been without problems, major concerns of the community include gang issues, safety, employment, family, education and health.

In Vancouver more than 1 in 4 youth are born outside of Canada. These youth face enormous challenges not encountered by their Canadian born peers. They are more likely to live in poverty, leading to problems of mental health. They encounter problems coping with the Canadian school system, face greater barriers to employment, and suffer from communication barriers as non-native English speakers.

The findings of this research show major opportunities for participation through the church, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, community centres and neighbourhood houses, school and other (predominantly East Vancouver) locations. Youth participate where there is a youth friendly, inviting, environment. Participation provides youth with experience and volunteer hours needed for both graduation and future employment. There are major barriers preventing youth participation in both the Vietnamese Community and mainstream society. These relate primarily to the traditions and politics of their parents, perceptions of this community by others, and issues and influences facing today's youth, among other limiting factors.

Major recommendations directed at settlement service organizations and the Vietnamese community itself include: the formation of a youth leadership committee; a monthly column for youth in the Vietnamese paper; a youth report on Lac Viet Radio; increased programming for Vietnamese youth, supplemented with a survey of Vietnamese youth

to determine program direction; the establishment of a community scholarship fund, and a mentorship program aimed at Vietnamese youth. Greater intergenerational programming, the creation of a dialogue on these issues on Lac Viet Radio, and the introduction of a youth initiated Vietnamese history project are recommended with the intent of fostering a greater understanding between the generations. Recommendations for the Vancouver school board focus on the work of the multicultural liaison worker, addressing the challenges of visible minority youth and newcomer youth, and greater education for the student body. Finally recommendations to the City of Vancouver address the need for youth to have a greater understanding of the city in which they are living.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Our cities are changing. With the 1967 immigration act began an immense reconstruction of the social geography of major Canadian cities. Whereas in 1966 nearly 90% of immigrants were arriving from Europe and the United States, today half are arriving from Asia with large numbers from Africa, the Caribbean and South America (Hiebert, 2000; Ley & Germain, 2000). In the mid-1980's Canadian immigration policy was altered again and annual targets increased from 100,000 to over 200,000 immigrants. During the 1990's alone 2.25 million newcomers arrived in Canada, increasing the population by nearly 10% (Hiebert, 2000). The vast majority of today's immigrants settle in just three metropolitan areas creating the 'MTV phenomenon': Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

The resulting changes in the ethno-cultural makeup of our cities over time has created new forms of social interaction, and altered the cultural landscape of our city (Hiebert, 2000). Physical and social planners, architects and other professionals in major Canadian cities must now deal with the implications of these changes (Ley, 2000). However, as Marcia Wallace points out, despite planner's recognition of the multicultural environment, they still struggle with how to integrate ethnicity and change into the planning process. While our major cities are clearly shaped by multiculturalism, immigration is seen by most planners as standing outside their domain, they "consider their work to be technical, not cultural"(Wallace, 2000).

As a student of planning, I have chosen to explore the 'cultural side' of my chosen profession, examining how immigrant youth, both first and second generation, are faring in our cities today. In 2001, Anisef et al. defined integration in the Canadian context as "the extent to which immigrants become full participants in Canadian life, capable of achieving their aspirations and potential"(Anisef et al., 2001). How do researchers define 'participation'? How are newcomers defining it? How can social planners help immigrants reach this state we call integration? Are we as a host society constraining the full integration of immigrants as we adapt to the changing ethno-cultural composition of our

neighbourhoods? This report will examine immigrant youth integration with the context of the Vietnamese-Canadian community of Vancouver.

1.2 Rationale

Within mainstream media and the Vietnamese community there is a perception of a high number of 'at-risk' youth within this ethnic community in Vancouver as well as in other Canadian cities. Media attention has focused on youth gangs, crime, violence, and illegal substance abuse. In reality the number of youth involved in illegal activity relative to community size is minimal (Alberts, 1991; Schuler, 1991a; Schuler, 1991b; Vancouver Sun, 1992). This negative media attention is likely to have or have had serious affects on Vietnamese youth. With this study I hope to go beyond these stereotypes and focus on the creation of a more balanced view of the Vietnamese community.

1.3 Research Goals and Questions

The purpose of this research is to study the integration of both Canadian born and newcomer youth of Vietnamese ethnic origin in Vancouver. A key component to studying integration will be to define, with these youth, their understanding of participation in society. I wish to examine what opportunities exist for participation and what types of barriers may be preventing the active participation of youth (both in mainstream society and within the Vietnamese community). The ultimate goal of this research is to provide recommendations for: service providers working with the youth; the Vietnamese community(youth); and those stakeholders playing a major role in the lives of youth in Vancouver. Recommendations will focus on how to maximize the potential involvement of these youth and increase their ability to integrate.

1.4 Rationale for working with youth

'Immigrant Youth in Canada', a report by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), cites young people aged 12-24 who have immigrated to Canada within the last five years as one of the fastest growing populations. Among the roughly 200,000 immigrants arriving each year, about one-third are under the age of 25(CCSD, 2000). The number of youth (aged 15-24) in our cities, born outside of Canada, is steadily

increasing. In Vancouver, more than 1 in 4 youth today (28%) are born outside of Canada (CCSD, 1998).

With these numbers and with a proposed increase in levels of immigration, youth are increasingly likely to be the population most in need of our attention. A review of integration literature reveals a major gap in research pertaining to this age group. In addition, the body of literature on youth participation, though addressing the issue primarily from a hierarchical position, does not address issues of immigrant or newcomer youth participation and the best ways to involve them.

In many immigrant and newcomer families youth are the first to learn English or the first to understand or accept the cultural norms of their new society. Many youth play a key role in the integration of their entire family. They often represent their family, bridging them to the larger society in a variety of settings, at school; the supermarket; the bank; or with a social service agency. If we want to involve youth in our society, it is essential that we are able to provide for them and understand the hardships they face throughout the integration process.

1.5 Why the Vietnamese Community?

Throughout this process I have been asked time and again, "Why are you working with the Vietnamese community?". The idea for my research and the concept of investigating participation within an ethno-specific community came about during my first year at SCARP. The one thing I did not want was to have my research project sitting on a shelf at the end of the day. Ethno-specific research I believe is fascinating, but working with an over-researched community is not an enjoyable experience for either party. Looking at the work done by various service providers in the city, I contacted MOSAIC first as a volunteer and later looking for a client. It was through discussions with MOSAIC that I found out where my research skills were needed. Initially I wanted to do a multi-generational study, and the Vietnamese community was suggested to me. It is now a fairly well established community in Vancouver, having multiple generations. In addition, MOSAIC in partnership with others, carried out a service review project with this community in 1998. Since implementing new programs in the Vietnamese community,

little research has been done. With a chance to research and write something that I hope will be of use to others, I started my beginner Vietnamese language course and got my research underway.

1.6 MOSAIC (Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities)

The goal of the professional project at SCARP is to simulate a client-consultant relationship. This relationship was formed with MOSAIC early on, and I was able to gain feedback on the validity of my proposed research topic, and narrow it in scope to meet the client's needs. It was through MOSAIC that I was able to network with those individuals working as service providers in the Vietnamese community in order to gather further information and eventually begin my work with the youth.

MOSAIC refers to themselves as "...a multilingual non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society"(MOSAIC, 2004).

Founded in 1976, their mandate is to support and empower immigrant and refugee communities in addressing issues at home and at work. Through research they are able to constantly adapt their programs and services to the changing needs of the community. Their guiding principles are equality, social justice, equal access and democracy. Their active tools are advocacy, public education, community development, coalition building and bridging with the larger community.

MOSAIC works in partnership with a variety of community agencies and funding organizations to help newcomers integrate into the social, economic and political spheres of Canadian society. They provide the following ethno-specific services for the Vietnamese Community:

- Vietnamese Family Counseling Partnership Program
- Vietnamese Family Support Initiative
- Vietnamese Probation Support Program

Other services offered by MOSAIC include interpretation, translation, English classes, employment programs, community outreach/development programs, family support programs and bilingual and family counseling. The goals of MOSAIC are: to be community-based; to have bilingual staff; and to offer services to non-English speaking people in Greater Vancouver (MOSAIC, 2004).

1.7 Methodology

I have chosen to use multiple methods in my research, which I feel are appropriate given the age of my study participants and my research goals. These included a literature review, a focus group and an asset-based mapping workshop.

1.7.1 The Literature Review

The literature review served as a key research method on the subject of integration. Information was gathered from the fields of sociology, planning, geography, anthropology, education and health science. In the literature review I attempted to draw on many of the major sources on this topic, while trying to maintain a 'Canadian contextual' focus. This section explores definitions and theory of the process of integration as well as an in-depth look at socio-economic, cultural and social barriers to integration faced by today's (predominantly newcomer) youth. This literature proved that research on youth integration is indeed lacking. As well it allowed me to formulate a number of research questions which need to be looked at by researchers in this rather sparse area. This literature review then served as a good source of information when formulating my focus group interview guide.

1.7.2 The Focus Group

I designed, planned and moderated a focus group with 5 youth. All participants were recruited because of their Vietnamese ethnic origin. Some participants were born in Vietnam and have been living in Canada for a minimum of 3 years, while others born in Canada are now a part of the second generation of Vietnamese-Canadians in Vancouver. This focus group took place at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre[1] and lasted

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[1] The Broadway Youth Resource Centre offers integrated community based social/health services for youth aged 10-24. Their goal is to create a youth positive environment, accountable

approximately 90 minutes. Vi Nguyen the Vietnamese Youth Development Worker at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre was in attendance at the focus group. In addition Ms. Nguyen acted as a third party recruiter for all youth. The major purpose of this focus group was to define 'active participation' in society (both within mainstream and in the Vietnamese-Canadian community in Vancouver) from the youth perspective. Following this definition the next goal was to determine what are the opportunities and barriers to participation faced by these youth. A final question investigated the perceptions of this community by society. Youth in particular are seen as 'high-risk', and ideas of gangs and gang related violence abound. How has this negative perception or stigma of these youth affected these young people and their ability or desire to participate in society?

1.7.3 The Asset-Based Mapping Workshop

This workshop took place 5 days after the focus group and ran for 3 hours. The 5 youth who participated in the focus group were present as well as 3 additional youth. The mapping workshop served to graphically display the opportunities and barriers for participation as highlighted by the youth. Focusing on the assets of the community, and what is, rather than what is not, can be an empowering experience for youth. The youth produced a total of 4 maps during the course of the workshop, incorporating ideas from the focus group as well as new ones.

1.7.4 Rationale for Using Asset-Based Mapping

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a technique developed by John Kretzmann and John McKnight in the 1970's. The idea behind asset-based mapping is in direct contrast to the needs based approach (which has been used on multiple occasions with this community), focusing on what is, rather than what is not. There are three central pillars to ABCD. This approach is *asset-based*; it looks at the gifts, skills, and capacities of the community as well as the local organizations, associations and institutions. It is *internally focused*, stressing local definition, creativity, hope and control. Finally it is *relationship driven*, building and rebuilding the relationships among

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to the community, and offer a continuum of service that will decrease the possibility that Midtown at-risk youth will become street entrenched. Our communities continue to strive towards offering services in a fashion that youth and their families can easily identify and access(Broadway Youth Resource Centre, 2004)

local individuals, associations and institutions. Those using ABCD tend to see the glass as half full rather than half empty (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; ABCD Institute, 2004).

The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA)[2] has adapted its own version of community mapping, referred to as the Youth Community Asset Mapping Initiative. They use a creative, participatory approach, building capacity among youth and their community. I have adapted the following seven principles from EYA for my research and used them in order to facilitate the mapping process in my own research.

- It tells the everyday stories → records local stories, ex. how youth see their community
- It's an engagement tool → provides an opportunity where youth from different backgrounds with different knowledge and skills feel comfortable participating
- It's fun and creative → allows for different ways of expressing yourself
- It records a sense of place → people gain a better sense of where they live
- It helps create a healthy community → it looks at assets not problems and leads to positive growth
- It's an educational tool → it allows the experts to see what is going on at the community level
- It's a social change tool → it provides a community with a resource to use proactively

1.8 Research Limitations

Looking at the initial goals of my research, there are several questions that I asked myself both before and after beginning my research. How these limitations affected my research will be reflected upon in the final chapter.

1. Some participants were known to each other or known to the older or younger siblings of participants. Would this at all affect their freedom of expression? Would they be scared to say things in front of each other? In front of Ms. Nguyen or in front of me?

2. I felt parts of the focus group discussion may lead into rather heavy topics, and I was unsure how this would affect the youth, and how they would articulate themselves in this situation.

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[2] EYA is a non-profit, non-governmental charity dedicated to creating sustainable living alternatives. They promote youth community involvement. Their work consists of building rooftop gardens, developing urban agriculture options, environmental building projects and creating education strategies (Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004).

3. Being a white middle-class researcher going into a room full of Vietnamese-Canadian youth, would this in any way act as a barrier to them opening up and sharing their thoughts and insights with me? Did I understand the context of this research well enough to understand them?

4. Timing; this research was done at a time when final exams and high school graduation were happening. These events and last minute drop outs led to a lesser ratio of newcomer versus Canadian born youth than was expected, and therefore less of a focus on any differences that may be present amongst these two groups.

5. As this was a professional project done as a requirement for graduation, it was carried out on a limited scale. Running only one focus group, rather than a series of focus groups, leads to difficulties in generalization of information. Are these youth representative of a larger population?

6. Who participates? Given that participation is the nature of this research, it may be those more active youth, willing to commit the time to the research, who participated. For newcomer youth, with a lot on their plate at any given time, how much time do they have to commit to this research? Would some newcomer youth feel uncomfortable in a group discussion format with perhaps only limited English skills? These issues again lead to questions of representation and generalization.

7. Were the examples used for clarification purposes, by myself as the moderator, neutral enough not to bias the results?

1.9 Format

Chapter 2 will provide the reader with the ethno-cultural context relating to the Vietnamese community. It will briefly outline Vietnamese history, major waves of Vietnamese immigration to Canada and focus on the Vancouver community and the issues affecting it. Ethnic community formation and organization will be discussed along with resultant issues of resettlement and maladjustment from both the family and youth perspective.

Chapter 3 introduces the literature on integration and will familiarize the reader with the situation of immigrant and newcomer youth and the major forces affecting this group throughout the integration process.

Chapter 4 brings together the findings of both the focus group discussion and asset-mapping workshop. This major section of the paper examines the opportunities and barriers to participation according to major themes that arose during the course of this research.

Chapter 5: As the final section of this paper, all research findings are addressed in the form of discussion and major recommendations, followed by concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2: VIETNAMESE IMMIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT

2.0 Setting the Context

It would be impossible to carry out research on any ethno-specific community without a substantial investigation into the history, culture and social organization of that group. While this research study will deal primarily with youth, many of whom may be Canadian born, it is essential to look at the Vietnamese experience as a whole and gain an understanding of the origins of this community. The early experiences of those refugees arriving in the late 1970's, loosely termed the 'Boat People', have been central to the formation of this community. An investigation into the integration process of today's youth would not be possible without touching on the resettlement and integration issues faced by these early community members.

This research is focused primarily on the history and experience of the ethnic Vietnamese, and touches very little on the experience of the Sino-Vietnamese. The integration experience of these two groups may differ substantially as the ethnic Vietnamese experience being an ethnic-minority for the first time, while the Sino-Vietnamese have been an ethnic-minority in Vietnam for centuries.

This section will begin with a very brief history of Vietnam, followed by a look at the major waves of Vietnamese immigration to Canada. Special attention will be given to the Vietnamese Canadian community of Vancouver and the major issues affecting it today. The largest section will investigate ethnic community formation among the Vietnamese, social organization, and both formal and informal community organization and participation. Finally issues of resettlement and maladjustment will be addressed.

2.1 A Brief History of Vietnam

To many in the west, Vietnam seems like a young country, relatively unheard of before its recent wars. Yet Vietnam has a culture deeply rooted in its ancient past (Nguyen, 1979). Legend tells of its origins around 2000 B.C.E., the first people, descendents of a dragon father and a fairy mother. Real life in Vietnam proved not to be so paradisiacal, as a nearly continuous struggle for autonomy soon prevailed (Phuong, 2004).

Vietnam was invaded by China in the 1st and 2nd century C.E. and Chinese domination prevailed for nearly 1000 years. From the 10th century onward the country was ruled by a series of Vietnamese governments and kingdoms but was still considered a district of China.

The French occupied Vietnam from 1858 until the end of World War Two, only admitting defeat at the end of the Indochina War in 1954. The Geneva Accords left a divided Vietnam, a Communist North and an anti-Communist South. Tensions rose between the two sides and the U.S. soon replaced the French as the major sponsor of the anti-Communist South. Conflicts escalated and war eventually broke out. It was not until 1973 that the U.S. began to withdraw its troops. In 1975, Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese. Political repression and socio-economic upheaval followed, and the mass emigration of over one million Vietnamese began. With the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War, many Western countries have begun to reestablish diplomatic ties and trade relations with Vietnam (Nguyen, 1979; Phuong, 2004).

2.2 The Vietnamese in Canada: Vietnamese-Canadians

Vietnamese immigration to Canada has occurred in four major waves, the most well known being the plight of the Boat People some 25 years ago. Many had traumatic journeys out of Vietnam, with stays in transit camps in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Between 1979 and 1980 alone, close to 44,000 Vietnamese-born took up residence in Canada (Richard & Dorais, 2003). Today 95% of Vietnamese-Canadians reside in just four of Canada's provinces; Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta, with the largest population in Toronto followed by Montreal (Vietnamese Canadian Federation, 2004).

Table 1. Major Waves of Vietnamese Immigration to Canada (Richard & Dorais, 2003)

Time Frame	Immigration Details	Resident Population
1950's-1960's	Predominantly young male students receiving aid from the Catholic Church or 1951 Colombo Plan.	By 1974, 1500 people of Vietnamese origin resided in Canada.
1975-1976	Predominantly urban upper-middle class joining family already established in Canada	By 1978, 9000 people of Vietnamese origin resided in Canada.
1979-1982	The 'Boat People', refugees arriving by government and private sponsorship. Large numbers of ethnic Chinese, and young men with little education and a low socio-economic status.	This massive wave of immigration constituted 60,000 people across Canada.
Post 1982	Predominantly those arriving under the family reunification program.	Currently 148,405 declare Vietnam as their country of Origin (Stats Canada, 2004)

2.3 The Vancouver Vietnamese-Canadian Community

The first Southeast Asian refugees arrived in Vancouver in November of 1978, many of whom were ethnic Chinese, having resided in Vietnam for many generations. During their initial years in Vancouver, many Vietnamese were faced with economic exploitation by their employers, due to their inability to speak English and unfamiliarity with the labour laws. They remained in low paying labour-intensive jobs (Griffin, 1993). With the recession that hit Canada in the early 1980's many Vietnamese employees, often the last to be hired, were the first to be were laid off (Griffin, 1989).

Slowly the community began to grow, and by the late 1980's they had developed their own print media. By the 1990's, self-employment was seen as the road to improvement and there were approximately 150 small businesses owned and operated by Vietnamese in the Vancouver area. These ranged from jewelry shops to beauty salons, and from autobody shops to restaurants (Griffin, 1989; Griffin, 1993).

Today three newspapers and two magazines are in circulation and the Lac Viet Public Education Society[3] hosts a weekly radio show. Vietnet, a recently developed website,

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[3] A non-profit volunteer run organization established in 1994. Mandated to serve and inform the community through mass media; to provide public education through mass media enhancing

acts as an informal network for local Vietnamese workers dedicated to community service. The site provides a forum for discussion, bringing individuals and organizations together, it is an opportunity for those who work with the Vietnamese community to "celebrate their contributions to a thriving and positive Vietnamese identity in Canadian society" (Vietnet, 2004). Within the Vietnamese community, programs range from Vietnamese language classes for children to weekly Vietnamese seniors programming, and services include family counseling and a women's support group (Vietnet, 2004). Marriage ceremonies and Tet[4] celebrations bring community members together as do sports teams, and language classes, both in Vietnamese and English (Buchignani, 1988).

2001 census data reveals that of 738,550 immigrants in the Vancouver Metropolitan area, 22,140 listed Vietnam as their country of origin, and 19,645 listed Vietnamese as their mother tongue (Stats Canada, 2004). In 2000, Montani listed a total of 3,066 children and youth from Vietnamese speaking families enrolled in the Vancouver School System, with 2,069 in elementary schools and 997 in secondary schools, with the majority of students attending schools east of Main Street (Montani, 2000).

2.3.1 Community Issues Past and Present

As the status of refugees increased and their presence in the community became more established, post-traumatic stress disorder began to show. The mental health of refugees can be affected by the ethno-specific community, as well as by reception from the host society. The ethnic community plays a large role in promoting mental health and in preventing disorder, while differing levels of hospitality shown by the host society may affect the resultant mental health of immigrants and refugees (Beiser, 1999). In 1990, the first mental health program geared towards Vietnamese refugees was set up, examining their unique refugee experience and difficulties in adjusting to the new culture of the Lower Mainland (Griffin, 1993).

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community development; to facilitate and encourage increased participation (of Vietnamese Canadians) in the activities and process of the Vietnamese community and mainstream society (Lac Viet Public Education Society, 2002).
[4] The Vietnamese (lunar) New Year

In 1981, the media publicized the rise of Vietnamese gangs, and by the mid-1980's reports showed a further increase in gang violence, and presence of violent turf wars (Griffin, 1993). Despite studies, such as one by a young sociology student in Edmonton, showing only 10% of Vietnamese youth involved in any type of criminal activity (Schuler, 1991), headlines like "Chinatown violence: Ignoring the real problems Asian youths, especially Vietnamese, adrift in new culture" seen in the *Toronto Star* seem to prevail (Chow, 1991).

For those coming to Canada as children or youth, irrespective of their ethnicity, the following reasons may contribute to youth resorting to gang behaviour; lack of language skills, peer pressure, economic gain, low self-esteem, unemployment, family conflict, and desire for power. Many coming from war-torn countries and refugee camps may have grown up with violence as a way of life (Coordinated Law Enforcement Unit, 1993). Thanh Ho, who worked as a Vietnamese youth worker in the late 1980's, attributed gang behaviour to a lack of English skills leading to a feeling of isolation and loneliness. Being ignored leads these youth to do things that say, "Here I am, look at me". Lack of understanding and inability to communicate in English may also lead to intense anger. Despite the problems Ho was dealing with at the time, he stressed how much the community changed in its first 10 years, "The part about the gangs, that is behind us. We are trying to contribute now, to make the Vietnamese community here more united, more a part of Canadian society." (Ho, T. *in* Griffin, 1989).

More recent research and needs assessments done within this community have listed several urgent issues. To the general Vietnamese-Canadian community issues such as language, employment, family issues, financial issues and health were priorities (MOSAIC et al, 1998).

In *The New Start for Vietnamese-Canadian Community Forum*, the Lac Viet Public Education Society surveyed individuals to identify the causes of crime and victimization within the community. The results have been used to run a series of radio shows addressing these issues. Gang related issues were identified as the area of most

concern, followed by safety, grow-ops, education and health. Employment, family and school issues were listed as the root cause of crime and victimization.

Issues identified specifically by youth as areas of major concern are those related to school, gangs, safety and family. Under these headings, issues include bullying, kidnapping and violence; recruitment into illegal activities; selling and smoking marijuana in schools; and recruitment of female youth into sexual activities (Lac Viet Public Education Society, 2002).

2.4 Ethnic Community Formation

> "To understand the nature of an ethnic community requires an understanding of the history, demography and economic organization of the group as well as its social religious and cultural patterns. In addition, it requires an understanding of the community within the context of the larger society. Some understanding of theoretical concepts of ethnic community formation is necessary as well." (Copeland, 1988)

2.4.1 Social Organization: The Vietnamese Family: *gia dinh*

Changes to the country after years of war, peace and a new political system have affected the heart of Vietnamese society, the family. In Pre-colonial times and prior to immigration, the Vietnamese people were defined by their patrilineal and patriarchal families (Buchignani, 1988; McLeod, 2001). At this time, the clan, which incorporated numerous families tied together through a common male ancestor, formed the basis of Vietnamese society. Found within the clan was the family, usually consisting of grandparents, parents, children, uncles and aunts and often great-grandparents. The head of the family was the grandfather or father, ruling over all members, and speaking on their behalf to those outside the family on all matters.

The family is shaped by the values of: filial piety (*hieu*), moral debt or gratitude (*on)* and merit (*due)*. Through folktales, songs and family stories, children are taught from birth to remember the sacrifices of their parents and ancestors (McLeod, 2001). For each individual, great priority is placed on the family. Ideas of self-identity and one's conception of reality are defined through the individual's role within the family (Chan, 1983; Chan and Lam, 1984 *in* Buchignani, 1988).

Sociologist Buchignani characterizes the pre-immigration family as one having several distinct economic and social units existing within a given household, and pooling of resources. This type of family structure is typical of those playing an integral part in a strong social community, with many kin and varied social stratification. Such people tend to make every effort to reproduce this family structure in Canada and guard their family values (Buchignani, 1988). *What is the role of the youth in today's Vietnamese-Canadian family? Are the strong family ties seen in the past still maintained by today's youth?*

2.5 Thought and Religion

Animism, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam have all found their way into the borders of Vietnam (McLeod, 2001). Religious influences over the course of Vietnamese history have played a significant role in the development of culture, traditions and family values.

Introduced from China, Mahayana Buddhism brought the Law of Karma into the lives of the Vietnamese and has contributed greatly to the development of Vietnamese culture (Muzny, 1989). In pre-1975 Vietnam, greater than 70% of the population was considered to be Buddhist, with 10-15% practicing Catholicism (Rutledge, 1985 *in* Pfeifer, 1999). Catholic missionaries started arriving in Vietnam as early as the 16th century. They had been most successful at conversion in areas of North Vietnam. The Catholic population suffered from periodic religious persecution throughout parts of the 17th and 19th century (Gheddo,1970 *in* Pfeifer,1999). With the division of Vietnam in 1954, Catholic villages in the Communist North were again targeted, resulting in the movement of close to 800,000 Vietnamese (predominantly Catholic) to South Vietnam by the end of the year (Hanh, 1967 *in* Pfeifer,1999).

The religion of Caodaism originated in Southern Vietnam in the 1920's as a synthesis of all major world religions. After its official establishment in 1926, followers of Cao Dai represented a major political and military bloc in Southern Vietnam. Estimates show that approximately 1/8 of the population of South Vietnam in the 1950's practiced Caodaism.

Attempts to suppress the influence of Caodaism began with the French in the 1930's and continued with the Communists arresting several key leaders and shutting down temples after 1975 (Pfeifer, 1999).

2.6 Informal Community Organization

> "Ethnic communities may operate formally or informally, depending on their degree of institutional completeness. At the formal level, members' needs are met through ethnic institutions which parallel those of the larger society. At the informal level, needs are met through interpersonal networks of kin and friends as well as institutions provided by the larger society" (Breton, 1964 in Copeland, 1988)

2.6.1 Social Networks

Most Indochinese arrived from a life characterized by extensive informal social interactions in the form of reciprocal visiting and assistance, reflecting a significant number of personal ties and loyalties relating to kinship, class and gender. An individual's social network is formed by personal and inter-familial networks, and is seen as the fundamental basis of community throughout Indochina.

Due primarily to the restrictions on those leaving Indochina during the early years of migration, chain migration has not occurred within this community to the extent in which it has operated in other ethnic minority communities (Anderson and Higgs, 1976, Boissevain, 1970 and Chen, 1981 in Buchignani, 1988). Resulting from this and from the vastly different social context in which these immigrants have been embedded, it has been nearly impossible for them to recreate these same networks upon settlement.

What one does see is the creation of new informal social networks, based on similar ties, but reflecting the new context in which they find themselves. They tend to show affiliation with those either perceived as social equals, or with whom one wishes to be identified as an equal (Buchignani, 1988). *What is the basis for social networks seen among Vietnamese-Canadian youth today? Who do these youth perceive as social equals? How are their social networks perceived by their parents?*

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2.7 Identity and Organizational Participation

Many Vietnamese who have come to Canada have both an ethno-cultural and a national identity, along with a political and regional identity related to Vietnam. The Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese have little experience as the ethno-cultural minority, whereas the Chinese arriving from each of these countries have little national affiliation as a result of years of living in an ethnic enclave (Buchignani, 1988).

In Vietnamese communities across Canada, organizational problems are not uncommon at the local level. In some instances this may be due to political positions taken by various groups or members (Copeland, 1988, Dang and Nguyen, 2004). The majority of refugees who came to Canada as 'Boat People' risked their lives fleeing the new regime, while a minority exist showing sympathy and admiration for the Communist regime in Vietnam (Ba, 1988). Research has shown that while a common national or cultural origin may be present, interests and identity may not be the same. It is not uncommon for groups to be divided by economic, political, religious, social class, age or gender lines (Dorais et al, 1987).

Woodside, a professor and scholar of East Asian research at Harvard, focuses on the social organizations of Vietnamese cities in the late colonial period. Much of his data looks at the new social class that emerged in cities such as Saigon, Hanoi, Haiphong and others in the 1920's and 1930's. This new class consisted mainly of doctors, lawyers, journalists, and businesspeople whose sons attended the country's prestigious schools. These were the supporters of the French, who found themselves learning the specialized roles and gaining organizational understanding and experience that would soon transform Vietnamese society. Woodside provides organizational formation examples within the realm of medicine, law, pharmacy and among a group of women of elite families (Woodside, 1970).

Woon, in accordance with Woodside, again raises the idea that in Southeast Asia, organizations exist mainly for the rich. The experience of most newcomers is thus in development and maintenance of informal social networks or relationships. In contrast, North American voluntary organizations exist largely for the middle-class (Woon, 1985).

In ethnic communities with similar family structures, community institutions or organizations place second in importance to informal social networks, in terms of both perceived importance and contribution to daily life (Buchignani, 1988). *Is the same pattern seen with today's youth? Where do they place the importance, and how is their choice viewed by their parents? Are they influenced one way or another?*

2.8 Across Canada: Some Community Insights into Issues of Resettlement

The sheer stress and trauma of many years of warfare and disruption in Vietnam prior to immigration, and the very experience of being a refugee has taken its toll. Unlike many other ethnic communities, whether arriving as refugees or immigrants, the Vietnamese had little, if any, established community in most parts of Canada. This lack of support and services made their settlement even more problematic.

2.8.1 Family and Gender Role Changes as a Result of Resettlement:

Loss of loved ones or separation of families experienced by the 'Boat People', has often resulted in fragmented family structures. New or blended families have taken shape, some family members have lost their former independence, in other cases parenting roles have been taken over by siblings adding stress to both the new 'parent' and 'child' (Woon et al, 1988; Copeland, 1988).

The stress of role reversal in a patriarchal society can have devastating effects on a family, a wife who is suddenly an independent wage earner or her husband the child-rearer. Men have become more socially isolated, with less control over the social and economic aspects of their lives, while women tend to know almost twice as many people here in Canada (Dorais, 1988; Woon et al, 1988;Indra,1988). This weighs heavily on males in Vietnamese families as they are the ones expected to shoulder all the family burdens (Indra, 1988). It has been suggested that this familial marginality results from the conflict between the expected ideal male cultural role in everyday life versus the actualized role. As seen among this and other immigrant groups with similar family structures, women can more easily carry out their cultural role as wife and mother than can men the role of husband and father (Buchignani, 1988). *What are the current*

gender roles among Vietnamese-Canadian families? Are youth influenced more by the traditional Vietnamese gender roles they may see at home or by the gender roles they are exposed to in a wider society? Do these conflicting images have any effect on the mental health of today's youth?

Added stress such as anxiety over the safety of those who remained behind, and a feeling or need to look out for the economic well being of these family members places financial strain on an already minimal income (Copeland, 1988).

Buchignani notes the following structural changes occurring in today's Indochinese families;

- an increase in women's decision-making power
- children's exposure to peer pressure from non-Indochinese friends
- the 'individualization of economic resources followed by the nucleation of families' despite maintenance of the household leadership role of the male (Buchignani, 1988).

What have been the effects of these major structural changes on the Vietnamese family, on the youth specifically and on the relationships of youth with their parents?

2.8.2 Other Problems and Maladjustment

For those refugees having little or no experience in Western ways, cultural and language barriers as well as adapting to a technologically different and complex society provide new stress. For many, the life skills and coping strategies they had known in Vietnam suddenly had no place. Underemployment or downward mobility of many newcomers provided an added stress. While many Canadian-born face this same dilemma it is often the lack of resources in dealing with this which leads to problems (Copeland, 1988). When compared with other immigrant groups and with Canadian-born, the Vietnamese often have marginal low-status jobs, and often still face social isolation (Nguyen, 1980 in Indra, 1988). Again these conditions perpetuate the problem, leading to further stress.

Symptoms following the stresses of maladjustment include conflict, ranging from family feuds to spousal abuse, assault, and inter-generational conflict. Other personal problems

such as alcoholism, gambling, and major mental health concerns are seen (Woon et al, 1988).

Now that this community has become more established, and with initiatives such as the Lac Viet Public Education Society radio show, they must continue to come up with new and innovative ideas to deal with major issues in the community as they arise, as well as acknowledge the context of an ever changing society.

2.8.3 The Youth Perspective on Resettlement

In many cases, youth with their superior English skills, often have to translate for other family members in school, hospital, church or commercial settings. Research by Woon et al. has shown that this may easily cause a teenager to lose respect for a parent, witnessing their lack of English language skills, and inability to access services in the community (Woon et al., 1988).

Copeland has found that the feelings of youth in this case range from good to embarrassment to shame. In her early work with Winnipeg youth, she discovered that newcomer youth do not show extensive interaction with Canadian born youth. Reasons cited included fear of not being understood by Canadian born peers and fear of not understanding their Canadian born peers when spoken to. Her study also showed that respondents involved in leisure activities such as sports often did so with other newcomer participants rather than with Canadian-born. However newcomer youth are seldom the focus of research and little information exists in relation to their place in both ethnic-minority communities and mainstream society.

Education is seen to play a key roll in establishing oneself in a new environment. It is highly valued within the Southeast-Asian community, and Copeland's work shows a high percentage of youth planning to continue their studies at university. As newcomers, parents are often unfamiliar with the occupational situation in Canada, and thus are unable to guide youth or act as a role model in choosing a potential occupation (Copeland, 1988). *Whose role is it then to step in and provide a role model for these youth?*

2.9 In Conclusion

The majority of information from this chapter relating to ethnic community formation and issues of resettlement is a result of research on Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Canada under private and government sponsorship in the late 1970's and early 1980's. This information is key to an understanding of the home and community life in which today's youth are raised. Moving ahead, the next chapter will look at the needs of the next generation, the youth and the major forces affecting them as they integrate as individuals, as part of a family, and as members of a larger ethnic community.

Chapter 3: Integration

> *"Vancouver has become the most integrated city in Canada--perhaps the most integrated in the world--…More than a third of the region's residents are non-white. But major cities across North America have populations more diverse. What is going on in Vancouver is far more interesting and profound: To a degree never seen before in Canada, ethnic groups in Vancouver are integrating—living in each other's neighbourhoods, working together and marrying each other."*
> (Skelton, 2004)

While this quote, the introduction to a four part series on integration in the *Vancouver Sun,* paints a rather rosy picture of the inner workings of diversity, a full investigation into the concept of integration and how it is affecting the 'newcomer-youth' in our country today reveals a far different, perhaps darker picture. As discussed in this chapter, research focusing on immigrant youth and settlement issues has been all but neglected for far too long. It is only in the past few years that youth specific research has begun and their story is only just beginning to be told.

This chapter will look at definitions of integration, best settlement practices for youth settlement services, and will examine the major socio-economic, social and cultural barriers to integration faced by immigrants and refugees today. It will focus predominantly on the experience of 'newcomer-youth'.

3.0 Defining Integration

The United Nations Economic and Social Council defined integration in 1952, as a "gradual process by which new residents become active participants in the economic, social, civic, cultural and spiritual affairs of a new homeland. It is a dynamic process in which values are enriched through mutual acquaintance, accommodation and understanding. It is a process in which both the migrants and their compatriots find an opportunity to make their own distinctive contributions" (Kage, 1962 *in* CCR,1998).

In *"Best settlement practices: settlement services for refugees and immigrants in Canada",* the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), argues that the process through which newcomers become a true part of Canadian society cannot be defined by a single

word, but rather should be viewed as a continuum. The terms they use to define this process include; resettlement, settlement, adaptation, adjustment and integration.

Figure 1. The Settlement/Integration Continuum

Resettlement/settlement

O ---------⟹ ---------⟹---------⟹ ---------- ⟹

Acclimatization   Adaptation   Integration
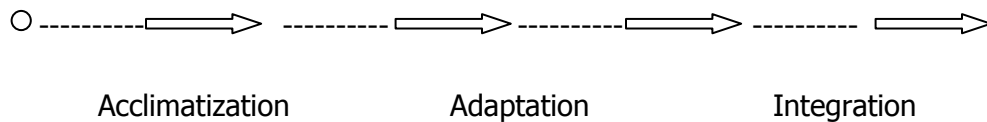
Settlement refers to acclimatization and the early stages of adaptation, including basic adjustments to a new life, finding a place to live, learning the language, finding employment and getting the gist of a new society. Integration is seen as "the longer term process through which newcomers become full and equal participants in all the various dimensions of society" (CCR, 1998).

According to this report, settlement and integration are multi-dimensional and can be divided into four main spheres;

- The social sphere
- The economic sphere

- The cultural sphere
- The political sphere

It is recognized that within any given sphere the degree and speed of integration may vary but ultimately what happens in one sphere will have an affect on the outcome of the others.

3.1 Settlement and Integration: Who plays a role?

While settlement services play a major role in the integration process, other institutions such as schools, hospitals, police, justice systems, and media play a significant role, the success of which is highly dependent on their ability to adapt to the diversity of their clients.

Government policy is also key to successful integration. Policies fostering a sense of security and belonging tend to promote integration, while those which keep families separated, delay status recognition or leave a community feeling threatened, add difficulty to the integration process.

Finally, the general population has a role to play. Contact with neighbours, co-workers, fellow students, and others in a time of racism and xenophobia can also undermine the integration process. Anti-racism awareness and public education will have a strong role to play in the years to come (CCR, 1998).

The host society in general can make an immense contribution to the lives of newcomers, however individuals and institutions do not always recognize their part. Creating an understanding and acceptance of difference from an early age can allow all individuals to be active players in the integration of newcomers. By increasing awareness around the need for diversity training among all citizens, and by focusing on the contributions immigrants and newcomers have made to our society, slowly we will see change.

3.1.1 Best Practice Guidelines for Immigrant and Refugee Settlement

Agencies or organizations offering settlement services to immigrants are designed to facilitate integration and to prevent marginalization, isolation and segregation of immigrant groups within Canadian society (Anisef et al, 2001). Best practices for settlement services need to acknowledge and work within the changing context as outlined in section 3.2. It is, and most likely always will be an iterative process, reflecting not only the fluid context but also the individual needs of each community. CCR have noted twelve core values from which they have formed the guidelines of best practice, creating a framework essential to the field of settlement services (CCR, 1998). These core values are as follows;

- *Access*
- *Client empowerment*
- *Holistic approach*
- *Cultural sensitivity*
- *Collaboration*
- *Reliability*

- *Inclusion*
- *User-defined services*
- *Respect for the individual*
- *Community Development*
- *Accountability*
- *Orientation towards positive change*

The guidelines which emanate from these values all have a role to play in the research undertaken here, and will be touched upon again in the recommendations section.

Specific to the topic of youth integration, I will look briefly at those best practices aimed at youth.

1. <u>Youth Program:</u> A day program intended to introduce youth to the issues of law and politics, taking youth to visit a prison, meet with police officers and talk with a member of parliament (MP).

2. <u>Canadian Cultural Orientation Assistance:</u> A program aimed at youth who have been in Canada less than 3 years, divided into groups aged 11-15 and 16-19. Involving parents and the community at large, activities provide an orientation to Canadian culture focusing on peer relationships, encouraging youth interaction and cultural sensitivity among both newcomer and host society participants.

3. <u>Focus on Parents and Youth:</u> With intergenerational conflict becoming more common, this program arranges for four meetings of youth and parents to each discuss (separately) the issues affecting family life. The final meeting allows for both groups to explore their varying perceptions of the issues in combination with a celebration.

4. <u>Intergenerational Programming:</u> A program designed to reduce adolescent maltreatment and delinquent behavior among first generation immigrants, consisting of a skills-building and support program targeting both groups together. With facilitators from both the mainstream and the focus ethno-specific community, the programs involve parent-adolescent skill building groups, parent help groups, peer support groups, counseling, home visits, ESL tutoring, cultural celebrations, and recreational activities. This program was developed in partnership between an immigrant-serving agency and mainstream service provider, and included a process and evaluation procedure.

5. <u>Summer Daycamp Program:</u> An 8 week summer camp for immigrant children, emphasizing English language activities in a fun and stimulating environment. This opportunity provides parents with the chance to continue their ESL school attendance over the summer.

3.2 A Changing Context

As mentioned above, if we wish to provide settlement services that meet the needs of today's immigrants we must remain aware of the changing context of immigrant integration.

In a Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) sponsored 'conversation', the Metropolis project brought together academics, 3 levels of government, the media and many from

the community sector to discuss immigrant children and second generation immigrants. There was a general agreement among those present as to the following theme. In the past decade and a half several major changes have taken place in the social and economic context of immigrant integration.

These changes include:

- o Country of origin of immigrants

- o Economic and technological globalization

- o Scale of immigration

- o Structure of the labour market and the shift to a knowledge economy

- o The prospect of continued, rapid change (Metropolis, 1999)

3.3 Youth and the Process of Integration

As stated in the first chapter, youth are vital to the process of integration, not just as individuals, but as bridges to their entire family. This section will discuss some of the major topics, as outlined by the literature, playing a significant role in the integration of youth.

3.4 Meeting Their Needs: General Statistics on Youth

In *'The Progress of Canada's Children: Focus on Youth'*, the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) reports that there are approximately 2 million youth in Canada between the ages of 15 and 19 (CCSD, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2004).

'Immigrant Youth in Canada', another CCSD report, cites young people aged 12-24 who have immigrated to Canada within the last five years as one of the fastest growing populations. Among the roughly 200,000 immigrants arriving each year, about one-third are under the age of 25(CCSD, 2000). The number of youth (aged 15-24) born outside of Canada increased by 7% from 1991-1996. In Vancouver, more than 1 in 4 youth today (28%) are born outside of Canada (CCSD, 1998).

As this sector of the population continues to grow and as the federal government commits to increased levels of immigration, it is important that the needs of this group are not forgotten (Kilbride et al, 2001). Those who fall under the category of immigrant teenagers (aged 16-20) are facing unique challenges in our cities today. These youth are too young to be able to utilize programs for newcomer adults, and not young enough for the gradual family mediated adjustment process that most younger children need or use. They are also too old to have the full amount of time needed for adjustment before graduating from high school (Anisef et al, 2000). *How can we best help these youth to integrate, what types of services will they benefit from most? What can the Canadian school system do to aid the adjustment process given the limited time frame in which they have access to these youth?*

While much research is focused on immigrant adults or elementary school children, very little has been directly targeted at newcomer youth (Anisef et al., 2001; Kilbride et al., 2001;Beiser et al., 1999). Kilbride et al. stress the need for provision of adequate settlement services which will benefit the integration of immigrant youth and address the diverse needs found among various ethno-cultural groups (Kilbride et al, 2001).

3.5 Socio-economic Status and Mental Health

Newcomer youth face a wide range of problems which pose a threat to their physical and social development (Anisef et al., 2000). Researchers have cited the socio-economic disparity found between native-born and newcomers to be the primary determinant of negative development (Beiser et al., 1999; Fralick & Hyndman, 1998; Steinhauer, 1998). Newcomer children from unstable families respond less well to racism at school, are less likely to succeed at school and show a greater likelihood of delinquency (Beiser et al., 1999). Adjusting to new cultural surroundings and a new language as well as dealing with peer expectations can be difficult to achieve in the face of family instability and lack of economic security. The inability to adapt to the new society can create a higher risk of substance abuse, delinquency and depression (Anisef et al., 2000).

Newcomer youth are more likely to live in poverty than their Canadian born peers. The New Canadian Children and Youth Study, which examines pre- and post- migration stresses, shows that greater than 30% of immigrant children are living in families whose

income falls below the poverty line (Beiser et al, 1999). This poverty is among the factors which may lead to a mental health risk for children (Langner et al, 1977; Rutter et al, 1976 *in* Beiser et al, 1999). *What are the root causes of this poverty and what can be learned from youth growing up in this environment?*

While self-esteem is a concept not given adequate recognition by mental health professionals, it is known to be essential to the well being of youth, and a strong predictor of achievement and success at school (Harter, S.,1983 *in* Beiser et al.,1999). Further research compiled by Beiser et al. shows that conflict between the values of home and school, or parent and peer, in combination with other societal forces such as racism, among ethnic minority youth can jeopardize self-esteem. Securing a sound ethnic identity may enhance one's self-concept and help nurture personal resilience, thus improving the chances of healthy development and integration (Beiser et al., 1999). *What types of programs geared toward youth, their parents and their peers can help mitigate the home school divide? What can be done to help foster ethnic identity and increase one's self-esteem? Whose role is this anyway? The parents, the school system or the community at large?*

Ethnic resiliency plays a major role in the mental health of immigrant youth (Beiser et al., 1999). Resiliency is defined by Steinhauer as "unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress, and/or an ability of the stressed person to rebound to the pre-stress level of adaptation." (Steinhauer, 1998). While Beiser et al. maintain that identifying with one's own heritage culture can help nurture personal resilience (Beiser et al., 1999), Fralick and Hyndman stress the presence of a strong social support network among family, friends and a community is correlated with positive health (Fralick and Hyndman, 1998; CCSD, 2000). *Is a solid social support network enough?*

In Beiser's 1999 book "*Strangers at the Gate: The 'Boat People's' First Ten Years in Canada",* he focuses on the process of adjustment to a new country and new culture, specifically examining the stresses of adjustment and the psychological and social factors that aid individuals in coping with this transition. His research is based on a longitudinal study of both refugees and Canadian residents in Vancouver. His findings show that among both the refugee and resident Canadian populations, young people

had a higher rate of depression than older study participants. They were twice as likely to be depressed as people aged 35 and over (Beiser, 1999).

3.6 The role of the Canadian School System

In *Learning and Sociological Profiles of Canadian High School Students,* Anisef and Bunch explore the role of ethno-cultural diversity (among other factors) and its impact on the education of youth. They have found that visible minority youth face a variety of challenges in coping with the school system, which result in poor academic achievement or school dropouts.

While efforts have been made to create equal opportunity for all youth, school policies often rooted in discrimination, teacher attitudes, and a school's organizational structure serve as barriers to equalization (Anisef &Bunch, 1994). CCSD's report *Immigrant Youth in Canada,* the result of focus group research with immigrant youth, cites many as feeling that teachers and staff were part of the problem rather than the part of solution (CCSD, 2000). Success among minority youth is simply not encouraged. The result, a feeling of alienation and an increase in negative behaviors such as poor attendance, and feelings of hostility directed at the school. *Again what is the role of self-esteem here, and how does this lack of encouragement of minority youth affect their self-esteem?*

In Vancouver, Montani found a disproportionately high number of early school leavers of Vietnamese origin. Of 136 secondary school students falling into this category, 48% were Vietnamese. Citing an unpublished report by the Vancouver School Board, Montani discusses evidence of ESL students who 4 or 5 years after arrival in Canada still find themselves in ESL classes with weak language skills, preventing full grade level integration. Experiences of racism or stereotyping at school, peer pressure to join in activities outside of school, financial pressure to earn money, and a curriculum not focused enough on assisting individuals to enter the labour force all contribute to chronic truancy (Montani, 2000). *What can the Vancouver School Board and other education systems do to lower these numbers? Is co-operative education the answer, allowing and encouraging these youth to earn money, gain work experience and finish high school?*

In Lam's study of Indochinese youth, he states, it is "not uncommon for Indochinese youth to 'quit school' and 'work for the well-being of their families' ". Many of these youth may believe they will find greater rewards in the labour force than in educational attainment. Based on their parents' experience of underemployment and downward mobility they may not see a connection between higher educational attainment and greater occupational status (Lam, 1994).

With a wide range of economic, cultural and academic backgrounds represented among newcomer youth, a greater understanding of the unique traditions, family structure, and values are invaluable in creating a program to meet the learning needs of individual students (Duran, 1990; Freire, 1990 *in* Lam, 1994). Ethnic minority students will remain at risk until the entire system begins to work towards the accommodation of difference. Recommendations by Anisef and Bunch towards this goal include incorporation of a more racially and culturally inclusive curricula, better diversity education for teachers, and hiring teachers that reflect the population (Anisef & Bunch, 1994).

3.7 The Transition Phase: From School to Employment

The CCSD have noted in their 1998 report that a key event in the lives of young people aged 15-24, is the transition to adulthood, a time where youth are establishing themselves as independent members of society. According to the CCSD, one of the most important changes during this time period is the movement from school to the workforce (CCSD, 1998-microform).

As noted earlier in this chapter, there are approximately 2 million youth in Canada aged 15 to 19 (CCSD, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2004). While the high unemployment rate affects all youth, statistics show that newcomer youth face greater obstacles to employment, and are much less likely to have any type of work experience than their Canadian-born peers (CCSD, 1998 *in* Anisef et al., 2000). There are a number of factors working against them, leading to an inability to find gainful employment. Education, socio-economic experience and susceptibility to negative influences and discrimination make it difficult for newcomer youth to acquire the skills and training needed to be competitive in today's labour market (Anisef, 1998).

A 1996 study revealed twice as many newcomer youth (aged 17-19) with no work-related experience. This study also found a correlation between socio-economic background and access to employment opportunities, showing that "youth from low-income families face greater challenges in acquiring job experience than do those living in high- or middle- income families". This pattern is seen among both newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth. However, newcomer youth face further challenges such as learning one of the official languages of their new country, responsibilities at home and parent's expectations that they must focus solely on school (CCSD, 1998 *in* Anisef et al, 2000).

In another report, *Youth Unemployment: Canada's Rite of Passage*, the Canadian Youth Foundation (CYF) examined the experiences of Canadian youth (aged 15-29), using a cross-section of aboriginal, immigrant, middle-class and street youth. This report revealed that most youth consider themselves occupationally challenged, despite their greatest efforts to seek employment, and in many cases youth feel dependent on their parents, delaying the start of an 'independent life'.

This research notes that immigrant and street youth do not have the personal support systems in place to assist them in seeking employment. While middle-class youth often have a coping strategy in place through self-employment and contract work, immigrant and street youth on the other hand find themselves completely dependent on government agencies to prepare them for the job market (CYF, 1998 *in* Anisef,1998). *If these youth are indeed dependent on government agencies, what types of programs are available to them, and are they properly geared towards immigrant and street youth?*

Anisef (1998), in an examination of the transition from school to employment, has found that youth from low socio-economic backgrounds, and visible minorities are more vulnerable to marginalization as they make this transition. While one of the primary functions of the school system should be the preparation of youth for this transition, Anisef argues that Canadian schools are not adequately preparing students for today's job market (Anisef & Bunch, 1994; Anisef, 1998).

3.8 Language Learning

Speaking and understanding the language of the host society is widely seen as key to economic, social, cultural and political participation (CCR, 1998 *in* Anisef, 2000). Beiser found that those who have learned English have enjoyed life more, perhaps because language gave them full access to newspapers, radio and TV, and allowed for greater access to their neighbourhood and community. This may also have helped to prevent intergenerational conflict, in cases where children have become 'Canadianized' (Beiser, 1999). The question remains though, is the level of proficiency obtained when language classes are completed adequate for integration into Canadian society (Anisef, 2000)?

Kilbride et al. and Scott stress the important role of language in employment and employability (Kilbride et al., 2001; Scott, 2000). In Kasozi's work with African Immigrants in Toronto, of those who had English as their mother tongue, 60% reported that their accent acted as a barrier to employment and integration. 28% of subjects reported having lost or left their job due to language problems (Kasozi, 1986 *in* Scott, 2000).

3.9 In Conclusion

If integration into Canadian society truly is a long-term process, sometimes not fully completed until the second generation, why, as the literature points out are we making things harder, not easier, for today's newcomers? Immigrants are vital, contributing to the social, economic and political culture of our society, and it follows that we should be welcoming and accepting of all newcomers of all ages and ethnicities. According to the literature, newcomer youth face obstacles throughout adolescence not encountered by their Canadian-born peers. These obstacles put them at risk for problems of mental health, lower their chances of finding employment and at times slow them down in our school systems. The next chapter will examine these issues from the perspective of both first-generation and second-generation Vietnamese-Canadian youth, providing a first hand account of newcomer and immigrant youth integration in Vancouver.

Chapter 4: Findings

Taking information from the literature review and an interest in many of the issues raised, in combination with insight gained from personal communication as well as personal motivation, I moved forward to compile an interview guide for the focus group. Keeping the age of my participants in mind and the goal of my research at hand I carried out both a focus group and an asset-mapping workshop. What follows are the results and interpretation of both.

4.0 Focus Group and Asset-Mapping Findings

Getting to know the youth participants through these research opportunities, and examining their responses and the information relayed on the maps, I now attribute the findings to two things. On one hand these youth are just that, *youth* aged 13-17 experiencing the trials and tribulations of being youth in today's world, and dealing with many of the same issues perhaps my peers and I dealt with as teenagers ourselves. On the other hand the hyphenated title of *Vietnamese-Canadian* precedes these youth, and without seeing that they are *youth* the world is treating them differently because of either their country of origin, or that of their parents. These youth have been constrained in many ways by the beliefs, ideas and traditions of their parents, yet their identities have been shaped in many ways by these same beliefs.

The focus group and asset-mapping workshop in combination provided great insight into the interrelationship between the youth (or the individual), their family (or home) life, school and peer interaction and the outside world. While the focus group discussion seemed to highlight personal perspectives, the asset-mapping workshop allowed the youth to speak for others, not just themselves. The focus group provided an opportunity for verbal communication while the availability of an alternate form of expression found in the asset-mapping workshop through the written word and original drawings allowed all youth to get involved in their own way. The result, a more concise comprehension of how these youth understand participation, how their 'Vietnamese' world and their 'Mainstream' world differ and the influences present in both places.

4.1 Research Format

The focus group began by examining 'active participation', what it is, and how and where youth can get involved. The ethnic origin of these youth was explored, discussing what it means to be Vietnamese and contrasting this to life in Canada. The remainder of the discussion focused on opportunities and barriers to participation in both the Vietnamese community and mainstream society. The session ended with a discussion of perceptions of the Vietnamese community by others, and how these perceptions have affected youth participation.

The asset-mapping workshop allowed the youth to take the opportunities and barriers discussed in the focus group and expand on them further. They were now able to tie location and activity together and map several places around Vancouver, creating 4 maps. The themes were discussed amongst participants following the focus group and were as follows:

- Opportunities for Participation in the Vietnamese Community
- Barriers to Participation in the Vietnamese Community
- Opportunities for Participation in Mainstream Society
- Barriers to Participation in Mainstream Society

The format of the rest of this section, will look briefly at the some of the issues discussed in the focus group, followed by the results of the latter part of the focus group discussion in combination with information obtained from the maps.

4.2 Our origins: the role of Vietnamese culture and Vietnam in our life

All youth present, both Canadian born and newcomer youth, showed tremendous appreciation for their ethnic origin or for that of their parents, grandparents and family. Many of them have a strong recognition of the daily hardships of their parents in Vietnam. As one youth commented, (knowing about Vietnam/Vietnamese culture) *"helps us look back on what our parents lived through in their lives in Vietnam or the elderly, it wasn't very pleasant, even though we need to know our origins and where we came from…. Our origins are carried by our parents and grandparents. They put a lot of pressure on you cuz they can say you are very lucky you can go to school for cheap*

where we (they) *have to pay a lot for our education. ..they really put a lot of pressure when they say I'm depending on you to succeed farther than I am and past the school. Its not that easy being Vietnamese."*

The importance of origin was again stressed by the fact that parents want these youth to know their history, so that it can be passed on to their children in the future, as those born in Canada may not have had the opportunity to visit Vietnam. In the case of some youth, understanding their origins and their family history has led to a curiosity about other classmates and their ethnic origins, the beginning of a time of questioning and sharing of stories. The ability to celebrate and share their own language and culture, and learn about other cultures was highlighted as something celebratory about being Vietnamese.

Several youth equated this question with doing daily household chores, many of the same things their parents had to do during their youth in Vietnam. This included preparing Vietnamese food, doing dishes, cleaning the house, and taking care of younger siblings. Some felt forced to do these things, others obligated and a few did things because they wanted to; "(*doing things myself)I get to know my origin, and I know how to cook Vietnamese food and go to temple sometimes with my mom and we celebrate our special ceremonies like Tet (*Vietnamese New Year*)."*

4.2.1 In Contrast to life in Canada:

Those youth born in Canada again show an appreciation for the freedom they have here and recognize that the conditions under which their parents grew up were substantially different. They see this freedom as giving them time to spend with friends, volunteer and participate in other activities.

Those newcomer youth born in Vietnam also spoke of the freedom given to them in Canada. This was contrasted with living in a communist country, where in their opinion, corruption is rampant and education does not elevate your status nor does it allow you to work towards the betterment of your country.

4.3 Defining 'active participation'

To these youth, participation in society means; *getting involved, being active and being a part of something. It means doing something better for your community, helping others and not just yourself. Part of the commitment of participation is about being there for others, and in some cases prioritizing the needs of others over the needs of the individual.*

The places where these youth participate or see opportunities to get involved are *community centres and neighbourhood houses, the church, the home and the school. Opportunities discussed included both paid and volunteer positions, both part time and full time. Many youth mentioned sporting activities and opportunities to coach younger children.*

4.4. Opportunities for Participation:

4.4.1 In the Vietnamese Community

- *The church: Vancouver Church for Vietnamese, Taikon- Vietnamese/Chinese United Church, Some Church for Everyone, St. Mary's Church, St. Joseph's Church*

The Vietnamese Church is seen by these youth as a major opportunity to volunteer, helping others and the community. They give their time as altar servers or assist in event organization. It is a place for outreach to other Vietnamese, teaching them about the church and what involvement can mean. The Vietnamese community can grow and expand through the activities of the church. Youth see it is a place for exploration and investigation, where they can acquire the knowledge and *"social smarts"* to benefit their own lives, and broaden their worldviews and understanding of diversity. It also provides an opportunity for these youth to interact with other people and make new friends. There are other services such as tutoring, support groups and other social groups organized through various churches.

- *The Broadway Youth Resource Centre (BYRC)*

The BYRC is seen by these youth as a place where they can begin to alter the views of society toward Vietnamese youth. They consider the activities or programs which they participate in here, as helping to strengthen the morale of Vietnamese youth. Participation allows them to help both the elderly and the young. It is also a place that allows them to speak their own language, meet new people and make new friends.

- *Other locations and further opportunities*

Other locations mentioned by these youth which provide opportunities for participation in the community included:

- *o* Lac Viet Education Centre
- *o* Lac Viet Radio (an opportunity through the Lac Viet Education Centre)
- *o* Vovinam(Viet Vu Doa) – a Vietnamese martial arts centre.
- *o* Andy Pham Teaching Education Centre (APT) - a tutoring centre established 5 years ago by a member of the Vietnamese-Canadian community. Run by Vietnamese College students with services for all aged youth, this centre serves primarily Vietnamese students.

Further opportunities mentioned were widely varied. Two youth were involved with *'Spectrum'*, an exhibit highlighting work by Vietnamese artists which took place at the Roundhouse Community Centre. This event was set up by Vietnamese youth and provided an opportunity for them to volunteer their time as well as contribute original artwork.

Areas on the West side of Vancouver were depicted on the maps as opportunities for opening Vietnamese Clubs, and for bridging the gap between East Vancouver and the west side of Vancouver. Many youth have not had the opportunity to see their own city West of Main Street, and some feel that it is barriers of wealth and image that are preventing this crossover.

4.4.2 In Mainstream Society

The discussion around mainstream society, and the results of the asset-mapping workshop produced results focused primarily on environment and atmosphere rather than location of specific opportunities.

- *Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses*

Many youth find opportunities to meet people of different backgrounds, participate in various clubs, activities and sports teams associated with local community centres and neighbourhood houses such as Riley Park Community Centre, Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House and Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

- *School*

School based activities and clubs, as well as opportunities for travel abroad are associated with mainstream participation.

4.4.3 Influences and Considerations in Both Communities

Environment

Youth are attracted to opportunities which are fun and enjoyable and take place in an environment free of stress and anger. They look for places which offer them encouragement, a caring atmosphere, and a sense of gratitude for their participation. New opportunities and novel experiences that both the youth and their peers will enjoy also encourage participation. For other youth the concept of receiving recognition in some way for their contribution to the community is essential.

Awareness

Participation in the mainstream offers these youth a chance to share their culture with others. *"(Awareness.) You can show a lot of people how your culture works or how certain stuff work in Canada. And it's sometimes totally new to them because they are so enclosed in their own world that they don't see anything else happening outside."*

General Experience and Volunteer Hours

Opportunities for participation are viewed as a way to gain much needed experience for a resume or solid references for future employment. An advantage to volunteering in both communities is to gain volunteer hours needed for high school graduation. As part of the graduation portfolio (as needed for those entering Grade 10 after June 2004) under the section of Employability Skills, students need 30 hours of "generic skills needed to make the transition to the workplace". This can be volunteer or work experience (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2004).

4.4.4 How Opportunities for Participation in Both Communities Differ

Parental or family influences appear to play a large part in the determination of what 'type' of activities these youth participate in. Parents and family appear to have priorities for their children, be it participation first and foremost in the Vietnamese community, church related activities or in the mainstream.

Many felt that their parents were encouraging them to participate in activities in the Vietnamese community in order to meet other Vietnamese, while others had the feeling that encouraging them to participate in these opportunities was an attempt by parents to 'protect' their children from the racism they first experienced in Canada as an ethnic minority. *"Coming from Vietnam they didn't interact with a lot of other countries and when they did come here it was all very sudden for them and they didn't get to adapt very quickly and there were all these racist people and they still hold those grudges until now. And then they pass it on to us."*

In other families, the church remains the dominant influence, and youth are highly encouraged to attend church and participate in church related activities above all else.

Participation in mainstream activities by Canadian born youth seems to be encouraged by some parents who recognize the importance of community involvement and volunteer work. This results in youth active in both their ethno-specific community and in the mainstream.

Interestingly in the case of newcomer youth, the parental influence was directed toward participation in mainstream activities and opportunities where the youth can meet people from a host of different cultures. *Is this purely reflective of the idea of integration or is this more reflective of newcomer's negative perceptions of the established Vietnamese community in Vancouver*?

4.5 Major Themes: Barriers to Participation in the Vietnamese Community and in Mainstream Society

My research has found that the major barriers to participation in both the Vietnamese community and in mainstream society as seen by these youth differ only slightly. Thus, this section will be flagged by major themes, since in most cases they were common to both communities.

Politics: North Vietnam versus South Vietnam

Issues of North Vietnam versus South Vietnam quickly became a major topic of discussion in relation to the Vietnamese community. Parents, grandparents and other family members play a major role in how this affects today's youth and how it shapes their activity. Youth reported cases of parents not wanting their children to attend certain events because of the people in attendance, and expressed animosity towards these people. One youth portrayed a school club which had youth with origins from both North and South Vietnam participating together, a club which he was discouraged from joining.

The youth themselves did not have personal views of North versus South, but simply expressed that they were all Vietnamese no matter which area they or their family originated from. *"Even though we have different accents and stuff its just an accent nothing else, it doesn't change the way we act towards each other, there shouldn't be any big difference between North and South like our parents think, it's a wrong issue to bring up being in a family, especially when you're a kid, you don't want to be influenced by hating the North or South or whatever."* This issue is very political among families, has created divisions among communities right across Canada, and has been widely written about in the literature.

Tradition: Parents and their opinions

Through the mapping exercise, youth expressed the feeling of a generational gap. For some youth, whose parents were raised in Vietnam and had a very different upbringing from that of their children, there is a feeling that their parents have very different beliefs and opinions. Their parents' non-permissive attitude or unwillingness to adapt to change has contributed to the inability of these youth to try new things within both their own community and mainstream society.

The Social Ladder

The concept of a 'social ladder' existing in both communities came up in the focus group and asset-mapping workshop. Youth reported that *"Some people are cooler than other people in the same (Vietnamese) community."* A similar social ladder is in operation in the school system. According to these youth, this ladder is in relation to the way you act and the way you dress and some youth reported, *"not having the look".* This ladder

puts those more confident youth at the top, calling them popular, while the quieter, less self-confident youth fall to the bottom. While this 'ladder' may exist, it is also reflective again of issues of confidence among youth, as seen in the wider population.

Cost and Socio-economic Status

The high cost of living and financial difficulties experienced at home in combination with the costs associated with school and club activities result in an inability to participate or join. The same is true of activities in the Vietnamese community as a lack of funding for programs such as Sunday school or tutoring (by Vietnamese groups) means that these activities come with a high price tag. In the mapping exercise the youth reported not being able to participate in activities with *"West side"* residents because they are not from a *"wealthy"* family background.

Negative Influences

Influences from other youth such as drugs, alcohol and smoking arose in relation to both the Vietnamese and mainstream communities. In some instances family members would not allow or approve of contact with youth involved in drugs, smoking and alcohol, while in other instances parents were not turned off by friends partaking in these activities but trusted in their own children not to get involved (with drugs, smoking, alcohol). Influences related to both school and church activities.

Discrimination and Stereotyping

Stereotypes such as 'most Vietnamese drink or smoke' or 'plant marijuana' have deterred youth from participation or association within the Vietnamese community. Discrimination against Vietnamese youth, societal notions of troublemakers, and youth *"not decent enough to be given the opportunity to join society"* instill fear in some and discourage participation in the mainstream and in many school related activities. Youth also felt that discrimination against the way people may act or dress or racism directed at visible minorities is a major barrier to employment in the city.

Peer Opinion

Peer reaction plays a major role in youth self-confidence and in their willingness to participate. The opinions of others, if not encouraging and supportive, can easily give youth second thoughts about participation. The downside to volunteering in their own ethnic community, as one youth recounted, is being ridiculed by other youth at school for their involvement in *"weird"* activities. While these issues may be related back to

youth being youth, and the fragility of the teenage years, it is also clearly an issue of tolerance and sheds light on the need for cross-cultural education among youth.

Time constraints and associated stresses

Youth reported a heavy load of homework and projects and a resultant high degree of stress associated with the school environment. A considerable amount of time associated with caring for younger siblings restricts time available for other activities (predominantly in relation to the mainstream). For others who have committed to activities at the church they are unable to attend more mainstream activities at places like the BYRC, due to time conflicts.

Environment

When the factors listed above under Environment (see 4.4.3 general considerations) are not met, the environment then acts as a barrier. The experience of feeling excluded by others when trying to get involved, left some youth thinking that involvement in those activities is just a waste of time; *"I feel that if I go to something, it's to help someone and if you feel excluded there is no point in going...you're just there to fill in space or whatever."*

Appearance, Trust and Safety

Using the BYRC as an example, the youth were questioned about why they only seem to frequent this location when there is a specific event happening rather than showing up on their own (as BYRC is open to ALL youth). Youth were discouraged by the people they associated with the BYRC, and had seen outside the premises. *"I never came in because there are freaky people standing outside yeah they're smoking and it gives you a really bad idea of what's inside because you are only seeing what's on the outside and you think the people inside are going to be the same when in reality most of them aren't."*

Not knowing the people outside brought up issues of trust and safety. *"Well I just come in if we know the people because we don't always trust them, we don't know them."* BYRC is not seen as an ideal place to go out at night, youth saw this area as dangerous and were not encouraged by what goes on around the streets at night.

Issues of safety and trust appear to be large factors in getting the youth to find a place where they feel comfortable and safe to return to. Several youth did acknowledge that they frequent other community centres in the area to hang out with friends after school.

Other limiting factors

There is an overall lack of programming for youth in this age category within the Vietnamese community, while in mainstream society youth mentioned that it is the lack of late night opportunities such as teams or clubs that is a barrier to participation.

Other issues such as lack of transportation, or simply not knowing the location of an event or how to get from one place to another are seen as additional barriers. Lack of knowledge of opportunities available was tied to immigrant status in the mapping exercise.

Age is also seen as a barrier by these youth, as some opportunities are age restricted. This affects the youth directly, as well as family members indirectly. When youth have the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings and these siblings are unable to attend programs, the older youth must forfeit the opportunity as well.

Language and Communication at School

Language and communication issues are among the most prevalent barriers in the school system. Students were often not understood by others due to the way they speak English and/or the presence of a heavy accent. Some youth felt that people often pretend to understand newcomers while being spoken to, but at the end of the conversation are no further ahead. *"If you've immigrated its hard to learn English and hard to communicate. It's a communication problem that is the barrier."*

Those who do not have English as their first language tend to hang around schools in groups speaking their heritage language. English as a Second Language (ESL) students are often grouped together for school activities and those born in Canada see this as further limiting to their (the ESL students') ability to integrate, meet new people, and improve their English.

Several youth felt that teachers or the school system do not deal with this properly. Where students do not even have the ability to ask the teacher for help, students are failing and having to repeat course work. "*They are treating the people who are minorities (newcomers) exactly the same as everyone else, and they expect the same.*" "*Its like the teachers expect the same level from everyone even if you are an ESL student*"

One participant suggested that each school should have a multicultural worker[5], using the example of one school which has a Vietnamese multicultural worker, and where to his knowledge several parents send their children to this school because of the help that this worker provides. Youth reported not having someone to talk to in the school system when problems arise. These multicultural workers do not have their own offices or phone numbers and can be difficult to contact. In many cases both students and teachers seem to be unaware of their presence.

Education and Credentials

Speaking from their own experience or from those of their parents (who may have been educated in Vietnam but not in Canada) education and credentials are seen as major barriers to finding employment.

4.5.1 Perceptions of the Vietnamese Community as a Barrier to Participation

Overall these youth feel very disappointed in those who have given the Vietnamese community a bad reputation for their actions, doing things they know are ultimately wrong for their own purposes. They have often been embarrassed by others pointing or staring. As one youth summed up, "*When they get caught the media are all like well all people are like this, all Vietnamese people are like that. That's really like that word.(disappointing)*"

According to another, "*I don't think that we're, that kids are born naturally to be in gangs or thugs. We are born and we are the same as everyone. So it really gives us a bad reputation.*"

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[5] There are currently 4 Vietnamese multicultural workers for the entire City of Vancouver , serving elementary and high schools. Each worker has an extremely high caseload and visits schools on a rotation basis (Nguyen, 2004).

With so many people influenced by what they hear or see in the media, these facts or issues are often brought back to the (Vietnamese) youth in their school life and outside. Kids are asked for weed at school or told that a lot of Vietnamese plant marijuana because it was in the news. These perceptions also affect them in the job market. "*It makes it harder to get involved or get a job, especially when you're on the news or whatever, you're the main character throughout the whole city, you know Vietnamese people are bad and you shouldn't employ them cuz they do this stuff or whatever, they steal clothes or whatever, its just that media sometimes entertain you and sometimes they give other people a bad reputation.*"

4.6 In Conclusion

The maturity and articulateness of these youth displayed during the course of our discussion has provided me with a wealth of information. The findings of this research reveal a lot about the lives of these youth and the community in which they were raised. They tell us about what influences them most, and reveal many of the forces acting in both their home and school life. Much of this information is fascinating to me, and within the larger context of the Vietnamese-Canadian community and the City of Vancouver, I can see room for many changes or improvements. Again, in other ways I look out and see teenagers, and I understand what a difficult time it is for them, and know that we cannot change the process of growing up and only time will take these youth to new places and bring them new experiences.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

I have drawn on integration literature, reviewed the best practice guidelines and core values in the process of immigrant and refugee settlement services, and heard the voice of a group of ethnic-minority youth in the City. It is from this research and from my own experiences that I have come up with recommendations addressed to the multiple stakeholders acting in the lives of immigrant and newcomer youth in Vancouver. They address major issues faced by youth, such as mental health, self confidence and ethnic identity as well as issues pertaining to employment and schooling. Areas affecting both parents and children such as the North versus South divide, and traditions of the past versus what is truly Canadian are also addressed.

5.0 Recommendations and Conclusions
For settlement service organizations working with the Vietnamese community and for the Vietnamese community itself, in particular the youth:

1. Youth Participation and Leadership- hearing the voice of youth
The British Columbia Ministry of Health, in an action paper on the health and wellbeing of children and youth in British Columbia, found that feeling empowered is the number one issue among youth in discussion of their mental health. Youth need to be heard by adults and to have the opportunity to participate fully in all decisions that affect their lives (BC Ministry of Health, 1996).

Sharing power with youth in place of holding power over youth, listening instead of talking and being the facilitator rather than the expert acknowledge a belief that youth are experts in their own lives and have a right to make decisions. Sharing power involves providing services and programs that recognize that right of youth to participate. At home it means parents showing respect to their children as they transfer power from adult to child. At school it may mean allowing youth to assess their past achievements, goals and strategies for the future, making them more responsible for their own results. Sharing power is about respect for the experiences of adults and youth, and recognition of the legitimacy of both. This form of empowerment is a major step on the road to increased self-esteem and self-identity for youth (BC Ministry of Health, 1996).

Several issues that arose during the course of my research with these youth, such as the existence of a social ladder, peer opinion about various activities and the need for inclusion, and an environment conducive to participation, all relate to issues of mental health, in particular self-confidence. Giving youth a voice in their community is one way to strengthen both their self-identity and ethnic identity.

- **Formation of a youth (leadership) committee to help in the establishment of a strong youth voice in the Vietnamese community**. This committee could serve to organize events for youth as well as for the general Vietnamese community, in addition to networking with other youth groups in the city. Taking a further advocacy role, this group could be instrumental in fighting some of the rumors and stereotypes about Vietnamese youth found among the general population as well as contributing a youth voice on community issues.

- **Creation of a monthly column in one of the Vietnamese newspapers or magazines in circulation in the lower mainland**. This would allow youth to celebrate their achievements and voice their opinions on community issues.

- **Allotting time for a youth report on the Lac Viet Radio Show** to provide community updates or announcements by youth for other youth and for the community at large.

2. Greater Youth Focused Opportunities in the Vietnamese Community

All study participants felt that there were not enough programs geared towards youth in the Vietnamese community. Suggestions from the youth included sports leagues, and Tet celebrations for youth, or other heritage activities. In mainstream society several youth commented on a lack of late night opportunities. When looking at opportunities available to Latin American youth through the Britannia Centre, opportunities for Chinese youth through S.U.C.C.E.S.S, or for Aboriginal youth through the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), granted the population sizes may differ, it would follow that more programs should be available to these youth. Other important issues to consider when program planning are transportation and safety (in particular for late night activities).

- **Increased programming for Vietnamese youth through the BYRC (continued)**, **local community centres or neighbourhood houses**. Combining the request for late night activities with programming in the Vietnamese community may be a way to draw out more youth. Approach other community organizations to find out about the availability of sports facilities, coaching opportunities and perhaps an opportunity to create a new sports league.

3. Youth Activity Survey

The UNYA developed the Aboriginal Youth First Sports & Recreation Survey, hiring and training nine Native youth to conduct a survey, in order to identify the sports and recreation needs of Native youth in East Vancouver. The resulting information was then used for programming sport and recreation activities and promoting other opportunities for Native youth (Urban Native Youth Association, 2004).

- **Carrying out a survey of Vietnamese youth in order to determine what direction to take with future programming initiatives**. This survey could be done in a similar manner, hiring minimal staff, or using existing staff or community volunteers to train a group of youth to conduct the research among Vietnamese Canadian youth in Vancouver (or the GVRD).

4. Economic disparity: Community scholarship funds

Cost inhibits the ability of youth to participate in activities both within the Vietnamese community and mainstream society. Discussions revealed that youth are often discouraged from joining a team or club due to high yearly fees or other associated costs.

- **The establishment of a community scholarship to be built up over time, enhancing the future of youth in this community.** Having an established community organization administer the scholarship fund, and accept applications from youth for scholarships based on community participation and financial need.

5. Increasing youth employability

For youth in general finding employment is always difficult. There is the 'need experience to get a job, need a job to get experience' predicament. During the focus

group, youth reported obstacles such as stereotypes, racist managers resulting in selective hiring processes, as well as general perceptions of the Vietnamese community negatively affecting their employability. The literature shows that immigrant youth are less likely to have the coping mechanisms used by middle class youth, such as self-employment or contract work, available to them. They must rely on government agencies to help prepare them for the job market. As well in many newcomer families, parents are unfamiliar with the Canadian occupational situation and unable to help their children in choosing an occupation or serving as a role model.

Mentors, coming from both the Vietnamese community and mainstream, can act as role models for these youth, and provide them with needed experience for their resumes. A program such as this could be initiated through the Broadway Youth Resource Centre or perhaps in conjunction with similar programs happening in the Vancouver school system.

- **Implementing a mentorship program aimed at Vietnamese-Canadian youth with partnerships in the wider Vancouver community** is an ideal way to build trust among employers and provide support and a sense of security among youth. Mentors can act as role models for these youth, and provide them with needed experience for their resumes.

6. Addressing the generational divide

From both the focus group and asset-mapping workshop, it is evident that there is not yet a full understanding between parents and children as to how best to deal with this generation gap, and how to balance the old world with the new one. Parents and children both need to learn to adapt to one another's past, present and future, understanding the cultural traditions brought over by parents from Vietnam and balancing them with new traditions learned by children in Canada. According to the literature, being able to individually mediate the home versus school or parent versus peer conflict is essential to the mental health of youth.

The politics of North Vietnam versus South Vietnam is a major issue in Vietnamese communities across Canada, creating divisions across community organizations as well

as among individuals. Parents, born and raised in Vietnam, in many cases, have a strong ethnic identity in addition to a strong national, regional and political identity. Today's youth may have only an ethno-cultural identity, perhaps a regional identity, but little if any political identity with what was the anti-communist South or communist North. What today's youth do see is a major influence coming from their parents and affecting their ability to fully participate in the activities of the Vietnamese community. While it is unlikely that this will be resolved amongst this older generation, these adults need to be aware of the effect this has had and continues to have on the younger generation. As one youth stated, it is simply not an issue to raise in a family.

- **An increase in intergenerational programming within the Vietnamese community**, **to allow for greater transparency in the lives of youth and their parents**. This type of programming could incorporate many of the techniques outlined under the 'Focus on Parents and Youth' and 'Intergenerational Programming' best practices in settlement services highlighted in section 3.1.1. Ideas such as parent-adolescent skill building workshops or discussing issues affecting the family in several individual sessions and bringing together parents and children in a final session to discuss the issues may help mitigate many intergenerational issues.

- **Creation of a dialogue on intergenerational issues on Lac Viet Radio**. Radio appears to be a good way to access this community, and broadcasting done by the Lac Viet Radio seems to be well known to many community members, so using this medium to discuss intergenerational issues seems ideal. Topics which could be role played and discussed include: politics of North versus South, traditional Vietnamese gender roles versus traditional North American roles and the resulting affects on today's youth. This may allow adults to realize that this is their issue and not something they should pass on to future generations.

7. Community Projects

The Vietnamese community across Canada has received a lot of press in previous months, commemorating 25 years of the 'Boat People' in Canada. While the Vietnamese have established themselves as a thriving ethnic community in

Vancouver, they do not have a community centre or a place they call home. Many would attribute this not only to being 25 years young, but to the many political, regional and economic divisions within this community. While some Vancouver residents may know a lot about this community through friends, acquaintances or through the media, the history of this community has not yet been told.

- **The creation of a youth initiated Vietnamese history project, telling the stories of this community, beginning with the lives of the earliest immigrants and continuing on to tell the story of the established community it has become.** This would allow members of the community of various ages and backgrounds to work together to share their stories. With divisions in the community mainly among the first generation, making this a youth initiated project could perhaps bring many people together through the younger generation. Display of this project to the residents of Vancouver would serve not only to educate the wider population but hopefully to eliminate many of the stereotypes tied to this community.

For the Vancouver School Board (VSB):

1. Multicultural Liaison Workers

Known as the 'cultural resource staff' of the VSB, these people are professionally trained and experienced in issues of cultural integration and cross-cultural communication. They serve the needs of students, families and school staff, breaking down linguistic and cultural barriers and allowing the needs of each individual to be understood. Multicultural liaison workers in the school system, provide service in 8 languages (including Vietnamese) (Vancouver School Board,2004).

The findings of this report indicate that many youth are unaware of who their multicultural worker is. For those that are familiar with their multicultural worker they have had a difficult time contacting them, and due to their limited availability youth are left without someone to talk to when problems arise.

With more than 1 in 4 youth (28%) in Vancouver born outside of Canada today, the schools are overloaded with ESL students and the need for students and parents to understand the school system and its benefits is ever increasing. Likewise the need for

the school system, its staff and administration to understand these youth and their families is equally important. In the Vietnamese community alone, Montani reported a total of 3,066 children and youth from Vietnamese speaking families enrolled in the Vancouver school system (Montani, 2000). Are 4 Vietnamese speaking multicultural liaison workers enough to serve this population?

- **The importance of this position needs to be stressed to the Vancouver School Board**. In addition, the existence of this position needs to be advertised to students, parents, and all school staff, and contact information provided.
- **As there is such a great need for cultural resource staff in the school, a similar volunteer position to assist the multicultural liaison workers on some level should be introduced**. Community volunteers could help ease the burden of these workers being spread so thin.
- **The creation of a high school student network of trained peer 'multicultural workers'** available to younger students in dealing with lighter issues could also prove helpful to both elementary and junior high school students and classroom teachers.

2. Addressing the challenges of visible minority and newcomer youth
From a review of the relevant literature and from the focus group discussions and mapping workshop it appears that there are barriers faced by newcomer youth and visible minority students in the Canadian school system that do not seem to affect Anglo-European Canadian born students. Discriminatory policies embedded in the school system, teacher attitudes, and organizational structure all act as barriers for these students. The result is manifested as poor achievement or higher rates of chronic truancy among visible minority students. Seen in the literature and correlated by research participants, teachers are frequently seen as part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. With a highly diverse student body, representing a wealth of needs, teachers must have a greater understanding of students and their needs in order for both parties to be successful in the classroom.

- **The hiring board must make every effort to hire teachers who reflect the makeup of the student body**. Whether this is the case or not, all teachers and school staff need to be made better aware of the diverse needs of their students.

Diversity training should be provided for all staff on a regular basis, with updates reflecting the changing student population. Understanding student's needs is not something that can be left to the multicultural liaison worker, it is something which all staff must take responsibility for.

- **Incorporating a curriculum that is both racially and culturally sensitive as well as diverse**. Ensuring the use of a curriculum in all subjects that students, both Canadian born and newcomer can relate to. A curriculum should allow for diverse learning for all students as well as for the teacher.

3. Educating the student body

When students experience discrimination at school, or are taunted by other students as a result of having participated in an event in their own ethnic community it indicates a lack of tolerance among today's youth. When new students group together speaking only with others from their country of origin, or are grouped together as 'ESL students', their ability to improve their English, to meet new people and to begin the road to integration is severely limited. When other students do not make the effort to draw in the new students, this may be indicative of a lack of acceptance on their part. To foster learning for everyone, both sides need to put in the effort.

- **Continued cross-cultural education and anti-racism training for youth** is essential given the changing makeup of our cities and our classrooms.
- **Encouraging partnerships**, **buddy systems or small groups combining newcomers and Canadian born students** for a variety of classroom and school related activities.
- **Ensuring that ESL students are not segregated from other students for the majority of activities** but rather are incorporated with the homeroom class as much as possible.

For the City of Vancouver:

1. Youth City Tours

With the creation of the Civic Youth Strategy in 1995, under the Social Planning Department of the City of Vancouver, the Youth Outreach Team have the task of engaging youth to share their expertise with City staff. Together they are working

towards the goal of an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable city, one that cherishes, nurtures, welcomes and celebrates people from all backgrounds and all ages. Building a strong foundation for youth involvement now, means a legacy of youth involvement later (Civic Youth Strategy, 2004).

I believe that true involvement can only come with an understanding of one's city and surroundings, an understanding that is fundamental to the lives of youth, and highly underestimated by many. Several youth reported never having been West of Main Street and never having explored large sections of this city. Youth were often discouraged from participation by unfamiliarity with the event location.

There were sentiments that these youth are not good enough to live up to the *"wealthy"* standards of those living on the West side of Vancouver. Seeing and understanding the city and its residents also plays an essential role in the development of bias and stereotypes at this age. With only rumors about what is happening on the other side of the city, these youth are forced to come up with their own notions, as are youth on the West side of Vancouver.

- **Youth focused City tours organized by the City of Vancouver** (perhaps in partnership with the VSB) to foster interest, understanding and involvement in our city and region.

Providing youth with access to activities that promote strong mental health and help build a sound ethnic identity can lead to increased resiliency among youth. These recommendations have been designed to *empower* youth through strong leadership and a community voice. They set out to *involve* youth, their parents and the entire community, strengthening ties and bridging the past and the future. They attempt to *build* trust and support among the Vietnamese community and the wider society fostering community development at home, school, work and play.

5.1 Concluding remarks:

While there were many anticipated limitations to my study, such as reluctance to reveal information in front of others or difficulty in addressing tough issues, these youth were exemplary in the way they handled themselves. They openly discussed issues amongst

themselves, and revealed their insights and opinions to each other, and to the moderator. Multiple methods of research allowed all youth to express themselves. Correlating their insights with the relevant literature eased fears of an inability to generalize information. Overall I feel the ideas are fairly representative of a generation of youth despite the small sample size.

These recommendations represent a review of the relevant literature on youth integration as well as the voice of youth in the Vietnamese community. They address many of the general needs outlined by previous community studies, such as family issues, employment, health, language and financial issues. In addition they raise and address other youth specific issues. Representing the next generation, it is my hope that some or all of these recommendations can be implemented bringing about the creation of a stronger, more united Vietnamese-Canadian community here in Vancouver.

With the ever-changing makeup of our Canadian cities, studies such as this one will one-day become common practice. When planners, the general public and community institutions recognize the importance and need for this type of work, as well as the active role they must play in integration, only then will newcomers and immigrants truly be integrated into the fabric of our cities.

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Focus Group Questionnaire   ***June 10ᵗʰ, 2004***

Name _____
        First   **Last**

Age_____   **Gender M   F**

Where were you born? *(Please circle one)*

Canada   **Vietnam**   **Other _____**

If you were born outside of Canada, how long have you been living in Canada for? _____

Language spoken most often at home _____

Email address *(if you'd like a summary of today's discussion sent to you before the asset-mapping workshop):*
_____
(I'll also make copies available at the BYRC)

Email address (if you'd like a summary of today's focus group sent to you before the asset-mapping workshop):_____
(I will also make copies available at the BYRC)

Focus Group Interview Guide.

Opening Questions:
- Please tell us your name, how long you've been coming to the Broadway Youth Resource Centre and one thing you are looking forward to doing this summer once school is finished!

I'm going to start by reading you a very academic, textbook definition of integration, and then we'll get into the down to earth stuff. Integration has been defined as a, "gradual process by which new residents become active participants in the economic, social, civic, cultural and spiritual affairs of a new homeland." Basically it is a long-term process where each person in their own way participate in the life of their new country. So I am interested in hearing more about what YOU think about participation and its role in integration.

Introductory and Transition Questions:
Definitions-active participation
- The word participation can mean a lot of different things in different situations. *For example you can participate in a school play (personal example..JWC musicals) or in a sports tournament right?*
But when we talk about life or society, and things like social activities like going out with friends or to an organized dance etc, cultural activities like Tet celebrations, a Chinese New Year parade, or playing the bagpipes at a Scottish wedding, politics and voting, jobs or other things..then what does the term 'participation' (in society) mean to you?

- How do you participate in society, by this I mean what kinds of things do you do that make you feel like you are an '(active) participant'/participating?
 Personal examples: school, inter-mural soccer, voters forum, youth week celebrations, part-time job, community festivals, volunteer work, holiday festivals/meals.
    - What (other) kinds of activities, events, organizations or other things come to mind when we talk about participation?
    - In what way do you feel like you participate in the Vietnamese community here in Vancouver? How about in mainstream society?
Personal examples: holiday services, community speakers, volunteering, plain awareness of events in the community, ex. school, work, volunteering, events etc.
    - Is participation important to you?
Yes brings me in contact w/ so many different people and exposes me to a lot of different ideas….

Your role and the role of both 'Vietnam' and 'Canada'

- What part does 'Vietnam' play in your life? I mean what is its significance in your life? What about Vietnamese culture? 'Canada'? Canadian culture?
- What part does family play in your life?
    - What is your role/job within the family?
    - (How is your role within your family shaped by you as a male or as a female?)

Key Questions:
Opportunities and Constraints for Participation- Why do you do it? Or why don't you?

- What encourages you or makes you want to participate?
    - What motivates you to participate?
    - Are there benefits or positive effects to participation, if so what are they?
    - Is participation empowering?

Examples: having your friends or family also involved, some type of reward, just a good feeling etc.

- What are the opportunities for participation in your own ethnic community? How about in mainstream society?
    - How do these opportunities for participation differ?

Examples: different influences, different people, personal feelings, are you expected to take part in your own ethnic community in some way?

- What discourages you from participation?
    - What prevents or keeps you from participating?
    - Are there negative effects to participation?

Personal example: Anti-Racism conference involvement, nb. Cause but one of two people who were not members of a visible minority, open to all but....

- What barriers/constraints do you see toward participation in your own ethnic community? In mainstream society? (Is there something that makes you avoid certain types of participation?)
    - What types of participation do these effect?
    - Do you have to be a certain age, speak a certain language or know the right people to participate?

Other examples: wrong crowd

Barriers:
In the school system:

- What have been your experiences as a visible minority or as a newcomer in the school system?
    - What is celebratory or positive about this?

- What do you think needs to change in order for you to feel more at home or participate more at school? /Are there things that need to change?

Employment
- Are any of you working at the moment? (please raise your hands)
    - How easy do you think it is/or has been to find work in Vancouver?
    - Are there any barriers for you to access employment?

Perception of your community by others.
- Many people (media, community service providers, general community, society etc) have a negative perception of youth in the Vietnamese community as being 'high-risk' or 'at-risk'. What effect (if any?) do these views have on you and on your ability to participate?
    - On your desire to participate?
    - To better integrate into society?

Ending Questions
- Thinking about what we talked about today (GIVE A BRIEF SUMMARY-2 min max), what do you think is most important?

CF Version 2   **June 8th, 2004**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ABCD: ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

There are two ways to look at a community. One way is to focus on the needs, on what's missing and the problems of a community, i.e. what's negative. The second is to focus on the capacities and assets of a community, i.e. what's positive.

The first way often relies on outsiders to provide services to the community, and takes away from the local neighbour to neighbour support system. The second way builds communities 'from the inside out', and the individuals, associations and institutions of a community are the focus.

> **Assets are what we want to keep, build upon and sustain for future generations.**
> Assets can be physical things like a building, a local swimming pool or a 150-year-old tree in the town square; assets can also be intangible, like the work that volunteer groups do to beautify the main street or raise funds for the food bank.

WHAT IS ASSET BASED MAPPING?

Asset based mapping is a way of graphically displaying the qualities and resources of an individual group or community through the creation of a map.

WHY ASSET MAPPING? (according to EYA and their Youth Community Asset Mapping Process)

- It tells the **everyday stories** ⟹ records local stories, ex. how youth see their community
- It's an **engagement tool** ⟹ provides an opportunity where youth from different backgrounds with different knowledge and skills feel comfortable participating
- It's **fun and creative** ⟹ allows for different ways of expressing yourself

- It records a **sense of place** ⟹ people gain a better sense of where they live
- It helps create a **healthy community** ⟹ it looks at assets not problems and leads to positive growth
- It's an **educational tool** ⟹ it allows the experts to see what is going on at the community level
- It's a **social change tool** ⟹ it provides a community with a resource to use proactively

MAPPING

"It is important to repeat over and over that there is no "good" mapping or "bad" mapping. Leave the need for perfection to the scientists; what you are being encouraged to do is honestly describe what you already know about where you live in a manner that adds momentum to positive forces of change." (Doug Aberley, 1993)

LINKS TO FOLLOW:

Environmental Youth Alliance
www.eya.ca

Common Ground Community Mapping Project
http://www3.telus.net/cground/index.html

Community Youth Mapping
http://www.communityyouthmapping.org

try it yourself…
Mapping Community Assets Workbook
http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/com_mapping.pdf

HURRY ERS? RACISM General

Fostering Community Participation

- Parents not letting
- Fear - what if we are perceived as "bad kids"

Curricula Vitae! (Screen related)

NOTION

TOO FAR!
- no cars
- ... takes too long

Terra Ave Model

Length of time.

$ PRESS

COST

Broadway Ave

West 41st Ave

LIFESTYLE

Cost $$$

BARRIERS IN THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY

Fostering Community Participation

PARENTS
THEIR
OPINIONS

THE ACTUAL ACTIVITY

Vietnam

West 4th Ave

Broadway Ave

COST

RACISM

INFLUENCES
drugs, alcohol,
smoking

West 41st Ave

FRIENDS
THEIR
OPINIONS

SOCIAL
LADDER

OTHER
PRE I
THEIR OPINIONS

Our parents are from Vietnam,
(they had a very different
childhood & teenage life). Therefore
our parents' beliefs & opinions are
totally different from how they deal
with our teens may NOT let us to try new things, etc.
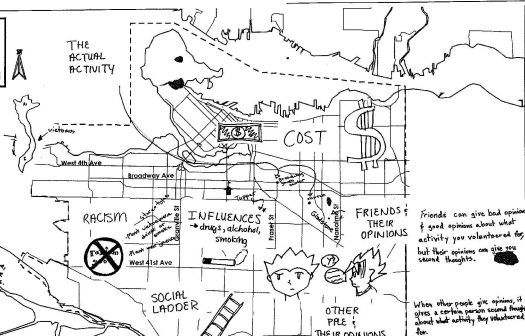
Friends can give bad opinions
& good opinions about what
activity you volunteered for,
but their opinions can give you
second thoughts.

When other people give opinions, it
gives a certain person second thoughts
about what activity they volunteered
for.
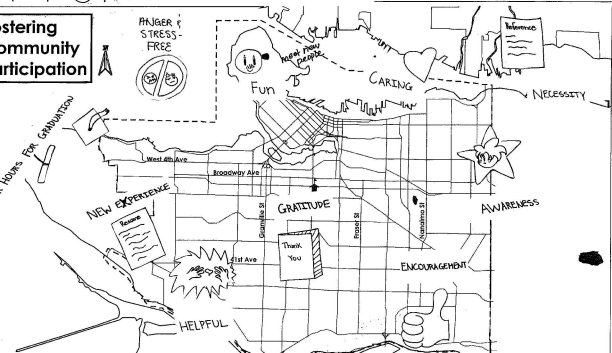
Fostering Community Participation

Widen view of one's side in belief of undervalued cultures...

Knowledge about... ideas of own Viet benefits of... clubs...

Learn new things

Outdoor activities Clubs (YPRC)

Gain exp. for future opportunities

Connect the gap barrier (now & later)

Definite stronger morals for youth.

Allow some self discovery!

Meet new people

Make new friends

EXPLORE THE UNKNOWN!

Help most people not just ourselves

Give/Lend out a hand

Meet more people

Help the elderly voting

VIEWS OF SOCIETIES

Vietnamese

Enlarge & increase people

To know our ORIGINS

West First Ave

Woodland Ave

Grandview Ave

Worthing St

West First Ave

DEPICT THE ALREADY KNOWN!

To investigate more THINGS

To speak our OWN LANGUAGE in

To meet new FRIENDS

Perhaps even pursue a career in...