

TAPESTRY OF RESILIENT LIVES :
SOCIO-CULTURAL EXPLORATIONS OF TEN VIETNAMESE
INNER-CITY YOUTHS

by

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ABSTRACT

Traditional psychological research on resilience has focused on individual traits and abilities and minimized the role of cultural and socio-political contexts in its analyses. In this tapestry, I use a narrative framework to learn about ten Vietnamese refugee youths, who have received university scholarships to attend university, but whose life chances would otherwise be considered at high risk of failure because of their race, ethnic, and income status. I also interviewed their parents. Their narratives are discussed in the light of historical, cultural and social contexts in which they live and learn. In reporting the students' life stories, I use the concepts of "dance of life" that takes place within a context of shared human stories.

The parents' endurance, struggles, and hopes accumulated over generations, become a story of collective resiliency. This story provides the informative thread for a collaborative weaving of the students' "dance of life" in which the children's individual responsibility for their academic achievements. For the refugees academic resilience is a pervasive individual and collective experience, rooted in the distortions of social relations and the disruptions of community life that are the product of an oppressive society. Resiliency becomes the common "process" of participation open to all individuals, and conjoins deep personal meaning and shared common purpose. Thus, academic achievement is seen by the refugees as an effective instrument of empowerment and liberation for the entire family, community, and the hope for the future.

The self as narrated by these students orchestrates a dance between and among themselves within a family, a community, and across generations. The students' achievement is motivated by a debt of love and gratitude to those members of the family

achievement is motivated by a debt of love and gratitude to those members of the family and the community to which they belong. Students stated that through their own efforts and the "right attitudes" they could reach their goals in school and break down the barriers of discrimination. They reported growing closer and more emotionally dependent on their parents over time. They struggled more with how to have and maintain satisfying peer relationships without becoming independent from their parents.

This study opens a door to the discussion of socio-cultural perspectives that may partially explain previously reported outcomes of high achievement among Vietnamese refugee youths, despite their humble origins and their parents' low level of income and education

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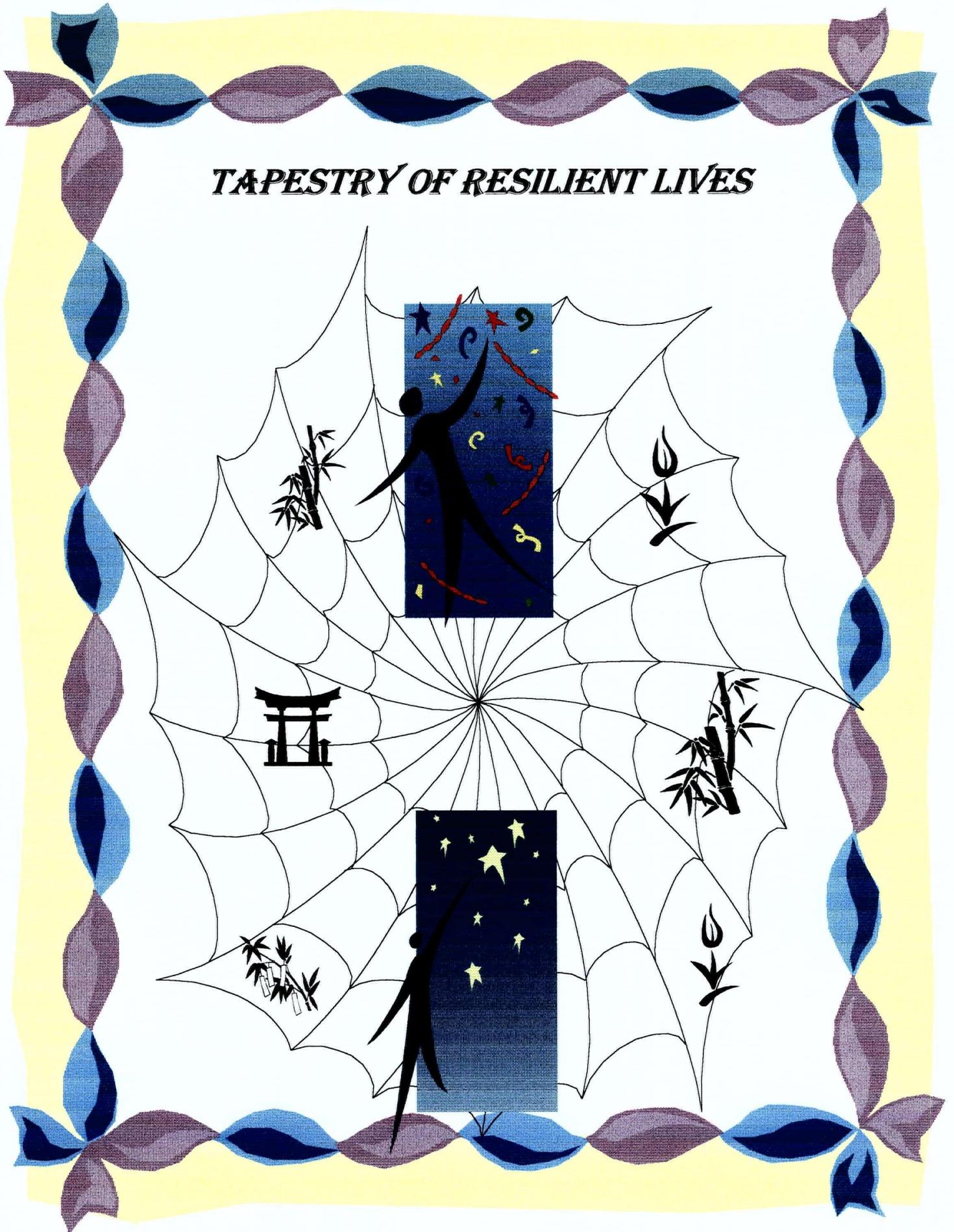
The light of my life, my three sons, Mike, Andrew, and Eric give me incentive to live and to work hard. They guide my educational focus, provide me with a purpose in life, and are the pillar of my strength. Their love, encouragement, and respect have always been sources for my inspiration. Each contributed in his own way. I wove their insights throughout this tapestry and have profited deeply from their contributions.

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TAPESTRY OF RESILIENT LIVES



TAPESTRY OF RESILIENT LIVES

Tapestry of Narratives in the Making

This thesis proposes a different way of looking at academic resiliency. I am placing the data gleaned from field work in a story-telling framework. The interview data are used as the basis for recovering elements in the academic development of ten refugee Vietnamese youths who have received scholarships to go to university, but whose life chances would otherwise be considered at high risk of failure because of their race, ethnicity, and income status. For more than two years, I followed these students. I interviewed them soon after they graduated from high school and received their scholarships (1997). Recently, in late 1999, I re-interviewed them when they were in their third year at university. I also interviewed their parents and Vietnamese community representatives in British Columbia. I was intrigued by both a growing literature (Caplan et al., 1991; Caplan et al., 1992) that focuses on the relative academic resiliency of Vietnamese refugee children after their arrival in North America and also by the findings from the research of my own master's thesis, entitled, "Voices of the Silent Shadows: A Feminist Perspective on Refugee Women," which explored the experiences of ten Vietnamese women living in a community in the Maritime provinces of Canada. It focussed on how their experiences at home, at work, and in the community were entangled, through relations of gender, race, and class. Despite adversities, these women

demonstrated great personal courage and strength. A major source of compensation for these Vietnamese women was that, despite the hardships and suffering they had personally endured, their children were receiving education and excelling scholastically. According to these women, the major reasons for the children's academic success were the extensive personal sacrifices parents made.

My present study is about Vietnamese people whose lives were devastated by war, escape, and even the refugee experience itself, but who nevertheless found inner strength to struggle on and create new lives for their children in a new cultural and political environment. Writing this dissertation as a narrative allows my identity, my intimate engagement in the life of the community, to take precedence over an academic research standpoint. My personal grounding has been restored in this contact. This research has enabled me to connect fragments of my self, to bring together object and subject, myself and others with whom I shared a history. I was a subject in the community speaking with, and to, other subjects with mutual pleasure and exchange with my comrades who found power and beauty in the art of story-telling. Neither myself nor my narratives can, therefore, have a single strand. I stand at the intersection of too many social and cultural forces and, in any case, have multiple voices within me. I am forever on my way.

In purpose and design, this thesis is about putting the refugees at the centre of our thinking. Now again I place Vietnamese refugees at the centre of my work, my thinking, and my interpretive flow, being careful not to camouflage either our joint purpose or our shared content. I write from the core of their experiences as refugees without apologizing for it. I met with my own people with the sense of shared history, of common anguish,

and of our common space. I am writing about their struggles. I want to honor them not because they suffer but because they continue to resist.

I do not approach my field work with the “objectivity” that I learned was a necessary component of academic discourse. I entered the community as a member of the community returning home, rather than as a visiting scholar coming to exploit the resources of the community for my academic ends. Patriarchal tradition had forced me to leave that community. I had traipsed into an academic landscape where I was an “outsider within” (Collins, 1991). My identity there was affirmed as “other.” My return ‘home’ to do my research was, on one level, a gesture of self-recovery; I was returning to self. At ‘home’ I could experience myself as autonomous and connected to the life of the community in a deeply emotional and spiritual way. I was reconnected in mind to habits of being and a way of life I had forgotten. My intellectual work renewed my spirit. I had occupied a space outside, beyond the border, from a place outside the reach of my experience until I began this research. Drawing upon the narrative experiences to map out a way of seeing, their stories are exemplars of how to interpret from experiences, and direct our attention to a process of connection between ourselves as refugees across the many boundaries of difference. I found myself moved with this discovery. For me the crossroad is this space between borders. This space between borders is not a margin; on the contrary, it is our centre. This is where we as refugees are, in fact, located because we live in a patriarchal, racially segregated, and class-conscious system. Being marginalized in relationship with each other as well as with the dominant groups, we traipse back and forth everyday, sometimes several times a day between these cultures of our existence:

women's cultures, men's cultures, the children's cultures, the work cultures, the class cultures, the ethnic cultures, the dominant cultures. We are at crossroads: at work, at school, in community, with family. To successfully negotiate these crossroads we do not, in fact, see things in oppositions. We shift contexts, relate across differences, make adjustments, integrate, synthesize, move with the spirit of a particular place. The borderland becomes a powerful metaphor of physical locations and spiritual places. There are many borders in my conceptual framework. There are the actual physical borders marking the national boundaries between South and North Vietnam, as well as those between Vietnam land and this new land. I trace the historical patterns of migrations of these Vietnamese refugees back and forth across these borders. You will hear through their personal histories the linkage to the whole story, the craziness of borders invented, lands conquered. There are the cultural borders between the North and the South Vietnamese, and Anglo worlds, pitted in opposition by racism internalized, hierarchies codified, the refugees most despised, abandoned. There are ideological borders between the Northerners and Southerners.

After I came to Vancouver, I followed these refugees for almost four years. I listened to their complaints that most reporting about refugees is erroneous, misleading, and demeaning. In my thesis, I have used the real experiences of these refugees.

This is a story not of subjugation, but of survival, of work, of raising children, of hope, and of liberation. I hope that after you read this thesis, and the story I will share with you, that you will have some understanding of Vietnamese refugees. They did not escape for economic reasons, although economic questions are important factors in their

lives now. They are human beings who earnestly love life and value liberty. They are willing to face challenge and hardship. They are the heroes of the times. They love life, and they are not willing to surrender it in their attempts to reach their goals. Refugees are those who make history. Being the heroes of the time, people who make history, the refugees are also witnesses of this era. This period of history will be passed on to the following generations. By telling the refugees' stories and reporting their experiences, I hope to guide the next generations toward valuing liberty as much as the refugees who suffered did, contrary to the stereotypes portrayed by the media. The stories I share will show their success story proves that they are among the most courageous people in society. They continue to light the torch for liberty. It is important that those of us who have been fortunate to live our lives in freedom understand the traumas refugees endured in order to start a new life in a foreign land, comprehend the suffering of innocent civilians in the aftermath of the American War (a k a: Vietnam War), and appreciate the experiences of Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants who have come to North America, the terrifying ordeals that many of them have endured to reach freedom, and the character as well as the courage they bring here within their lives.

Vietnamese refugees left their country, not freely, but because they were persecuted, or feared being persecuted, for their political affiliations; had they not felt threatened, they would not have left. They yet aim to return to their homeland someday. This dream is what has kept them going. They are dismayed at highly exaggerated coverage by the popular press of Vietnamese youths gangs. The stories of these very students tell us that they dropped out often as a direct outcome of the failure of the

schools to provide a place and proper teaching for refugee students. Among my research participants, relatives, friends, and former neighbors, living all across the United States and Canada, I have seen many Vietnamese refugees successful both at work and pursuing education. In British Columbia, Vietnamese families and their children continue to struggle. Here the refugees have great difficulty finding employment, and there are often no governmental or community service support systems which focus on the needs of the refugees, Vietnamese youths, or the impact of discrimination on these people. Faced with these situations, some turned to welfare. The refugees came with no plans and in large numbers to a country that had made virtually no plans to receive them and to a province that has a long anti-Asian history. Although this thesis deals with academic resiliency, focusing on success, it also reveals a grief that is so deep that it speaks to all people, to a mourning for the suffering endured by the Vietnamese over centuries.

Through the dance of dialogues, the refugees told me about their families; they dreamed of their families and loved ones still at home, of their parents, brothers, and sisters still there. They described the brutality, savagery, and injustice under the communist regime in Vietnam and the hardship during the time in the jungles, crossing the ocean, and in refugee camps. Their souls flew back to them, thousands of miles distant, where the old village remained in their minds. At times, I hesitated to turn the page, reluctant to read the human tragedies unfolding in their stories.

This tapestry of narratives examines and reexamines processes of human questioning, responses to blank spaces in experience, resistance to meaninglessness. I want to stimulate a kind of silent conversation and as well stimulate dialogue among the

young who come from different cultures and different modes of life, dialogue among people who have come together undertaking shared tasks, protesting injustices, avoiding or overcoming dependencies or non-resiliency. The oppressed struggle in language to recover themselves, to reconcile, to reunite, to renew. Their words are not without meaning; they are an action, a resistance. They tell me their stories in silent voices, in an unnatural silence, in broken voices. The language of broken voices contains pain (hooks, 1994).

I explored the refugees' deepest hopes and fears and documented what they considered to be their successes and failures. I will convey the actual experiences of the people from their own point of view. I traced the connections of their childhood environments, their responses to traumatic events, and their ways of adjustment in their new lives. Their narratives emphasized the importance of family roles in fostering academic resiliency. Their testimonies spoke to the betrayal of freedom under the Communist rule, of corruption and the failure of that regime to fulfill basic human needs. They bring with them the stories of atrocities and of unimaginable horrors.

From these experiences, out of this history, I propose a way of thinking and of being which seeks to integrate oppositions, eliminate hierarchy, the either/or dualism of risk and resiliency. For me it is a necessity. As a former South Vietnamese, a mother, an academic, and a feminist, the reconciliation of opposing definitions is essential in order for me to live a whole life. This way of thinking which I propose is to be the crossroads of my self. Explaining the significance of this for myself as Vietnamese, and for my people, is a tactic of survival in sustaining the onslaughts of the Chinese, Japanese, the French, and

finally the Americans. This story is of the crossroads, a symbol of synthesis and survival, the model of the refugees' strategy for resistance and reclamation of themselves. They reenact the experiences of rituals of belonging, distinguishing a politicization of memory that characterizes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as once it was, a kind of heartless act, from the remembering that serves to illuminate and transform presence.

Here the refugees' going home is denied, so they can never turn back. They will have to stand and claim their space, in the darkness of the ghettos. In that space they are transformed, individually, collectively, as they make radical creative space which affirms and sustains their subjectivity, which gives them new locations from which to articulate their sense of the world. It is a gesture of both fulfillment and promise. Flashbacks into the refugees' memories of the old regime with its struggles and triumphs and pain from the journeys and contradictions in the new country are woven into a series of still lifes. Space can tell stories and unfold stories. In this space they will have to make a new culture with their own lumber, their own bricks and mortar, and their own resistant architectures. That space is also a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing, nostalgia longing for things.

The purpose and design of this research is also about healing, and beauty, and balance. We are rebuilding a tapestry, making possible the potential for handing on a collective refugee vision, weaving corroborative threads, allowing each other the luxury of a self-consciously created community in which to sift through our ideas, tell our stories, read our poems, dance our songs, play out the fantasies of our imagination. We sing old songs, we tell old stories whose spirituals renewed spirits and made the journey sweet,

urging us to remember the old testimony, to keep the faith, to go forward with hope, to gain a vision of the future and to go forward in love. In the context of the pressures of racism and poverty, in the context of the pressures toward assimilation, this ritual of belonging is an act of connection, of affirmation, and of self-esteem. In this context, to connect is to resist.

In this space the refugees are weaving a web of life, a space of resistance. This site of resistance is continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is their critical response to domination. The idea of a web of life, of creating the conditions for life, of improving the quality of daily life, permeates many of the stories told by the refugees. In all these stories, an imaginative play draws from refugees' everyday lives, of motion and sound, of cultural integrity and beauty and self-esteem, which swells in a day's work, a night's pain, an afternoon's sorrow. It is evidence of another way of knowing, of resistance re-visioned, of the oppressed gathering on their own ground. At the center of this ground is their connection to their children, sustained by a broad, rigorous, tough, and unconditioned love for their children, for their safety, their dignity, their wholeness. These ideas about love and healing, balance and connection, about life and ritual inform this work of the refugees. This is a strategy for refugee coalition, for a politics of their own.

Resiliency means different things to different generations. Resiliency for the parents is the sacrifice and the struggle of the previous generations in order for their children to survive and have a future. The parents' endurance, accumulated over generations, becomes a story of collective resistance that formed their individual children's responsibility in their dance of life. The refugee parents, using their limited resources and

the courage and skills they had available to them, in this juggling, have carved a wedge of resiliency, and woven a crucial understanding of these Vietnamese refugee parents' labors as a force for social change. Their will to nurture, and its attendant labors for their children's acculturation, education, and ethnic, race, and historical pride, became a form of resiliency, in their web of life – a “dance of life” of their children's academic resiliency, a complex interweaving of person and situation, of individual and collective spirits over many generations, of family and community, and of instrumental action and circumstances. Here we see the ways in which the children, their parents, generational spirits, and extended family and community have to remain connected. There is, too, a collective strategy in how the stories were put together.

The self as narrated by these Vietnamese students orchestrated a dance between and among themselves within a family, a community, across generations. The themes included the war, the escape, race, food, spirit, birth, and the refugee camps, all of these providing the informative thread of a collaborative weaving. For a child whose parents had to risk their lives, had to suffer hunger, danger, escape, and imprisonment due to many failed escapes, deprivation related to poverty, the obligation to honor parents and pay them back for their suffering is truly overwhelming. For the students in this study who are in their teen-age years it appeared that they did not seek out friends, that their same-sex siblings are their closest friends. Most of them told me their siblings are their best friends, those with whom they could share their secrets and tell everything. They sought guidance and mentoring from their older siblings and they were there for their younger siblings. You will hear the pride of Vietnam's long rich history and ethnic identity, the sense of

obligation and responsibility to family, community, and nation, which gives motivation, energy, and inspiration to these students to work hard in school in order to repay the obligations of love and sacrifice. Their academic achievement is motivated by a debt of love and gratitude to those members of the family and community to which they belong.

I want to help us think in ways that move beyond schooling to the larger domain of education, where there are and must be all kinds of openings to possibility. To encourage this thinking, I have tapped certain human stories, most particularly those that speak of breaking through. In Paulo Freire's sense of the "oppressed" (1973), persons so disabled by their race and class that they can scarcely chart their paths through the world have to be aroused to a consciousness of how their reality is constructed and have to be challenged to "name" their lived worlds and, through the naming, to transform those worlds (p. 78). Freire also speaks of individuals' incompleteness, "from which they move out in constant search - a search which can only be carried out in communication with others." He finds that "hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one's arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait" (p. 80). That is, dialogue cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness. People trying to be more fully human must not only engage in critical thinking but must be able to imagine something coming of their hopes for their silence to be overcome. Thus, academic resiliency may be a new way of decentering themselves, of breaking out of the confinements of oppression and self-regard into a space where they come face to face with others and call out, 'here we are.' But there are other categories as well: those containing children labeled 'at risk' or lacking

something needed by mainstream society which considers they are to be set aside if they cannot be used; they are to be made invisible.

When applied to academic resiliency, the vision to see things brings me in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable. There are the worn-down, crowded urban classrooms and the contrasting new spaces in the suburbs: this modern apartheid. In that space of the margins, that lived-in world is segregated and colonized both as community and as family.

There are teachers without a sense of agency, who impose inarticulateness on students who are seen as alien and whose voices the teachers prefer not to hear. Portraying them with test scores, management procedures, ethnic and racial percentages, and accountability measures screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons. It seems more equitable to many of those who take a general view to do their surveys and their measurements without consciousness of names and histories. However, as I see it, the challenge is to attend to particular children, unmeasurable and unique. The challenge is to refuse artificial separations of the school from the surrounding environment, to refuse the decontextualization that falsifies so much. As part of this refusal, we must take into account connections and continuities that cannot always be neatly defined (Greene, 1995).

To tap into resiliency is to become able to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, supposedly objectively and independently real. It is to see beyond and to carve out new orders in experience. Each person's reality must be understood to be an interpreted experience – and the mode of interpretation depends on his or her situation

and location in the world. One's lived experience of race, class, gender, and history is important in the formation of one's political identity, but one must be willing to examine personal experience and one's speaking voice in terms of the ideological and discursive complexity of its formation. Experience needs to be recognized as a site of ideological production and the mobilization of effect, which can be examined largely through its imbrication in our universal and local knowledge, desire, and body. As Joan Scott (1992) notes, "experience is a subject's history. Language is the site of history's enactment" (p. 34). When a person speaks, it is always from somewhere (Hall, 1991), but this process of meaning production needs to be interrogated in order to understand how one's own identity is constantly being produced through a play of difference linked to and reflected by shifting and conflicting discursive and ideological relations, formations, and articulations (Giroux, 1992; Scott, 1992).

This new concept of academic resiliency has to do with various kinds of searching in relation to learning and with unexpected discoveries. The silencing of the marginalized has still to be overcome in schools. The invisibility of too many students has to be broken through. It is resilient or recalcitrant to break the classifications of young people in their various lived situations. It takes courage, or it is resiliency, on the part of the students to perceive openings through which they can move. In many respects for Vietnamese refugees the academic achievement of their children is a matter of breaking through barriers - of expectation, of classification, and of predefinition.

Only a few people are managing to crack the codes, to uncover that in which they are embedded, to appropriate visions and perspectives legitimately theirs. Through their

academic defiance, their resistance or resiliency, the new concept of concern for the oppressed uncoiled a new and powerful political terminology that enabled the refugees and their children to analyze their location within the privileging hierarchy of society and to engage in an attempt to dislocate themselves from the existing cycles of social reproduction. This new concept of resiliency enables the world of the refugees to become visible, to inscribe self as text, to be engaged and understood by the refugees and researcher alike. Their efforts to achieve academically are patiently directed at creating counter-hegemonic sites of political struggles, radically alternative epistemological frameworks, and adversarial interpretations and cultural practices, as well as advocacy domains for disenfranchised groups. This new concept of academic resiliency is important for psychological researchers to revisit, to build upon, and to reinvent within the contextual specificity of today's sociopolitical context with its inequalities.

I will illuminate the voices of the long silent or unheard in this country, from the refugees and their children who are listening to learn something about their lives, about courage and patience, devotion, love, beauty, grief, strife, resourcefulness, failure, survival, and struggle. They weave a web of resistance, of academic resiliency, through their dance of life, towards the pursuit of freedom and critical understanding and a transformation of lived worlds. Multiple motivations move people into lifelong learning; some have to do with breaking through the limits of lived situations. Their stories, accumulated over weeks, and months, and even years, form a legacy of strength, of endurance, of resiliency, and of astonishing will.

Overview of the Dissertation: Chapter 1 is an introduction, which provides a synopsis

of the framework for the study – *TAPESTRY IN THE MAKING*. Chapter 2 illustrates the central themes and methods of research that structure psychological research on risk and resiliency.– *THE DANCE OF TRADITION*. Chapter 3 describes the methodologies that informed the study – *WEAVING THE TAPESTRY*. Chapter 4 narrates the parents' stories – *DANCING IN THE DARK*. Chapter 4 discusses the children's academic stories – *THE DANCE OF LIFE*. Chapter 6 is about communities and schools – *CHORUS DANCING*. Chapter 7 describes the children's relationships – *THE DANCE OF CONNECTION AND CINDERELLA'S STORY*. Chapter 8 is the conclusion of the study – *COMPLETING THE TAPESTRY*.

THE DANCE OF TRADITION: STUDIES OF RISK AND RESILIENCY

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I will illustrate the central themes and methods of research that structure psychological research on risk and resiliency. I emphasize the two most influential studies, Werner & Smith (1982), and Garmezy's Competence Project (1984) and the models they present for discussion. I caution, though, that those who work within this perspective have a tendency to essentialize cultural differences, and to ignore historical differences in general as well as certain cultural differences. Difference is understood as a form of signification removed from social and historical constraints. That is, there is a tendency to ignore difference as a social and historical construction that is constitutive of power to represent meanings.

Recent work in psychology has questioned the assumptions and practices of traditional research. This work also debates in opposition to the traditions in psychology, often identified by quantitative research methodologies and the experimental approach. My analysis focused on problems of academic resiliency development within a system of social relations that is aberrant, alienating, and dehumanizing. Dissatisfied with the current state of psychological theory and research on risk and resiliency, my perspective, my view, of the biases and limitations of standard research models, grew out of my efforts to understand the subjective experiences of the oppressed and traumatized

refugees. Traditionally, the motives, behaviors, and personal characteristics of oppressed and marginalized people are studied, analyzed, and interpreted from the position of a presumably neutral, external white western observer. Their own voices are rarely heard. The particularities of their lives and circumstances are not examined, but they are pathologized and objectified. Thus, characterizations and interpretations based on such an approach serve the interest of the dominant class. Oriented toward possibilities of an emancipatory pedagogy, adding to the “scientific” framework a historical, individualistic, and universalistic viewpoint and re-embedding themes within the actual historical and socio-political context of the refugee people, I began at the central place of the needs, aims, and experiences of the oppressed. More adequate resolutions to problems of identity development require efforts directed to restoring stable and trusting social relations and the strengthening of the community’s capacity for collective action.

This does not mean I am uninterested in theories, methods and modern empirical methods – these are precisely what I want to hear. But dialogue about these theories is not an abstract, academic exercise. Rather it has to do with a broader and deeper meaning; that is, the refugees’ potential value for those resisting oppression through their academic resiliency and trying to transform the conditions of their lives and their families through academic achievement.

Critique is only the first step. In realizing Freire’s vision, I will be oriented toward possibilities, open to what can be, rather than constrained by what is. Freire develops a language of critique and a language of hope that work conjointly and dialectically and which have proven successful in helping generations of disenfranchised people to liberate themselves. I will conceptualize academic resiliency by re-embedding

it within the actual historical, social, and political concepts of the Vietnamese refugee people. Living among the Vietnamese refugee people, and as a former refugee myself, sharing their risks, entering their collective discourse of resistance, I realized that the traumas of war, violence, and oppression could not be fully understood by a theory of risk and resiliency that is rooted in the individual. According to Friere, in order for the oppressed to materialize their self-activity as a revolutionary force, they must form a collective consciousness of their own constitution or formation as a subaltern class, as well as an ethos of solidarity and interdependence. Hence, I argue, we must begin with recognition of academic resilience as an individual responsibility within a pervasive and collective spirit and experience, rooted in the distortions of social relations and the disruptions of community life that are the product of an oppressive society. Academic resiliency for the students in this study, like Friere's pedagogy of critical literacy, becomes the primary vehicle for the development of "critical consciousness" among the poor, leading to a process of exploration and creative effort that conjoins deep personal meaning and common purpose. Thus, academic achievement becomes that common "process" of participation open to all individuals. The problem of "critical consciousness" cannot be posed in abstraction from the significant historical contexts in which knowledge is produced, engaged, and appropriated.

According to Banks (1998) "researchers can play a significant role in educating students for citizenship in a diverse society. Their most important responsibility is to conduct research that empowers marginalized communities, and that incorporates the views, concepts, and visions of the communities they study (p.5)."

I present an alternative research model of academic resiliency that includes

mediation about the impact on individuals and communities of widespread, destructive, anti-human forces: economic exploitation, social injustices of race, political oppression, terror, violence, and war. These ideas are embedded in and elaborated through the detailed particulars of their lives and the impact of a history of violence, racism, and class oppression on their lives. Without ever letting go of the specific context of the refugees, I believe that the development of this alternative method of social and psychological research on academic resiliency is necessary if the field is to fulfill its promise of serving human needs, of providing tools with which people can transform their lives and rehumanize the world

Studies of Risk and Resiliency

Resilience is a construct that originated in the field of child and adolescent psychology, evolving as the antithesis of psychopathology (Masten, et al., 1990). The term refers to good adaptation despite stressful experiences encompassing resilient people who “overcome the odds” of such factors as poverty, parental psychopathology, pre-natal or prenatal complications, minority status, and low levels of parental education (Werner & Smith, 1982). Research on children’s initial “at risk” status and developmental outcomes relies on psychometric methods, structured interviews, and observations designed to identify particular traits and abilities. Individuals are then followed longitudinally over time using similar methods and similar instruments. Interest has grown in ways of characterizing the range and complexity of healthy or adaptive response to risk, as opposed to psychopathological behavior. A major factor contributing to this interest has been research dealing with children at risk due to a parent’s mental disorder, parental divorce, or similar family stress. These risk studies have had in

common the finding that significant numbers of children are resilient and manifest highly adaptive behavior (e.g., Garmezy, 1991; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1987). Consequently, investigators who have examined individuals at high risk have begun to characterize adaptation as resiliency (Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992; Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984). The underlying concept of resiliency is the belief that some children emerge from highly stressful conditions as competent, well-adapted individuals. Masten and colleagues (1988) defines resiliency to be an inherent human capacity to recover from adversity, to restore equilibrium of functioning. Others have added that this capacity is a phenomenon that may develop in the context of the person-environment transaction over the lifespan (Egeland, Carlson, and Sroufe, 1993). Still others have described resilience more simply as *normal* development in spite of trying conditions (Fonagy, Steele, Higgitt, and Target, 1994).

Risk and resiliency research is traditionally part of the field of developmental psychopathology. Since the 1970s, developmental psychopathology (Cicchetti, et al., 1993) has grown rapidly as a scientific discipline. It has provided an integrative framework for understanding mal-adaptation in children and adolescents. Topics of concern have included the roles of risk, competence, vulnerability, and protective factors. Each of these topics has been related to the onset and course of the development of psychopathology. Many of the contributions to the field of developmental psychopathology have been made by distinguished researchers in clinical psychology, psychiatry, and child development. These researchers provided early information documenting the phenomenon of psychosocial resilience in diverse, at risk populations (Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Nuechterlein, & Weintraub, 1990).

The studies of risk and resiliency have led to a new developmental model of psychopathology that addresses both vulnerability and resistance to disorders and spans the years from infancy through adulthood. Research findings have demonstrated that some children escape adversity without lasting damage, thereby providing a rich theoretical and empirical basis for new programs of psychological and educational research that can identify ways to foster and sustain the learning success of many at risk students (Cicchetti, et al., 1993).

One of the most influential studies in the study of risk and resiliency involved a cohort of children born in Kauai in 1955 and tracked over 30 years by Werner and Smith (Werner & Smith, 1982, Werner, 1992). The population of 44,000 from the island of Kauai were people for the most part descendants of immigrants from Japan, the Philippines and part-Hawaiians that now constitute three-fourths of the total population. Portuguese, Chinese, Koreans, and a few Caucasians accounted for the rest. This research population has a low mobility and limited access to coverage by medical, public health, educational, and social services as compared to most communities with similar size on the United States mainland.

In this study 604 parents' demographic characteristics were detailed including education, salary, age, IQ, and the number of people in the household. When the children reached school age, their teachers evaluated their academic and classroom behavior. Researchers administered a wide range of aptitude, achievement, and personality tests in elementary and high school; they also accessed the records of the public health, educational, and social service agencies in the community as well as the files of the local police and family court. They also interviewed the target individuals at the ages of 18 and

Of 604 participants, 201 were categorized as high 'risk'. That is, the authors began examining children's vulnerability, defined as their susceptibility to negative developmental outcomes after exposure to prenatal stress, poverty, parental psychopathology, disruption of and discord within their family unit, or other poor child-rearing conditions.

As their study progressed, the authors also looked at the roots of resiliency in those children who successfully coped with biological and psychosocial risk factors and maintained a sense of competence and control. In this high-risk group, 72 children grew up as competent, confident, and caring adults.

A second influential study follows a similar mode of inquiry, Garmezy's Project Competence program (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, (1984) explored the ability of some children in Minnesota to adapt well in spite of highly disadvantageous life events. It focussed on the search for risk and protective factors for competence in middle childhood and adolescence, and manifestation of competence in children despite exposure to stressful life circumstances. In this project, 205 participants from predominantly lower- and middle-class families were recruited. Forty-five percent were from "intact" families and 28 percent of the final sample of children represented ethnic minorities.

The Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ), was sent to parents. To measure stress, parents were interviewed about major life events of the past two years. A second perspective, on family qualities, was drawn from interviews. The interviewers completed a set of 30 Family Rating Scales at the conclusion of three home visits. Through rational classification and factor analysis, designed to tap global clinical impressions of the

family, and the Family Rating Scales where the interviewer assessed the level of family stress exposure, most of which concerned perceived family qualities of family rules, discipline, mother-child relationship, factor analysis suggested that this instrument (Masten et al., 1990) measured three dimensions. The most salient factor, Parenting Quality, measured maternal competence in relation to parenting.

Multiple perspectives on child competence at school were obtained, including teacher ratings, peer ratings, classroom grades, and performance on standardized achievement tests. Measures included individual attributes such as intellectual aptitude (IQ), Social Cognition, Humor and Divergent Thinking, as well as tests of Reflectivity-Impulsivity and of environmental attributes, including socioeconomic status (SES).

Based on their research and the accumulated work of others, Garnezy, Masten and Tellegen (1984) have described three mathematical models of stress resistance, two of which detail the potential processes by which personal attributes and stress may have an impact on adjustment.

1) The compensatory model predicts that high exposure to stressors is likely to decrease levels of competence and that various personal attributes work to raise levels of competence in a simple additive fashion. In other words, persons who possess a protective factor are higher in competence than those without the factor with the same levels of stress exposure. In this model, the child with the consistently higher level of adaptation would be the child possessing a given protective attribute or factor, such as an ongoing relationship with a trusted, supportive adult.

2) The immunity vs. vulnerability (or “protective factor”) model describes the relationship between stress and personal attributes in predicting that adjustment is an

interactive process in which the presence of a given factor mediates as a protective effect against the influence of increasing stress on adaptation. Gender may be a factor, which can confer either the protective or vulnerability to stress. For instance, a child with escalating exposure to stress may not experience any significant decreases in competence unless the child is female. The challenge model submits that a curvilinear relationship exists between stress and adjustment, whereby moderate levels of stress could increase competence.

Masten and colleagues (1988) added four more mathematical models of stress and competence to the above array; two of these models also describe the effect of personal attributes on the stress and competence relationship. The first model predicts that it is the presence of the attribute alone, not the level of stress, which determines the level of competence in a linear fashion. An example might be the comparison of two children with different problem-solving capabilities who were exposed to equivalent but increasing amounts of risk. Each child would possess levels of competence reflecting their different cognitive abilities, but the levels of adaptation would not vary with increasing levels of risk.

The second model states that it is the level of stress exposure, not the absence of a protective attribute that inversely influences competence. An illustration of this model would be that children would demonstrate decreasing competence with increasing risk exposure regardless of differences in personal or environmental attributes. The cumulative effects model posits that small amounts of stress exposure will have minimal effects on competence but that a clustering of stress events will result in a curvilinear decrease in competence.

The last model, or vulnerability model, describes that the relationship between stress and personal attributes in predicting adjustment is an interactive one where the presence of a given factor facilitates high competence under low levels of stress but mediates a deleterious effect on adaptation when stress increases. In this model, a highly empathic child may demonstrate high levels of social competence at low levels of stress because of his /her ability to empathize with others. This child may be more likely to lose that high level of competence when the stress escalates to involve her little sister compared to a child who is less empathic.

Masten and her colleagues (1988) found that the results of their study of grade school children showed consistent patterns, which supported the application of their mathematical models. The patterns of adaptation discovered depended on the standard for competence used and the particular moderators examined when the criterion for competence was classroom disruptiveness and the attributes of IQ, socioeconomic status, and parenting quality were examined in relation to life stress.

Masten's finding also suggested that attributes may be protective for one sex and less protective or even detrimental for the other sex in affecting competence. For example, girls appeared to benefit from more adept maternal parenting than boys did; and girls who did not have skilled maternal parenting were more likely to display aggressive behavior than boys under similar circumstances. In general, children with more personal and environmental protective factors exhibited better adaptation in the school setting. Adaptation, here, was measured as the degree of social involvement, the level of scholastic achievement, and the frequency of disruptive or aggressive behavior. Overall, females tended to show higher levels of competence, especially in the area of social

competence, than boys. This result is consistent with the findings of other studies of stress and adaptation in this age group (Rutter, 1979; Weiner and Smith, 1982). Both response styles (e.g., aggressive and disengaging) and social competence are likely to affect the amount of social support received from significant others as well as the possibility of exposure to more stress. The authors found that high levels of intelligence, socioeconomic status, and parental competency acted as protective factors against disruptive and aggressive behaviors. Masten and her colleagues (1990) speculate that this finding may be the result of differences in learned response behavior across classes and cultures.

The identification of protective factors in other studies of resiliency in children has included intellectual ability, gender, aspects of temperament, humor, ego-control, social skills, interpersonal awareness and empathy, social expressiveness, internal locus of control, task-related self-efficacy, self-worth and self-esteem, autonomy, good problem-solving skills, education and skills training, religious faith, absence of organic deficits, good familial relationships, parent availability and competence, sensitive and responsive caregivers, family harmony and cohesion, future planning, presence of a significant and/or supportive other, identification with a resilient role model, positive school experiences, availability of opportunities at major life transitions, social and resource-related supports for children and parents, higher parental education, and good parental coping skills (Cicchetti, Rogosch, Lynch, and Holt, 1993; Egeland, et al., 1993; Fonagy et al., 1994; Masten, Garmezy, Tellegren, Pelligrini, Larkin, & Larsen, 1988; Murphy & Moriarity, 1976; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1984; Werner, 1992). In addition,

Werner (1984) found that resilient children were more adept at finding acceptable meaning in their lives after traumatic events than non-resilient children.

Rutter (1987) perceives the concepts of vulnerability and resiliency as not just opposite ends of a spectrum, but as outcomes which reflect a process of risk (stressor) negotiation and modification of response. It is this process which needs elucidation. Rutter continues by describing resilience not as a fixed personal characteristic but, rather, as an attribute which varies within a person across situations, ages, developmental stages, etc. Likewise, factors which function as protective mechanisms in one situation may function as vulnerability mechanisms in other situations.

Conceptually, some of these protective factors function as moderating mechanisms, i.e., they are antecedent factors which interact with other conditions to affect adaptation. Other factors act as mediating mechanisms which are produced during stress exposure and influence the relationship or transaction between antecedent factors, stress exposure, and adjustment. Rutter (1987) describes four possible mechanisms by which protective factors may mediate the effect of risk on adaptation. The first mechanism is the reduction of the impact of the risk factor by altering the meaning (e.g., attributions) or danger of that stressor for that child. The second mediating mechanism serves to reduce the negative sequelae which follow risk exposure and continue or heighten the risk impact. The third mechanism affects self-esteem and self-efficacy via the support derived from secure and harmonious love relationships (for children, this could be a non-abusive parental or adult relationship), the successful accomplishment of valued tasks (e.g., recreational, educational, or social), and adaptive coping with life turning points which may affect a risk trajectory (e.g., entrance into a new school). The

final mechanism involves the availability of opportunities, which may result from successful coping and adaptation (e.g., avoiding teen pregnancy or taking advantage of educational opportunities, which result in better job preparedness).

Masten and colleagues' (1990) studies of risk, vulnerability, and psychopathology over the last few decades provide important knowledge about etiology of disorder and mal-adaptation. Studies of protective factors, resilience, and good development despite risk, vulnerability, and adversity can be a window on the processes by which development rights itself, is fostered by "natural" or professional intervention. Building upon the existing knowledge bases, future research endeavors can help to develop theoretical models that are increasingly complex, and that incorporate the effects of multiple forces operating at the levels of stress, competence, and the developmental processes involved in resilience. These potential patterns of adaptation, based on analyses of group trends, are crucial for the advancement of psychological science to generalize beyond the single case. Finally, since ratings in these studies are based on observed and reported behavior, rather inferred processes, it has been possible to achieve reliability of rating (Masten, et al., 1990).

Ratner (1997, pp. 47-48) examines the concept of validity which was designed to remove the arbitrary assertions of operational definitions. He explains that validation involves correlating one measure with another. For example, in the resiliency studies; the IQ tests are validated by comparing scores with school performance. That is, to measure competence a second measure is included, such as other psychological instruments, or a judgment by teacher and peers, or reports of behavior performance such as school performance. The problem with this kind of validation is that the criterion measures are

as limited and ambiguous as the original, the IQ tests, measures. There is no certainty that the second set of measures reflects the psychological phenomenon at issue any better than the first one did; the IQ tests are validated by comparing scores with school performance. Ratner argues that “performance that is reflected in grades or teacher ratings may not reflect intelligence; it may reflect some other psychological process such as motivation. Consequently, a significant correlation between the standardized achievement tests and these other measures does not validate the test as an index of intelligence (pp. 47-48).”

As we have seen psychological research on resiliency is concerned with comparison among groups, and relies upon tools of measurement and classification of abilities. The unit of inquiry and the standardization process set up a dichotomous relationship between the “normal” and the “abnormal”: it is the normalization of development that makes abnormality possible; and vice versa. In addition, these studies are generally insensitive to contextual influences on cognitive activities. They assume that subjects’ test scores reflect some underlying ability or competence rather than performance related to the specific situation in which the research participants were being examined.

This perspective argues that a natural equality exists among Caucasians, Africans, Latinos, Asians and other racial populations. This perspective is based on intellectual “sameness” among races, that is, on their cognitive equivalence or the rationality imminent in all races that permits them to compete equally in capitalist society. Unfortunately, equality is absent in this society not because of Black or Asian cultural deprivation but because social and educational opportunities do not exist that permit

everyone to compete equally. Those who work within this perspective have a tendency to essentialize cultural differences, however, and to ignore the historical and cultural “situatedness” of difference. Difference is understood as a form of signification removed from social and historical constraints. That is, there is a tendency to ignore difference as a social and historical construction that is constitutive of power to represent meanings.

As we have seen, psychological research on childhood risk and resiliency often uses life event measures and instruments. In each of the categories of life experiences where resilience has been applied, researchers made judgments about desirable and undesirable outcomes, about risks and assets (both individual and social). It is dangerously simplistic to generalize within and between cultural groups, especially when confounding variables such as migration change the availability of extended family networks and the physical organization of characteristic childcare and child rearing practices.

The measure of competence, the second major construct involved in resilience research, gives rise to similar questions. Many of the uses of resilience are based on an implicit and unconscious “expectations model” and an unarticulated basis for judging outcomes, with regard to the definition of social competence. Social competence is the measure of choice in assessing levels of overall adjustment (Garmezy et al. 1984), that is, the success of the person in meeting societal expectations. When value judgments and expectations remain implicit and arbitrary ethnocentric values and expectations often predominate.

Nowhere is this assertion more obviously demonstrated than in the study of resiliency and related behavioral adaptations. That is, psychological researchers often

target the poor and minority populations. This attention is grounded on the notion that the poor are 'at risk' for intellectual and social pathology. However, some researchers often fail to acknowledge that the cause of poverty was the lack of opportunity caused by class bias and racism and pathological patterns of behavior on the part of the poor themselves. Even if they were classified as 'at risk' or nonresilient or pathological, Herrnstein & Murray (1994) argue that since the poor and minorities are less intelligent such programmes are not likely to benefit them.

This leads to young urban dwellers who carry a hopelessness as an embarrassment, as a dangerous contradiction to the individualist ethic (MacLeod, 1987). MacLeod writes: "Young urban dwellers carry a hopelessness so great that they embrace an anti-work ethic as a defense against the psychic scars of unemployment. Urban youth communities are built around their exclusion; their lived worlds are marked not by protest or passivity but by hostile, angry, and aggressive despair (p.123)."

Thus, the challenge for resiliency research lies not only in conceptual rigor, empirical connectedness, and practical utility, but also in understanding its connection to the critical context of inequality, oppression, and power in society. According to Banks (1998):

Many of the localized values and cultural perspectives of mainstream researchers were considered neutral, objective, and universal. Many of these value-laden perspectives, paradigms, and knowledge systems became institutionalized within the mainstream popular culture, the schools, and the nation's colleges and universities, in part, because they reinforced institutionalized beliefs and practices and were regarded as objective, universal, and neutral. A claim of "neutrality" enables a researcher to support the status quo without publicly acknowledging that support. The neutrality claims also enables the researcher to avoid what Code (1987) calls "epistemic responsibility" to the studied community. (Banks, 1998, p. 5).

Agency is emphasized to the exclusion of structure. It is here that the experiment comes into its own, for it is, in many ways, an accurate representation of our society. Some (researchers) are allowed to observe, to define the terms of argument. Others (they, the subjects) are observed, cannot argue, are forced to respond to our terms. At a relational level there is nothing artificial about the social laboratory experiments. It is precisely so because the experimenter replicates so accurately familiar social relations (Burman, 1994). Furthermore, Bank comments:

Institutionalized concepts, theories, and paradigms considered neutral often privilege mainstream students and disadvantage low-income students, students of color, and female students. These knowledge systems and paradigms are often used to justify the educational neglect of desperate and needy students, to privilege groups who are advantaged, and to legitimize and justify discriminatory educational policies and practices. (p. 5)

Further, Banks (1998) argues that “social science and educational researchers have both reinforced inequality and supported liberation and human betterment (p. 5).”

Different Path

More attention needs to be paid to the relationship between children’s experiences within the cultural environments of home and school, and in particular to the form and content of communication between parents and children and between teachers and children. Bruner (1986, p. 20) has made the point that “one of the most crucial ways in which culture provides aid in intellectual growth is through a dialogue between the more experienced and the less experienced.” Later Bruner (1995) adds:

...Culture and individuality converge in the process of meaning-making.....In this sense, meaning-making is as crucial to maintaining a culture as it is to individual adaptation. Acts of meaning...serve both functions at once. We can conceive of self, then, as an intersection of culture and individual identity. That meaning-

making should also be so dependent upon intersubjectivity, instrumentality and normativity, all three serving as constituent process in narrative and in prepositional thinking, should come as no surprise. (p. 29).

In addition to these methodological concerns in the risk and resiliency literature, another major problem is the need for a theoretical framework that unites the various levels of analysis. One conceptual methodological perspective that has not yet been explored in the field of risk and resiliency research is the sociocultural approach based on the early writings of Vygotsky, Luria, and Leontiev. Thus, in discussing Vygotsky's methods, Cole and Scribner (1974) stated that this aspect of his approach helps break down the barriers between the laboratory and the "field" and fit better than traditional experiments with the qualitative methods of anthropology and sociology. Because Vygotsky's approach is not focused on outcomes but on processes leading to outcomes, his work includes narrative description of how individuals accomplished assigned tasks.

One of Vygotsky's theoretical constructs that helps in exploring the social and cultural context of knowledge acquisition and academic resiliency of low-income and underclass students, is mediated action (Vygotsky 1962, 1978; Wertsch, 1985a, 1985b, 1991). Vygotsky insisted that human action in general was mediated by tools and signs, especially by symbolic sign system such as language. In order to understand conscious human action we must study human existence of behavior in their social and historical dimensions, not in the structure of the grey mass in the human brain or in the isolation of decontextualized psychological phenomena (Wertsch, 1991).

While recognizing the mental, symbolic, conceptual, and intentional nature of human culture, Thompson (1990) admonishes cultural psychologists for ignoring social structures in which meanings are formed, and concepts and psychological phenomena

appear to be divorced from practical matters. They seem to be unconditioned by social relationships, social dynamics of the class structure, the distribution of resources and the division of labor among activities or the principles that govern action in specific social institutions. For example, in his critique of Geertz's work on the symbolic conception of culture, Thompson complains:

[Geertz] gives insufficient attention to problems of power and social conflict. Cultural phenomena are viewed above all as meaningful constructs, as symbolic forms...But cultural phenomena are also embedded in relations of power and conflict. Everyday utterances and actions, as well as more elaborate phenomena such as rituals, festivals, or works of art, are always produced or enacted in particular social-historical circumstances, by specific individuals drawing on certain resources and endowed with varying degrees of power and authority...Viewed in this way, cultural phenomena may be seen as expressing relations of power, as serving in specific circumstances to sustain or disrupt relations of power...The symbolic conception of culture, especially as elaborated in the writing of Geertz, fails to give sufficient attention to problems of power and conflict and, more generally, to the structured social contexts within which cultural phenomena are produced, transmitted and received. (pp.134-135)

Culture, according to this view, includes the distribution of rights, privileges, opportunities, obligations, and wealth among various groups of people. It also includes the division of labour that integrates or segregates various activities from each other. These aspects of culture affect people's psychology (Thompson, 1990). And according to Thompson, Marx and Engels suggest that forms of consciousness are grounded in particular activities. That is, this dependence of psychological phenomena on practical social activities is called *praxis*. Ratner (1999) describes this perspective:

theory is used to elucidate the full social character of activities. This means identifying their concrete norms, roles, leadership, privileges, and opportunities. For example in his first writings Vygotsky said that 'we must be profoundly historical and must always present man's behavior in relation to the class situation at the given moment; every epoch has its own forms of education' because educational activity has always corresponded to 'those particular economic and

social structures of society that defined the whole history of the epoch.' (pp. 11-12)

The critical strategic requirement here is to shift the focus from the individual as the unit of analysis toward the sociocultural settings and processes in which activities are embedded. Guided by socio-historical and political perspectives and using narrative research approach, I examine 'academic resilience' as socially and culturally embedded, distributed between people, rooted not only in mental processes and computational references, but also in externally given and real world communities and cultural practices (Lave, 1988; Cole & Scribner, 1974; Cole, 1994; Rogoff, 1983, 1990, 1998)).

To begin with resilience as defined by success under a set of values, is to miss the important dynamics of the students' subjective world view, subjective impressions of success and adversity, and after that definition, it cannot be disentangled from important issues of the social, political, and educational context. I have chosen the narrative research method because I want to record the profound nature of the refugees' own voices. Narratives arise out of a desire to have life display coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure. Narratives are stories that people tell about themselves, reflect people's experience as they see it and as they wish to have others to see it. Through stories people organize, display, and work through their experiences.

The narrative research approach, as opposed to psychological research on academic resiliency, views the psychological reality of knowledge acquisition in its immediate social and cultural context. This brings about further understanding of varied achievement among minorities because of preconditions for valuing education: a perceived payoff for continued schooling does not mean that the student in an inner-city

school can see beyond surviving the next day. The position of poor and minority children in inner-city schools is still a world apart from that presumed by an academically oriented empirical model.

I believe that to study whole persons we cannot rely on logical positivist methods that isolate simple factors and trace their effects through statistical analysis. Such analysis aims for elucidating universals but effaces the intending individual. Whole human beings cannot be objectively described as though they are molecules. We must have a way of approaching data that allows for discovery rather than seeks confirmation of hypotheses and that fosters more exhaustive quests for explanation rather than the illusion of finding a preexisting truth. If we listen well, we will unearth what we did not expect. This becomes the paradigm for discovery.

In my analysis, I will integrate different theories such as feminist, race, psychological, and critical theories, and the relationships of culture, language, and tradition. I will show that in a variety of disciplines, a few of which I will discuss, new paradigms for thinking are evolving, opening up new frontiers. Many of my sources in this study probably do not know each other, nor, in many cases, would they appreciate or agree with each other. But I see their interconnectedness and find them complementary and believe that it is worth while to formulate a more or less coherent “tapestry” made up of as many diverse perspectives as possible. It is similar to the montage method of postmodern theory, which invokes a pastiche of images that provoke thought and new connections, as opposed to the rationalist model of a linear logical totality. Only this way can we begin to appreciate the complexity of our society, to see new, distinct patterns emerging from disparate data and views.

WEAVING THE TAPESTRY: NARRATIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF LIVES

Choosing the Path

This thesis is a qualitative narrative research study of ten Vietnamese youths who received scholarships for their academic achievement. Rather than developing and testing hypotheses from theory, I relied on the data to develop theory, a bottom-up, inductive approach (Straus and Corbin, 1990).

The purpose of this study is to explore family and community practices and informal educational activities that these Vietnamese families engaged in to prepare and to accommodate their children, that promote resiliency, and that are associated with academic success for their children in a culture that is relatively unknown. Through interviews, I focussed on the families' and students' activities, the daily routine of the parents' lives that appear to contribute to their children's academic achievement, and factors related to their family and cultural heritage. I sought to explore the youths' perspectives about many different aspects of their lives, to reveal the multifaceted nature of their lives, and to add their diverse voices to the research literature on academic resiliency. I endeavoured to listen to the youths' perceptions of how they relate to themselves, to family members, to peers, to important others, to schools, and to the larger culture. I explored the ways in which this group of youths speak about their values, about their aspirations, about their future, and finally about their experiences in school and the

society at large. I detected themes that arose when these youths spoke about a range of their experiences. I wanted to listen to the voices and hear the experiences of the Vietnamese youths growing up in poor, urban areas.

As their narratives unfolded, I traced the connections between the life experiences of their parents in Vietnam and their adjustments in a new land. Through these narratives, I explored the processes of human development in different times and places, with varying risks and assets. I studied the details of the social contexts within which children are developing and that give meaning and direction to social life. The life-story accounts were woven into a tapestry, a composition of the portraits of the invisible and voiceless.

Metaphors used in this study:

Vygotsky's famous concept of "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) draws attention to the participatory nature of ongoing development and the social-cultural-historical nature of forms of human activity, in which

'Zone' is 'the life space' in which the so-called higher psychological processes in which human beings engage (such as speaking, thinking, and problem solving) emerge and develop. The critical feature of the ZPD as life space is that it is *inseparable from we who produce it*. It is produced through tool-and-result methodology – the relational activity of human beings creating their lives. It is the socially-historically-culturally produced environment in which and how human beings organize and reorganize their relationships to each other and to nature, that is, the elements of social life. It is where human beings – determined, to be sure, by sometimes empirically observable circumstances – totally transform these very circumstances (making something new); it is the "location" of human (revolutionary) activity. (Holzman, 1997, p. 60).

Inspired by his ZPD concept, (Zone of Proximal Development), life space, concept, and taking from the ideas of Maxine Greene (1995), in reporting the students'

life stories, I used the concepts of “dance” and “dance of life,” of learning as “life space,” of “location,” and of “criticism from within” that are taking place within a context of solidarity, a context of shared human stories within a changing human community (Greene, 1995, p. 62).

The ideas of being engaged in the dance of life as we examine education, I call the action of critiquing within a shared context of “the dance of life.” It somehow presents an authentic human involvement with others and the natural world; it draws us into the dancers’ movement and suggests the vital networks in which we live or ought to live our lives. Maxine Greene thinks of education as “an opening public space, a common world or familiar world, where custodians, caretakers, bureaucrats, teachers and students come together, and in which students speak in their own voices and act on their own initiatives.” (Greene, 1995, p. 62).

The tapestry, the term I use as a method of inquiry, is designed to tap and to weave the richness and complexity of human experience told in the people’s own voices in social, historical, cultural and political contexts, and to convey the perspectives of the refugees who are negotiating those experiences: It is the complex interweaving of person and situation, of individual, family and community, and of instrumental action and circumstances. I want to write a story that can be read as a word picture that likens itself to a tapestry of life. The tapestry is woven through the dance of dialogue between the storytellers and the weaver, with its use of metaphor and symbol. In attempting to connect the voices of the storytellers, the weaver draws the continuum between analysis and solidarity, the depth of connection, the quality of insights, the expression of emotion, and the timbre and range of the dance of dialogue. The relationship of the weaver and

narrators is of reciprocity and symmetry, of skepticism and appreciation, of trust and alliance, of challenge and support. The depth of these relationships is defined by the duration and rhythm of time spent together.

Defining the concept

In this study, the concept of academic resiliency is defined as **resistance or defiance of negative predictions of success**. I argue that it is necessary to include the political perspective in defining resiliency contextually and that the dynamic of culture in the development of motivation to achieve academically, or in the development of resistance or resilience to achieve, is based on the impact of large macro-sociological and psychological structures of society: discrimination, oppression, poverty, and colonization.

In my opinion, the academic resiliency concept can only be clearly found in the narratives of the subjects interviewed, because “cultural values played an important role in the educational achievement of the children. Conserved values constituted a source of motivation and direction as the families dealt with contemporary problems set in a country vastly different from their homeland. The values formed a set of cultural givens with deep roots in the Confucian and Buddhist traditions of East and Southeast Asia. All the children attended schools in low-income areas, areas not known for outstanding academic records” (Caplan et al. 1992, p. 39).

The Context

In the lower mainland of British Columbia (BC), as in other Vietnamese communities in North America, poor families in low-income neighborhoods may provide support and encouragement for their children, but in BC their attempts to generate social capital are often defeated by their isolation and by the social disorganization that

surrounds them. This problem is exacerbated when the formation of constructive social relations among young Vietnamese is constantly undermined by persistent racism and negative racial stereotypes in the larger society and in schools; many young people became disenfranchised. In other North American cities, such as San Diego or Boston, children can benefit from these social relations. Poor families are connected to one another in a community that reinforces the efforts of parents and acts as a bridge to the mainstream society. In BC, racism, the undermining of poor minority parents and the language barriers cut many parents off from the larger society and weakens the parental authority.

For eight years, in Lee Gunderson's work (2000) immigrant students in Vancouver, he tracked students in Math, Social Studies, English and Science. He found that in Math, 21 Vietnamese students started grade eight, but six students made it to grade 12. In Social Studies, 15 Vietnamese students started at grade eight, but none reached grade 12. In English only one of 15 students made it to grade 12, and in Science three of 17 students graduated grade 12. Overall, the schools in Vancouver have successfully eliminated 95% of Vietnamese refugee students. So the students in this study in Vancouver are exceptional. They not only survived high school, but also received scholarships to go to university. Let us now look at other cities in North America.

In other inner city schools in the United States, Zhou and Bankston (1998) found that Louisiana's Jefferson High's honor program enrolls ten percent of the student population. These students are required to have B's or higher average grades in previous classes or schools and to pass an entrance test including all subjects. Vietnamese students made up about 80 percent of the honor student populations. According to Zhou

and Bankston, Vietnamese students, indeed, almost 90 percent of the Vietnamese students who attended Jefferson high from the Versailles enclave were in honor program.

Most Vietnamese children in the United States attended urban public schools, in which most children come from low-income families and are members of racial minority groups (Zhou and Bankston, 1998).

Ruben G. Rumbaut's (1995, cited in Zhou and Bankston, 1998) 1992 study of immigrant children in San Diego showed that Vietnamese students had an overall grade-point average highest among second-generation children of all immigrant nationality groups. The grade point average for Vietnamese was 2.87, for Fillipinos was 2.73, for Canadians and Europeans was 2.43, for Latinos was 2.42, and for Mexicans was 1.94. Nathan Caplan and his associates (1991, 1992) at the University of Michigan, found in mathematics, especially, Vietnamese students seemed to have out performed other young people. These students earned half of the mean A's and another third earned B's in their study based on a random sample of 536 school-aged children from 200 moderate-to-low income Vietnamese families in urban areas of Orange County, Seattle, Houston, Chicago, and Boston. They also found that one in four of the Vietnamese students had an overall A average, over half had an overall B average, seventeen percent had an C average, and only four percent had an average below C. The Louisiana Department of Education reported that Vietnamese students outperformed their black and white peers by significant margins in all major areas; their average scores exceeded their American peers by at least 29 percent in mathematics, 17 percent in language and arts, and 16 percent in writing and composition. Zhou and Bankston (1998) write:

At Jefferson High, where the Vietnamese made up most of the school's honors program. Their standardized tests were even more impressive. Vietnamese

students outperformed their black and white peers by significant margins in all major areas; their average scores exceeded their American peers' by at least 17 percentage points in writing and composition (Louisiana Department of Education, 1992). In terms of statewide median, the majority black students did fairly well; 48 percent scored below the state median, 52 percent scored above it, but only 14 percent of black students scored in the state's top quartile. By contrast, 95 percent of the Vietnamese students scored above the median for all Louisiana students, and 64 percent scored in the top quartile. Despite their disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, Vietnamese students from the Vietnamese Versailles Village appeared to have been among the best students in the state of Louisiana. (p. 141)

In national standardized tests in mathematics, half of the Vietnamese students scored in the top quarter of those taking the tests and 27 percent scored in the top 10%. Even though most were still struggling with English, they ranked close to the national average on English language skills (Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1992). Caplan, Choy and Whitmore (1992) also found that one in four of the Vietnamese students had an overall A average, and only 4 percent had an average below C.

The Yarns that Join the Tapestry: Narrative

The purpose and design of this study is about putting the margins at the centre of my thinking. The process of putting the margins at the centre has been at the heart of the effort. This work proposes a different way of doing psychological research in academic resiliency. It is structured out of the dailiness of the refugees' lives, and it attempts to put this doing into practice. It underlines the central importance of personal and collective narratives in imparting meaning to experiences of the refugees and in contesting the degrading or derogatory status assigned to them in the dominant culture. The objective is to undertake cultural, historical analyses of individual texts of stories, by placing narratives in their larger discursive and sociopolitical contexts, and by addressing philosophical and political issues related to the cultural construction and representation of

their experiences. I looked at things they create in their daily lives, their personal interpretations of their experience, imposing meaning on it through the use of narrative structure. Each day is a tapestry, threads of rice, fish sauce, children, laundry, politics, shopping, thinking, interwoven in intimate connection with insistence cycles of birth, existence, and death. More specifically, it was to challenge my ideas about the traditional theories of risk and resiliency as the most important or most significant way of understanding these students' experiences. This was to break up old patterns of thinking. I think, however, that the problem is one of form; that is, the problem is lodged in the nature of theory itself.

This tapestry traces, interprets, and incorporates the emerged themes of academic development from narratives and storytelling of ten refugee Vietnamese youths and their families. All of the adolescents have received scholarships, but their life chances might otherwise be considered at high risk of failure because of their race, ethnic, and income status. Their narratives are embedded in a particular context, including physical settings, cultural rituals, norms, and values, and historical periods, that are rich with clues about how the storytellers negotiate and understand their experience, and that reveals the dynamic dancing image of the narrators, the interaction of values, personality, structure, culture and tradition, family, and history. Their narratives are also pragmatic warnings and aesthetic artifacts. They raise essential questions about the way in which the narrators impart meanings to life, or question previously assigned meanings. They illustrate the degree of freedom, agency, or control that people have in deciding their role in the story and how the story is told and interpreted. Then the tapestry traces the structural, ideological, relational, and cultural themes that foster them as resilient. The

emergent themes reflect efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data, searching for convergent threads, illuminating metaphors, and overarching symbols. I then weave together these pieces of themes, these patterns of texture and color, into a tapestry that can be felt and seen.

Reissman (1993) argues that in qualitative interviews most talk is not narrative but question-and-answer exchanges, and this type of interview does not encourage storytelling. To avoid this, I tried to listen with a minimum of interruption and to use silence as occasions for the respondent to speak. I used open-ended questions, since the natural conversational style would be more likely to encourage storytelling than conventional interviews. The interviews were recorded on tape. None of the stories were presented to me as discrete units with clear beginnings and endings that could be detached from the surrounding discourse. They came to me in bits and pieces. I had to weave to shape the narrative fragments from different color threads (information sources) together to derive meanings from what the narrators wanted to tell me about their life stories. By life stories I mean narratives about some life experience of deep and abiding interest to the interviewee.

Narrative Approach to the Study of Lives

Within contemporary psychology, for Jerome Bruner (1986) narrative is the basic mode of human understanding or in his own words "narrative modes of knowing." Narrative psychology is the presentation of how people make meanings (Geertz, 1983). It uses the notion that individuals reflect upon their experiences of life through constructing and understanding stories. This mode privileges the lived experience rather than logical positivist constructs about variables and classes. It approaches the

understanding of lives in context rather than a prefigured and narrowing lens. Meaning is not inherent in an act or experience, but is constructed through social discourse.

Meaning-making makes sense out of the chaotic mass of perceptions and experiences of life. Moreover, Bruner (1990) contends that narrative psychology is presented as an effort to vivify the original programme of the 'first cognitive revolution' of the late 1950s and 1960s, to vivify culture and 'meaning' to a discipline that has become dominated by the root metaphor of information processing, and the pursuit of computational and neurophysiological models of information flow. Thus, narrative, for Bruner, is not merely a kind of discourse, but a mode of thought and an action describable in terms that can be related to cognitive plans and representations. It is the means by which "people organise their experience in, knowledge of, and transactions with the social world" (Bruner, 1990, p. 35).

The difference between the mind and personality as seen in this way and the traditional view is that we see the relationships as dynamic and essentially embedded in historical, political, cultural, social and interpersonal contexts. It is not definable in isolation.

Madeline Grumet (1991a) is concerned about power relationships between persons soliciting and reading autobiographies and those telling the stories. To Grumet story telling is "a negotiation of power." She continues, "even telling a story to a friend is risky business; the better the friend is the riskier the business (p. 69)." The narrative enquirer must always be alert to the ways in which "every telling is a partial prevarication (p. 69)." Furthermore, it is a problem concerning the constitution of the self. "The politics of narrative is not...merely a social struggle but an ontological one as well"

(Grumet, 1991a, p. 69); “we are, at least partially, constituted by the stories we tell others and to ourselves about experience (p. 69).” “The stories we tell others may be finally less dangerous than the ones we tell to ourselves (Grumet 1991a, p.70).”

Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993, pp. 2-3) argues that “narratives of personal experience...are ubiquitous in everyday life...telling stories about past events seem to be universal human activities.” Charles Taylor (1989, pp. 51-52) comments: “we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form.” Donald Polkinghorne (1988, p. 1) calls “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful.” Jerome Bruner (1986, p. 11) claims narrative is one of two natural modes of cognitive functioning, a distinctive way “of ordering experience, of constructing reality.” The act of telling a story helps to reproduce socially shared conceptions and meanings and produce socially constructed conceptions and meanings. By framing actions and events in a way that is relevant to other narrated actions and events, narrative storytelling makes it possible to relate the new to the old, to make the unfamiliar become familiar (Kashima, 1997).

A basic issue in telling a story of events in a life is where to begin. “Where one chooses to begin and end a narrative can profoundly alter its shape and meaning (Riessman, 1993; p. 18).” Where to start a story is a major and rhetorically potent, way of managing causality and accountability. It is an issue not only for personal narratives, but for accounts of all kinds, including histories of nation states, and stories of immigration and ethnicity: who actually belongs where? Starting when? Whose country is it? Alternative narratives compete in terms of precisely when and where they start (Riessman, 1993).

Riessman (1993) argues that in the social and human sciences narrative analysis is generally a matter of collecting interviews about particular kinds of life experiences and fitting them to various analytical categories and schemas. In her words, "the purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. The methodological approach examines the informant's story and analyses how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity (Riessman, 1993, p. 2)."

One of the most significant narratives of all is *self-narrative* (Bruner, 1990; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1988). Self-narrative is "the individual's account of the relationship among self-relevant events across time (Gergen & Gergen, 1988, p. 19)." Polkinghorne (1988) concludes:

We achieve our personal identities and self-concepts through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we constantly have to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not static thing nor substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be. (p. 150)

The construction of a self-narrative is not a solitary, private activity; rather, self-narrative may rely on the process of social construction. Thus, the act of storytelling about oneself is fundamentally a social and psychological process (Miller, Potts, Fung, and Hoogstra, 1990).

To Michael Cole (1994) in much of cultural psychology, mind is socially constructed ontologically. This notion of mind as socially constructed leads to Kenneth Gergen's (1994) deconstruction movement in social psychology. Social psychology, in

his view, is a form of history and history is highly contextual. Furthermore, Gergen implies that history itself is an impartial truth with social psychological findings serving as archival reminders of the ways people thought and behaved at the time the studies were conducted. Social psychology processes help to define history. The ways people talk and think about recent and distant events is determined by current needs and desires

The methodological approach examines “the informant’s story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity (Reissman, 1993; p.2).” Narrative process enables the narrator to develop creative ways of interpreting their life and to draw together disparate aspects of their lives into a cohesive whole. Narrative is a way of expressing development over time. Paul Ricer (1980) notes that the corpus of our individual histories is brought together by a work of imagination that, in articulating the various points of connection, transforms it into a coherent story. Peter McLaren (1993) concludes:

Narratives help us to represent the world. They also help us to remember and forget both its pleasures and its horror. Narratives structure our dreams, our myths, and our visions as much as they are dreamt, mythified and envisioned. They help shape our social reality as much by what they exclude as what they include. They provide the discursive vehicles for transforming the burden of knowing into the act of telling. (p. 207)

Furthermore, narratives are performative, and empowering. They represent action and, thus, agency. Experience is reshaped in the narrative process, and narratives are subject to change with subsequent experiences. As an analytic tool, narrative enables us to understand how coherence is created and maintained over time. Viewed as the practice of everyday life, narratives can provide us with important insights about people’s experiences and their perspective on these experiences.

Thus, narrative research is interdisciplinary. It includes element of history and literary, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and cultural studies. What links all these lines of inquiry together is an interest in the ways that human beings make meaning through language.

Perhaps the most important development within this strand of narrative research has been a reconceptualization of what it means to be “political.” Central to this redefinition is the recognition that the personal is political and, furthermore, that power is exercised in all relationships, not just those connected to the state. Implied in the political is the notion that education is instrumental to empowering resiliency which is understood as the capacity to function effectively in a given social setting, with active participation in the cultural, political and economic institutions, and the possession of full rights and obligations enjoyed by other members of society, the students’ ability to participate fully in academic activities, and to function effectively as students.

The Weaver

As the researcher of this study, I was born and lived in South Vietnam, and escaped after the revolution. I stayed in a refugee camp and was accepted by Canada as refugee. I share with these families, race, culture and some historical experiences. We share the love of our families, of our heritage, of our familiar earth and the new earth. These elements are important facets that influenced the validation of observation and interviews. In other words, studying people whose experiences are similar to my own allowed me to remain sensitive to the problems, issues, and the frame of inquiry that might be invisible to other researchers. This insight increased my sensitivity and awareness of the interview process, and contributed to the emergence of a friendly

atmosphere, in the narrative process. As Stanley and Wise (1993) comment:

We look to the kind of research which approaches this inevitable power relationship in a different way. Its 'different way' is to lie open, to make vulnerable, the researcher. It therefore involves displaying her actions, reasoning, deductions and evidence to other people. We're not arguing that 'vulnerability' is the magic key that enables us to enter people's experiences and emotions. 'Fictitious empathy' must be rejected...we do construct a view of what it is from how we feel about what this experience might be like for other person. (p. 168)

Foster (1994) argues that research about people of colour cultural sites should be a two-way learning experience of insiders as well as outsiders. The research process such as oral-history interviewing or participant observation should be structured in such a way so as not only to empower 'subjects' but also to contribute to the human development of the researcher. This is a point related to Patti Lather's concept of cathartic validity (1991) which refers to the degree to which a researcher allows herself to change and to grow through fieldwork, change and grow in ways that often challenge oppressive cultural forms. Foster (1994) argues "research undertaken by scholars of colour can be revisionist: it can offer new if disturbing insights, alternative and disquieting ways of thinking, can be a means of creating new paradigms and expanding existing ones, and can result in a much needed dialogue between scholars of colour and their White peers. Regrettably, it is still the rule rather than the exception to distort and to exclude the realities and to subjugate the voices of people of colour to further prevailing paradigms so as to fit the requirement of the caste society (p. 145)." This research is to be praxis oriented which means both personal growth and social commitment. Carspecken (1996) claims, "the pursuit of truth in social science cannot be followed without becoming open to wounding, without caring about those who are impoverished and oppressed. It will be painful at times, but it will develop and empower those who follow it with integrity (p.

171).” Thus, “if you are not prepared to be wounded, you will not make inferences true to the validity requirements of normative, inter subjective, and thus subjective, reconstruction (Carspecken, 1996, p.170).”

My life experiences of contradictions and marginality influenced the course of my research. Through this research, I brought into focus my everyday life activities as a student and single mother, and a member of non-dominant groups. My pedagogy was constructed within the constraints and possibilities of my particular circumstances. Woven through my theoretical deliberations, my pains and struggles, feminist and race theories in education are reflections on the everyday practices of my experiences. The movement from simple critical binary distinctions is elaborated through the relationship of culture, language, and tradition in understanding the individual-community dynamics in children’s academic resilience. My voice as autobiography threads through this piece, revealed in the nuances of my interactions with the participants, the intensity of my questions, and in our raucous laughter that barely masks our pain.

The Dancer Images: Participants

Because my intention was to conduct an in-depth investigation of urban Vietnamese youth in their journey to and through the contexts of their academic achievement rather than to generalize to a larger population, I chose to interview ten refugee Vietnamese refugee youths. Teachers, and Vietnamese representatives referred these five girls and five boys in my study to me because they have received academic scholarships. They were also actively involved in extracurricular activities and volunteer work in the communities, even though their life chances might otherwise be considered at high risk of failure because of their race, ethnic, and income status. In order to recruit

students, I volunteered to work in the urban schools and for Multicultural Family Services in East Vancouver. I attended ethnic cultural festivities, religious institutions, and Vietnamese language school, and announced the project in these places. All of the youth in my study were born in Vietnam. Three students have spent most of their lives in Canada and speak English fluently. The others, seven students spent most of their early life in Vietnam and in various refugee camps. All of them came from poor working-class families and lived in the low income neighborhoods in Lower Mainland, the areas in the city where schools were segregated by the law of class oppressions. Here boundaries became the central metaphor for speaking about contrasts between the real world and the academy, between the rich and the poor, between white and colour, between elitism and diversity: all themes that will thread through the narratives, gaining meaning and depth as the data were gathered.

Over the past few years, I crossed the boundary from the ivory tower of the university to the cacophonously crowded city streets to the public schools which are poised on the edge of the real world. The students here seem colourful, diverse, alive, and vibrant. I have listened to the Vietnamese youths and their parents talk about their lives. I have attended their high schools, joining them in classes, watching their struggles, success, and failures.

These students were interviewed over a two and half year period, at the end of high school and while enrolled in university. In 1997, I interviewed the students, their parents, and some community representatives, soon after the students received the awards for their academic achievements. Recently, in late 1999, I re-interviewed these students who are now in their third year in universities. We spoke English and Vietnamese. Both

languages were woven into our conversation through the dance of dialogue. I interviewed the parents and students separately. May with her younger sister lived outside of the family home. I did not interview her parents. I interviewed May in my home during the first interview, and in her house during the second interview.

I visited nine families and interviewed the parents in their homes. Their success stories revealed sadness and sorrows. My focus is on topics other than politics, war, and the resistance movement. When these themes surfaced in their stories, they often integrated into a larger view of the person's life as a whole. I traced the effects that a major historical event, the fall of South Vietnam to the Communists in 1975, has had on the lives of ordinary Vietnamese people who have come to North America, the ways in which they themselves view their situation that foster them as resilient. Among these Vietnamese boat people there were many from North Vietnam. Although they were conquerors, they entered Canada with the mass exodus of the refugees. The split within the Vietnamese community is between North and South. Among the Vietnamese in British Columbia, the issue not only cuts the heart of Vietnam but has controversial overtones in this city as Vietnam formally united in 1975. Canadian immigration does not distinguish between the two regions. The country is united but separate identities remain.

Gathering of Narratives

The primary means of data collection for this study involved in-depth interviews with participants. These interviews yielded a richness of descriptive material that cannot be summarized into tables and graphs. In many ways each narrative was different and could only be understood in the context of that individual's life and experiences. Within

this narrative framework, the significance of an experience and its meaning for the individual took precedence over objective fact. Yet some distinctive patterns emerged from the narratives which were seen as significant by most individuals in their development. Interviews with parents involved semi-structured, open-ended questionnaires. Each participant was read a letter that I had translated into Vietnamese explaining the purpose of the research (see Appendix A). They were then provided with a consent form (See Appendix B).

The narrative study of lives were those of “ordinary” people, many of whom have extraordinary stories to tell. You will hear the voices of the Vietnamese refugee parents and of their children. Vietnamese language was used as the music of our dance dialogue and mingled with Chinese, French, and English. I asked their permission to record the interviews by tape recorder so that I could engage in the informal conversations while maintaining eye contact without interruptions. The tape recorder captured every word the refugees told. After each interview, I then transcribed the tape and translated it to English. I explored relationships between individuals’ stories, their historical and material contexts, and the broader patterns of power relations (those of race, class and gender) that shape and constrain our possibilities and that release our educational imaginations.

My research relied on people’s descriptions and analyses of what had happened to them in their families, in schools, and in communities. Initial interviews ranged from two to four hours in length. Children and parents were interviewed separately. Fictitious names were used. I interviewed the parents together. The parents were asked about their families, their sociohistory, their present lives and community lives. Information was

also sought on the changes they have observed during their lives, their philosophies and pedagogy of their own or their parents on education. Interviews were in-depth, conducted in participants' homes; a context that reflects their life experiences more accurately than contrived or laboratory settings. Interviews focused on the strategies that families used to protect one another from risks and promote resiliency despite poverty, limited access to opportunities, and the disorganization of the immediate social context. From their stories, I explicated their struggles, through which they provided adequate conditions for their academic and social growth. I explored the struggle through which families and communities sustain and maintain serenity for their youth, and unveiled estimation of what is necessary to sustain or improve their children's quality of life within their limitations of this current economic milieu. These narratives contain lived experience and resistance: the site of living flesh.

Listening for Voice – Data Interpretation

My attempt was to examine the dynamics of culture in the development of motivation to achieve academically and the relationship of academic achievement to family and community values. Narratives or storytelling for my research was undertaken to enable the students and their parents to speak for themselves, to call forth their own stories of resistance, of survival, and to recognise their perseverance and unacknowledged stories. Listening for voice is also attentive to silences, timbre, and resonance. Cadence captures its texture and cadence explores its meaning and transports its sound and message to the text through carefully selected quotations. Understanding intimacy of rapport resonates throughout the shared telling of stories and weaving of the emergent themes

Particularly, following feminist theory, I resisted framing my project within the unitary truths implied in many developmental theories, and refrained from creating my own unitary and totalizing truths as I listened to and analyzed the interviews. I tried to avoid creating theories that exclude or do not consider the fragmented, contradictory, ambiguous nature of human experience. In order to begin to make sense of my data, after transcribing and translating the tapes to English, I drew from “The Listening Guide” data analytic method for narrative data to help sort, categorize, and understand the data. I revised the method slightly to fit this particular project.

The Listening Guide was developed by Lyn Mikel Brown, Carol Gilligan and their colleagues in their book Meeting at the Crossroads: Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development in 1992. This method is explicitly attentive to societal and cultural contexts in narrative data. Carol Gilligan highlights the value of studying lives in progress and emphasizes the importance of *listening* to individuals speak about their lives. Gilligan and her colleagues have spent almost two decades conducting research on the lives of adolescent girls and women. Similar to previously cited studies, their approach emphasizes the importance of lived experience. They believe that the words of adolescence can not be separated from the culture and the societal contexts in which they are spoken. The “Listening Guide” illuminates the multilayered nature of people’s experiences of self and their relationships as conveyed through interviews. This method draws out and highlights the complexity of voice and of relationships by paying close attention to the language used by the interviewees. By voicing the relational context of human living and also the dialogic nature of speaking and listening, this method offers a way of tracing and untangling the relationships that constitute mental life, including the

researcher relationships with the narrators and the researcher's responses to their experiences and stories. It involves four stages of readings the data.

The first reading involved listening to the story by focusing on how the narrator tells his or her story. As the reader, I sought to understand the story being told by the interviewee by following the unfolding of events, and listening to the drama (the who, what, when, where, and why) of the narratives. I also paid attention to contradictions or inconsistencies in style, revisions and absences in the story, as well as shifts in the sound of the voice and in narrative position: the use of first-, second-, or third-person narration. From this I could locate the speaker in the narrative. The first reading requires writing about the ways in which I responded to the narrator and to the story being told, and then considered the ways these responses affected my interpretations and understanding of the interviewed.

In the second reading of the interview text, I listened for the "self" – for the voice of the "I" speaking in the story. Without using preexisting categories to determine the self-perspective, the second reading allows the reader to listen to the narrators on their own terms.

Then I created summaries for each topic discussed during the interviews such as self-perspective, academic and career aspirations, perspectives on school, relationships with family members, relationships with peers, views on the larger society (see Appendix C, the interview protocol). I detected themes across narrative summaries. Themes were repeated phrases, terms, or concepts that I heard within and across narrative summaries. I also illuminated the theme across the topic of relationships with friends, family members, and school. I listened to the interviews in a holistic way; trying to capture the most

prevalent themes. When a topic is discussed, it is because I detected a pattern regarding this particular topic. The location of each of the themes varied from being topic-specific to being evident across topics in the interviews when the students spoke about their parents, role models, friends, schools, and communities.

“The Listening Guide” focuses on both the narratives content or *what* was said, and *how* it was said. In the third and fourth readings I attended to the ways people talked about relationships, how they experienced themselves in the web of human life. In listening to the Vietnamese parents and children’s voices, I listened for and against conventions of relationship within a society and culture that are rooted psychologically in the experiences of dominant groups. I was particularly attentive to their struggles for the web of relations and of resistance, and consequently narrow relationships, carrying implicit or explicit threats of exclusion, violation, and, at extreme, violence. I was attuned to the ways in which institutionalized restraints and cultural norms and values become moral voices that silence voices, constrain the expression of feelings and thoughts and space of resistance and silence. I made an effort to distinguish when relationships are narrowed and distorted by ethnic and class stereotypes or used as opportunities for distancing, subordination, invalidation, and oppression and when relationships are healthy, joyous, encouraging, freeing, and empowering or resilient.

The themes discussed in the chapter on friendships (chapter 5) were evident only when the students were asked about friendships (within one topic) and about racism (chapter 6). I asked the students whether they experienced sexism or racism and what these experiences were like. The purpose of this chapter (chapter 6) is different from the aims of other chapters. This chapter is driven solely by my wish to present the students’

responses to questions about discrimination – an experience that I believe permeates their lives, while other chapters discussed specific themes that I detected when the students spoke about their worlds. For example, the themes to appear in chapter 7 about the importance of parents and siblings emerged throughout each interview, not only when the students were asked about their parents. The themes discussed in most of the chapters were evident across or within individual topics. Chapter 7 also presents another study of a life in progress, a deviant story. This case study is of May. Although only a single individual's story, May's story as presented is a tribute to human strength and resiliency.

Realizing throughout my analysis that I can misunderstand or misrepresent what they are saying, I also present verbatim accounts. I recorded the respondent's exact words and usage; so extensive direct quotations from the data is presented, often at length, so that their voices can be heard throughout my interpretation, to illustrate the participant's meanings. Low-inference descriptors meaning that the descriptions are almost literal and any important terms are those used and understood by the participants. I want the reader to hear the details of the lives of the refugee children and parents, and to be guided by the rhythms of the stories

I also draw themes from "triangulation." That is, I use the emergent themes through triangulated data from a variety of sources: first, data from different voices, voices of community representatives, parents, and students; second, from factual evidence, achievement certificates, medals, artifacts, letters of recognition for achievements; and third, observations of classrooms, cultural festivities, and religious ceremonies, and award ceremonies.

Taping the visible and audible refrains spoken and played by the participants and various contexts, emergent themes are recorded in the resonant metaphors voiced by the participants, preserving in a few words a wide range of experience and deep meanings shared by many. Metaphors are also woven into ceremonies and rituals symbolized through art, music, dance, poetry of the ethnic communities cultural festivities, and religious places.

In this study, I do not seek to provide an “objective” or “subjective” account of the participants’ narratives, but rather one that is engaged and concerned: an account that contextualizes their voices and mine within the culture that we share and that separates us. While I have attempted to generate theory from the data, I have never been theory neutral or absent.

The tapestry is constructed, drawn, and woven through the development of relationships. In developing relationships, I search for what is resilient, what works, what is of value, and how life reverberates with the researcher's in order to illuminate our biases, inspecting the historical framework and social structural characteristics that shape participants' opportunities, relationships, activities, and ideologies, not to simplify the life at the cost of complexity and dissonance. As I listened to the life stories of ten students and their parents, I wove the tapestry by the depth and penetration of the inquiry, the richness of layers of human experiences, and the search for ancestral and cultural artifacts.

In this study, I attempt to underscore the singularity of the stories that the students told me. I focussed on the *participants'* perceptions. My study is not ethnography of inner-city Vietnamese youth life. It simply explores the narratives of a group of inner-

city youth over time. Not all topics discussed in the interviews are presented in the thesis. While the students spoke about their siblings, for example, these relationships are discussed only when they relate to the central themes. This thesis presents the themes that I discerned in the interview data rather than all the components of a student's life that may be important. I chose to address those topics that seemed most pressing when the students in the study spoke about their worlds. As it is, the reader will note additional omissions or topics that are not adequately addressed in this thesis. Although my findings are centered on various themes I detected in the interviews, none of the themes I discussed are neat or compact. For example, one of themes concerns the outspoken voices of the girls in the study. What the girls' interviews also suggest that these outspoken voices are only evident in certain contexts and relationships. Representing their voices as exclusively outspoken oversimplifies and thus distorts their stories. In my analyses, I note the nuances within each theme so that their stories do not get reduced to a simple set of patterns. At some point, there are patterns in the ways in which we experience or see our worlds, and these patterns may exist across or within specific class, race, gender, and regional categories. These patterns are not, however, evidence of a unitary self or story, rather they are evidence that experience is always traversed by consistency as well as inconsistency, ambiguity as well as clarity. The focus of my study is on capturing differences as well as commonalities in the ways in which the students speak about their worlds over time.

I would like to record the reality of the refugees as a means to enlighten us to the continuing human struggles in other parts of the world. After transcribing the data, I read the transcript, meditated on and was moved by the pain on each page. The refugees were

brave and courageous in telling the events as they experienced them. The story I present here reflects the tremendous hope and strength of thousands of the Vietnamese refugees who searched for freedom and democracy.

The refugees' stories are then to be pieced together like a quilt, a tapestry, arranged so the refugees and their children can see how it is and has been, can see the lines of connection between themselves, as Vietnamese, as the poor people in British Columbia, and can think about how they might want to be, how they could get there, to their liberation from poverty and oppressions.

Life Sketches

The Girls

1) **Hang** is a beautiful young woman. I followed her life with great interest since she was in grade 11. I interviewed her at the end of her grade 12 after she received awards in 1997. She was born in Vietnam and lived in the refugee camp in Hong Kong for four years. When she came to Canada, she was seven years old. She can speak English, Vietnamese, and Cantonese. She lived in public housing in East Vancouver with her parents, two younger sisters and a younger brother who was born in Canada. She achieved honour standings from grade 8 to grade 12. She received one Civic Award, academic awards, and silver medals for four straight years on honour rolls: Grades 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 honours with top marks. She achieved outstanding awards for French, and English essays. Hang received the Passport to Education, and Outstanding Achievement Scholarship from the two universities (UBC and SFU). I interviewed Hang again two years later in 1999, when she was in her third year at a university.

2) **Van Oanh**: From North Vietnam before coming to Canada at the age of thirteen, Van

Oanh spent five years in a refugee camp in Hong Kong. She lived in public housing with her parents, a paternal grandmother, and an older brother, and two younger brothers, one of whom was born in the refugee camp and the other in Canada. In 1997 when I interviewed her, Van Oanh had lived in Canada for five years. During that time she studied and worked her way quickly through the ESL program at a high school in urban Vancouver. After two years, Van Oanh was enrolled in the regular academic program and received Honour Roll standings in grades 10 and 11. Then she moved to another high school, where she again was an honour roll student, in grade 12, and earned the Passport to Education Scholarship Award.

3) **Ngi**: From South Vietnam, after spending six months in a refugee camp, Ngi came to Vancouver in 1988 when she was nine years old with her parents, an older brother and one younger sister. Her family lived in East Vancouver. She received several scholarships for her 'A' standing throughout her high school years. Ngi wants to be a physician and she is now in third year of a science degree

4) **Hong**: From North Vietnam, Hong was born in the boat during her family's escape. Mary Hong and her family stayed in a refugee camp in Hong Kong for six months. She lived in East Vancouver with her parents, an older sister, and a younger brother who was born later in Canada. In June 1997, Mary Hong graduated from a high school in urban Vancouver and received several outstanding academic scholarships from the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser (SFU) University and other universities. She chose to attend UBC.

5) **May** began her studies in Canada when she arrived in 1992 when she was 15 years old. She advanced quickly through the ESL program at a secondary school in the Lower

Mainland and earned a regular grade 10 class in 1994. I interviewed May when she completed grade 12 and received scholarships. At that time she was living on her own. Two years later in 1999, I re-interviewed May; she then lived with her younger sister.

The Boys

6) **Thin**: From South Vietnam, with his parents, an older brother, and a younger sister, Thin came to Canada in 1986 when he was seven years old. Thin's uncle sponsored his family. The family first lived in Quesnel for one year, then moved to Vancouver. Thin lived with his parents, an older brother, and a younger sister. Thin received outstanding academic achievement awards from SFU and UBC, and he elected to attend UBC. He works as a volunteer in an ER (Emergency Room) at a local hospital every Sunday. He is majoring in science and mathematic, and planning to study medicine.

7) **Long**: Leaving South Vietnam in 1979, Long came to Canada when he was 2-years-old after he and his family spent nine months in a refugee camp in Thailand. Long lived with his parents and a younger sister in Surrey, BC. He has an older brother and a younger sister who was born after their settlement in Vancouver. Long graduated from a high school in Surrey in June 1997 as a top academic student and received outstanding academic awards. He also proved himself to be a fine athlete and leader among his peers. Long was the captain of a wining volleyball team and continued his passion for badminton. One of his teachers described Long as "*a gifted individual possessing truly caring motivations. He is not out for Long but rather how to make every thing better for everyone else.*" Consequently, Long earned the school's Outstanding Service Award. Long planned to complete a Bachelor of Science degree and to eventually become a sport medicine doctor, preferably for the Vancouver Grizzlies professional basketball team..

8) **Vuong** was born in 1979 and has one older sister and one younger sister. He left South Vietnam when he was one-year-old, and came to Canada when he was two-years-old. His father brought him here. Vuong and his father lived in East Vancouver. Vuong received outstanding academic achievement awards from ten universities. For every subject he studied during his high school years, Vuong received over 95%.

9) **Khanh**: Leaving South Vietnam when he was three-years-old, Khanh arrived in Vancouver from a refugee camp in Malaysia when he was eight-years-old. He received outstanding academic achievement awards and is now in his third year in the mathematics programme at SFU. He maintained an "A" average during his high school years. He lives in East Vancouver with his parents and two younger brothers.

10) **Tuen** came to Canada when he was five-years-old from a refugee camp in Indonesia. Tuen lives with his mother and a younger brother and sister in East Vancouver. He was a volunteer math tutor for refugee children at a Buddhist temple. He also received several academic achievement scholarships at various universities in Canada, but chose to go to UBC and now majors in science and plans to study dentistry.

DANCING IN THE DARK: THE PARENTS' STORIES

Traditional psychological research on resilience does not sufficiently investigate the role of socio-political contexts, history and culture in its analyses. As a lens of individualism has been applied to theories of resiliency and achievement in North American psychology, this lens has not helped me focus my inquiry because the questions I asked were related to resiliency in youths who strive for academic achievement and work to meet the expectations of family, community, and the spirits of previous generations.

What motivates the youths to work so hard with a resiliency that enables them to achieve academically? The first part of this chapter offers descriptions of incorporating work on cultural constructions of the self and collectivistic and individualistic cultures. I briefly illustrate theory and research of cross-cultural issues. Resiliency also means different things to different generations. Resiliency for the parents is the sacrifice and the struggle of the previous generations for the survival and the futures of their children. In the second part of this chapter I focus on the parents' story. The plot of the story can be briefly summarized, but it is more difficult to retell this story, because it requires the summary of texture, a spatial and temporal sense, a different way of seeing resiliency from conventional assumptions and traditional empirical expressions

The individual stories I recorded are woven together into a larger tapestry, a collective story of the refugees and of their collective resiliency. The Vietnamese

refugees' story has strategic, immediate value, giving historical perspective to current struggles. It constitutes the heart of cultural survival. It is rarely romantic. There are scenes drawn from the dailiness of refugees' lives, gaunt, repetitive, cumulative images of resiliency.

On the one hand, for the children resiliency means academic scholarship after years of dedicated studies, and in spite of difficult social, political and economic circumstances. On the other hand, resiliency for the parents means sacrifice, hardship endured and about the protection of cultural integrity. It suggests the country, a devotion to sacred land, a stubborn will cleaving to the ways of the heart. The refugee parents' endurance provides their children with a story of collective resiliency, of cultural heritage and traditions that are the collaborative threads that weave the Vietnamese identity. Resiliency as a collective construct, process for weaving family, community, and generations together. After all, these struggles are for the benefit of their children.

The storytelling reveals pain and rage, and it draws the connection between reckoning with pain and opening the path to love and liberation. The parents' story teaches us about the rescue of children, about cultural roots, and about definitions of betrayal from the refugees' standpoints. Endurance lies at the heart of their resistance, and their resistance lies along a continuum of daily life. The more parents remembered, the more they drew connections between memories and new experiences, and the more centered they were in guiding and fostering resiliency in their children's development.

This chapter presents the refugees' stories in their own voices, with minimal interpretation or references. It is a story of war, of communism, of death and imprisonment, of the escapes, refugee camps, and of gender, culture, and generations as

told by the first-generation Vietnamese women and men refugees in British Columbia, whom I interviewed. Hearing their stories, I wept painfully to hear about the people's sad lives. Story after story broke my heart. Everyone, every family had tragedies. The parents' story is not a story of subjugation, but of work, of raising children to hope, and liberation, of resistance and resiliency.

Listening to these narratives I was moved by how deeply the refugees wove their story with the stories of their families. I heard stories of pain, understanding, talk, and wisdom passed on to generations, carrying politics, cultural memory, pain, loss, and connection. Generations past, present, and future, the stories portray the refugees connected, betrayed, catching each other, defending one another.

The dailiness of the refugees' endurance in the ghettos, accumulated over generations, become a story of collective resistance, collective identity, of the Vietnamese's resilience. They had spoken truly of this collective "ethos of mutuality." Social change had come, as their children entered university, but it had come slowly, and through enormous effort, by those who stand on the very periphery of political life. In each of the sections that follow I explore themes common to all these lives: about storytelling itself, on the effects of relationships in the process, on the war, on immigration, on race, and on poverty. These themes, or threads, are not discrete. They braid into one another. The way the narrators envision and compose their lives affects the way they reconstructed their stories. Their map of barriers and bridges defined by their racial, socio-economic identity affects the style in which they confront the personal and cultural contradictions they experience. In each of these stories there were moments of silence and resistance. There were moments of laughter and weeping, of optimism and

pessimism, and of determination and uncertainty.

Cultural Dance

According to Vivero and Jenkins (1999):

Belonging to an identified racial, ethnic or cultural minority community may be important for a minority individual's development of healthy ethnic identity, acquisition of a cultural frame of reference, learning of culturally appropriate social skills, and emotional attachment to the group and the resulting identity. All of these contribute to making this group a *cultural home*...A cultural home is thus a cognitively grasped and emotionally comforting sense of "being at home" with a group of people sharing a stable environment with a similar collective history and practices. (pp. 9-10)

The distribution of cultures into collectivistic and individualistic categories has to do with the emergence of certain themes that occur consistently within a culture. These themes have been studied and measured by a variety of researchers (Hofstede, 1980; Hui and Triandis, 1986; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clark, 1985). A few of the important distinctions are the way behavior is regulated within a culture, the level of connectedness between individuals, the way that individuals are taught to perceive and define themselves, and the goals or tasks that individuals in that culture are expected to reach.

In collectivistic cultures, the individual is guided by group goals and cooperation is the desired pattern of behavior. Fitting in with the group and preserving group harmony while downplaying internal attributes is the primary culture task. Individuals perceive themselves as appendages of the in-group and changes to the self are thought to occur primarily through interpersonal relationships.

Resiliency has always been interpreted from a Western individualistic perspective. As in individualistic cultures, the individual tends to be the unit of analysis. That is, behavior is regulated primarily by the individual; personal goals take

precedence and largely are unregulated by group goals. The major task in individualistic cultures is to reinforce internal attributes of the self (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Individuals strive toward independence and uniqueness, seeing themselves as separate entities from the group (Dumont, 1965; Lukes, 1973). According to Singelis (1994), Triandis (1983), and Triandis et al. (1988), Western cultures, primarily North American and European cultures, are usually considered to be individualistic. Nevertheless, individualism and collectivism have been represented as a continuum, such that some cultures can be identified as highly individualistic or collectivistic while others can be defined as located somewhere in between. Boski (1983), for example, investigated three different tribal divisions in Ethiopia and found that these groups varied greatly in levels of collectivism and individualism even though they were relatively close in geographic proximity. Furthermore, diversity is found within as well as across cultural groups. An independent construal of the self is characterized by an emphasis on personal freedom, expression, and independence (Johnson, 1985; Miller, 1988; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The individual defines himself or herself as separate from the social context and works to reaffirm internal attributes while those with a more interdependent view of the self emphasize the importance of social relationships and the maintenance of interdependence and group harmony (DeVos, 1985; Miller, 1988).

Nostalgia of belonging: Connection to past and present

War Stories

The ghosts of the past will inhibit their smooth progress forward. I think these parents worried that if they returned to old memories, they might be swallowed up by them. Mary Hong's grandfather described: *The Japanese were the most cruel, as I lived*

under Japanese, French, Communist, and Americans. In 1954 under the Japanese rule, they forced the peasants to grow cash crops, while storing rice for their own troops. When they were defeated they destroyed all the crops. Many peasants starved and died on the streets when they poured into towns to look for food. The famine took about two million lives.

Khanh's father reminisced: My family fled the North in 1954 as refugees, heading into South Vietnam as a result of the Geneva Accords. I was seven-years-old at the time but I still remember this period vividly. We were Catholics and feared Communist repression. Before the Geneva Accord we hated the French and supported the Viet Minh. Under the French regime, education was strictly controlled; many villagers were illiterate. This was a deliberate policy of the French. My father told me that in 1946, the French occupied Vietnam but only in the big cities. The Viet Minh occupied the countryside and also the villages. By night, Viet Minh controlled the villages. During the day, the French entered the villages with the intention of killing Viet Minh guerillas. When the French came in they arrested and tortured whoever they found. Once a week the French would sweep through the village looking for Viet Minh. We, my mother, my younger sister, younger brother, and my older brother were hiding in the church because the building was strong and could withstand rifle shots. My brother was arrested. He was hit on the head and his cheeks were burned with cigarettes. He was released because he was too young to be found guilty, but other prisoners were never seen again. The French could not distinguish between Communists and the villagers. So when they were attacked by guerillas they would go to the villages, arrest anyone they found, torturing and killing them. The guerillas were rarely killed. They were very fast, they

fired few shots, then left the village. One day the French raided the village. My house was burnt down, and my mother died in the fire. The communists used the same strategies during American War and the Americans behaved just like the French had done to the Vietnamese. The French took my sister and killed my brother. I was with my father in another village. We never saw her again. Now I realized that everything was influenced by Communist ideas. Even though we did not support the French, by 1954 the Viet Minh showed themselves as to be just like the Communists in their hostility toward religion. When they occupied the North, we were living in Ha No. We saw what other northerners had seen, so we left for the south with the help of the United Nations. But in the villages, the Viet Minh tried to discourage their flight, refusing to give them passes, blocking the main roads, and interrupting the efforts of United Nations to help people to leave. We fled to Saigon. After 1975, after the revolution I saw my sister again, she had been involved in the resistance movement and then Communist party. I then later tried to escape.

Ngì's father told me: In the South after the revolution, I was put in jail because I had been an officer in the old regime. In jail political prisoners were psychologically tortured everyday. It was horrible. VC (Vietnamese communist) didn't give us food so that we could not resist. We were unable to resist. We had to be compliant. Prisoners deteriorated physically and mentally. My health deteriorated. The jail was crowded. It was about 15 metres X 6 metres and contained 150 inmates. There were many failed escapes in 1981, 1982, and 1983.

Hang's mother: We escaped Vietnam (VN) because my husband's family was very rich. Our properties were confiscated after the revolution. We were not allowed to get

jobs because we were branded as capitalists. So we were monitored and placed under surveillance. My husband escaped and got caught the first time with the whole family, 300 people. He was jailed for a year. I was not jailed because our daughter was only 3 years old. They released me. .

Van Oanh's father told me: In Ha Noi, at school we were taught that Americans ate the South Vietnamese, that they opened their stomach to eat the victims' organs. We were told that Americans took every thing from Vietnam. The South Vietnamese did not have clothes, food, etc. The American poisoned the Vietnamese revolution and the Vietnamese people. So we had to donate clothes and food to the Southerners and liberate the South by the American who were very barbaric. No one knew anything about the outside world. Gradually our properties, food, clothes, furniture, etc. were taken away. We didn't have clothes to wear. We all were so hungry and so poor. Mentally we were exhausted, too tired to think. We never had full stomachs. We never had enough warm clothes. We had to wear papers inside our clothes to keep us warm. The temperature in the North in the winter was -10 Celsius. A lot of people had no blankets so they had to use cardboard or papers to keep themselves warm. We didn't have clothes to wear. We had only one or two outfits. After junior high school only Communist party members' children were allowed to continue their education as far as high school or university. Some were sent to Russia or other Communist countries. Corruption was rampant. I wanted to join the military so that I could go to the South and surrender. Life was so hard. It was unimaginable, even though I grew up under that government. No one could think clearly because we were so hungry. They gave us food just barely enough so that we could survive. In the evenings we had to study Communist philosophy and how to kill

Americans. Soldiers had more food than citizens because they received aid from Russia.

Mary Hong's father continued: Lots of people wanted to join the military just to have food to survive. Once we were in the South we could defect and stay in the South. As a member of a Chinese ethnic group, I was not allowed to join the military or to work for any government or private agencies. There were no private companies anymore.

Khanh's mother recalled: My husband was in prison because he was an officer of the old regime. They locked him up in a building which housed of thousands of prisoners. There was not even room to lie down. The prisoners could only stand or sit for the time they served there. I had two jobs in order to support my children. Every morning, I woke up at 3:00 AM, and rode a bicycle 30 kilometers round trip to buy vegetables which I sold on the streets. Afterwards, I went to teach in a school. One of my brothers disappeared after trying to escape. Another brother was sent to re-education camp and when he was released, he died of depression. My mother went crazy because she had lost her two sons and died.

Khanh's mother continued: My father then could no longer endure the hardship and he killed himself. Thousands of former military officers and high-ranking officials suffered physically, mentally, and spiritually in thousands of prisons. Being the intellectuals of the country, they were treated like animals. They paid dearly with their lives, health, and human rights. Moreover, some of them also became victims of divorce, broken families, and infidelity. While they were locked in prisons for years, their wives got pregnant by their enemies, or abandoned their children, or robbed them of their property. Others became crazy. Some became victims of depression and mental illness. Some lost weight and died slowly in great sorrow. Some killed their wives and left

children behind. People jumped to their deaths from the big buildings and bridges. Once in a while, friends were arrested during the night. Other friends were arrested while trying to escape.

The war stories have been repeated hundreds and thousands of time by the Vietnamese peoples to their children everywhere as variations on a theme of protection of cultural integrity, of the country, a devotion to sacred land, a stubborn will cleaving to the ways of the heart. Van Oanh's father shared his experience: *In Hanoi when the Americans bombed heavily in the late 1960s and early 1970s, schools and offices in the cities were transferred to the rural areas to avoid the bomb-raids. School children stayed away from home for years. In each new area the local people had to look after a few students and parents paid for the accommodations. Our classes were in the city halls, or in empty rice fields. Yet some classes were bombed and the children were killed. City dwellers literally carried out their every day activities under underground. So when Hanoi was bombed we were not destroyed. There was no food, light, water, or food. Yet everyday we were told how many Americans were killed. In math classes we were taught about how many airplanes our soldiers shot, how many Americans we killed and how many more we needed to kill. How many tanks we confiscated. I remember that when I went to school every day, each student was required to bring a box filled with rice. We would put the rice in the soup, and we would distribute it to the hungry.*

Van Oanh's mother's history is filled with the memories of her childhood and of the hardship endured as a result of the wars. *In 1954 as a result of Geneva Accords, the country was divided at the 49th parallel. My father left everything: his house, his business, his furniture, etc. to go to the South. But we were not so fortunate. The*

Communists refused to give us passes. When they did then it was too late. We missed the boat offered to us by the United Nations. Our home had gone. We were homeless. But my father had some savings so he bought another house. Now we faced public trial because we had tried to leave the North. Many people were killed, often by their own relatives. Servants, neighbors, sons-in-law or daughters-in-law, or friends, or even their own children were forced to denounce them in popular courts. The Viet Minh trained the poor to accuse the wealthy. The accused would then be taken away. They would either disappear or simply be shot at the village cemetery. Great fear spread throughout the North. This crushed any resistance against the Viet Minh in Hanoi.

Mary Hong's father: During the war against the Americans, Communist propaganda made us believe that they were fighting for their own people in the South, their own freedom and their country, and the Americans were invaders. Suspected citizens were taken away in the middle of the night. Prisoners were killed without being tried, or simply jailed indefinitely for no reason; or for any reason, however tenuous. In the 1950s no one knew about the Communist regime. We trusted them. The whole world had absolutely no idea what was going in North VN. Thousands of people were loaded into trucks, murdered en masse and buried in the jungles, woods, etc. My father and other adults didn't have any experience or knowledge about the Communists, nor of their brutality. In 1954 the United Nation came to Vietnam to observe the separation. Yes, of course, re-education took place for people who had to work for the French, or the supposed perceived capitalist or bourgeois. I was 7 or 8 years old. It was the first time I had seen white people I still remembered when we were living in Ha Noi. We were curious. The UN observers were strictly controlled. They didn't have any opportunity to

meet ordinary citizens. They were shown nice places.

Mary Hong's father described: My view has never changed. I looked after my younger siblings when they were young because I was much older. I took care of them as if they were my own children. I rode a bike in the winter 50 kilometers to pick them up from a school far from the city so they would be safe from American bombing. School children and government offices moved to rural areas away from Hanoi. The children were distributed into the local families to board them and parents had to pay. During late 1960s and early 1970s, Americans bombed the North very hard. We didn't have clothes to wear. It was very cold. We had to wear all the clothes we had to keep warm. There were people who had only one outfit so they had to wear papers to keep them warm. I gave my clothes to my siblings.

The Journey

Hang's mother described: A year later he [her husband] was released. Again his family planned to escape. This time our second daughter was born. She was only one month old. Our oldest daughter, Hang, went with him. I brought the baby. We divided into two separate groups, so that if we got lost, each of us had one child. Then we united in one boat. We spent one week in the boat on the ocean. Wind led us to China. Then from China again the wind led us to Hong Kong. We stayed in a refugee camp in Hong Kong for five years. The first year was unimaginable. We were jailed in the camp. Twelve people in room that was about six meters long. We didn't have salt or fish sauce. This was the retention camp. I did odd jobs to earn money to buy food and medicine for my children. Because we could not speak English and the children had not received formal schooling, no country allowed us to seek asylum

Mary Hong's father recalled: *As ethnic Chinese, we were allowed to leave. We walked to China. We didn't want to go. I missed Ha Noi. I didn't want to stay in China. We planned to go to Hong Kong. We arrived in a province which had camps for returned Chinese from VN. We were kept here for 6 months. In China the situation was even worse. The province was even poorer than North Vietnam. It was like hell. I was very worried about my children's future. I gave them life and I wanted to provide all I could. China was so backward. It was so primitive. VN was bad but China was hell. I sold my motorcycle which I had brought with us when we left VN. My wife was pregnant with our second child. It was like living in ancient times. We lived in the camp for six months. We then secretly bought a boat to leave China. The Chinese didn't care. In fact they wanted to get rid of us because we were not considered as Chinese. Chinese in China were not allowed to leave. My wife was pregnant. My oldest one was only two years old. We boarded a train to another city, and then bought a boat. When we were floating on the ocean, my wife gave birth to Mary Hong. We were floating for one week. Luckily the baby was okay and my wife was okay. There were no complications or infections. We were washed to Hong Kong's shores by wind. From the boat far away from shore, I felt relief. I knew that we were almost saved. I looked at my children and I cried. My dream for my children to have a better future almost came true. Once in a lifetime, I knew my children would have a future. In the refugee camp, it was so crowded; 100,000 people in the camp. I wanted to go where there are no Communists. Once I was allowed to go to Canada, I felt that I was the happiest man on earth. We arrived in Edmonton, and I found heaven. I knew my children's future was secured. There would be no more communists. That's all I wanted, freedom and democracy. No more Communists.*

Edmonton was too cold. I could not bear the weather. We stayed there for three days, and then we asked to be transferred to Vancouver.

Ngi's father, from South Vietnam, described: The last escape, Ngi was 9 years old. We arrived in Canada on May 3, 1988, my wife and my children. My wife is still afraid of the ocean. She has nightmares about these trips even now. The children were very young. Ngi's mother added: The first trip, it was stormy with dark big waves. We were caught and placed on an island for one month, but my husband was kept there for three months and was then transferred to Vung Tau, South Vietnam, a city famous for its port. Ngi's father: On our last escape, we floated on the ocean for three days. When I was released from jail for the fifth or sixth time, a friend of mine had a boat and he wanted me to help him to take him and his family. So I led the boat. We headed for Singapore, which took three days of ocean travel. We landed in Singapore, but we were not allowed to stay there. Our boat was pulled back to the ocean. We were floating on the ocean. Luckily there were lots of ships from different countries. The boat was sinking, Just then, a German ship named Queen Victoria rescued us and asked us if we wanted to go to Germany. We were grateful that they rescued us. Because people on our boat had relatives in the US (United States) and Australia we refused the offer. The ship took us to Singapore. We stayed there for three months. When we were in Singapore, the first few days we were offered to go to the US because I was an officer in South Vietnam. We refused because I was still bitter about what Americans had done to our country. I was determined to go to Canada because I had read about Canadian politics; I came to love the country. So I went to the Canadian embassy. I met the ambassador. Afterwards when I presented him with my documents, he advised me that I should go to the US where

most refugees wanted to go, and because I was an officer in the old regime the Americans would allow me in right away. I told the ambassador that I realized that lots of people wanted to go to the US and I had been offered to go there, but I did not want to live in the US because of their politics. We lost our country because of them. They interfered with our government. They overturned our good government. It was very painful for our country; therefore, I did not want go to the US. Then the ambassador asked me why I chose Canada. I told him that I had read about world politics and about Canada. I had learned that Canada is a peaceful country, and Canadians never initiated or created wars or invaded any countries. I chose Canada because of all these things I had read. He patted my shoulder and said "starting from today, you're Canadian" So two weeks later we arrived in Canada.

Hang's mother draws upon her experience to map out ways of seeing. Her story is an example of how to interpret from experience, and also now to direct our attention to a process of connection between ourselves as refugees, and across many boundaries of difference. *So we were transferred to another retention camp. Here we had more freedom, and we were allowed to work. My husband was sick most of the time. When he felt better he worked outside the camp. They went to school in the camp. We volunteered to work there in the camp. We worked in an orphanage camp. We looked after kids who had lost their parents. Three years later, we didn't want to go to Canada because we had heard that it's very cold and our relatives were in the States. But we didn't want to stay in the camp any longer so we decided to go to Canada. My husband had an operation in the camp. We spent six months studying English, but my husband was often hospitalized so he wasn't able to work.*

Vuong's father: *I left Vietnam because I was an air force officer. As a pilot I was trained in the US and I bombed the North. When the Communists took over; I left my town go to another town and pretended I was just a simple soldier, not an officer and a pilot, but my younger brother and my sister's husband, they were not so lucky. They were taken away in the middle of the night and were never seen again. I was in the re-education camp only for a short time. But after the release, I couldn't get a job because of my background, so I did odd jobs. The oldest child [named Tu Anh] was born in 1978. Vuong was born in 1979, and the youngest, Lan Anh, was born in 1981. I escaped unsuccessfully about 10 times. Then I worked for a company. The Communists were not only very corrupt and brutal but the worst of all was they were uneducated, and they were holding higher positions. Most of them had a grade 6 or 8 education at the most. At this company, the manager was from the North who had only a grade four. He was ineffective, incompetent and corrupt. But he was in the Communist party, so he was very powerful. I was a union labor representative, and I complained, so they tried to put me in jail. Then I tried to escape. They sent a subpoena to my home. I had to leave the country, because once the Communist party does not like you, your life ends. After so many failed escapes, I ran out of money so I depended on the mercy of friends. This time I departed to a different city. I was lucky that I did not get caught. The last escape the boat owner only allowed me to take one child. I had to leave my daughters with my wife. My youngest child was only little more than a year old. But some one had to escape first in order to rescue the whole family later. It's very painful. I missed my children; they were so young.*

Vuong's father continued: *A Communist police boat chased our boat. We had*

only a small boat, 49 of us, we could not lie down or walk around. We could not bring food, because we didn't know when we could we leave. We had only a little food for many days on the ocean. We didn't eat. We gave food to the children. We were then washed to Malaysia. The boat was shattered and almost sank. Then we were transferred to a refugee camp in Malaysia for three months. As a former air force officer and trained in the US as a jet mechanic, I was offered a chance to go to the United States. but I refused because I resented American politics. I chose to go to Canada. I didn't trust Americans.

Integrating Past, Present and Future

Storytelling and memory allow people to return home, but home is seen differently by each of them. It is re-created as a new cultural home for their children in a new country by their stories. The storytellers in this chapter see old memories as a chance to reckon with the past and integrate past and present and to prepare and look forward to their children's future. The dailiness of the refugees' endurance provides their children a story of collective resistance. Van Oanh's family tells another kind of resistance story. This is a story of refugees' resistance.

Reserving Traditions

The struggle to adjust to the new environment frequently produced attempts to preserve and adapts images of traditional families. Hang's mother: *Life here is different than in Vietnamese culture (cried). Here we're comfortable, our children can accomplish their dreams. They are on honour roll every year. But I don't change my view as a wife, and mother. I always respect and care for my husband, for my children. I teach my children Vietnamese traditions, customs, and culture. I don't want them to be*

westernized because we're Asians; we would never be a westerner. We celebrate Vietnamese Lunar year. We carry out most of the celebrations. I don't want to change, to be Canadianized. I cherish our values. Ngi's father: Yes, we are closer to each other, because we feel that here they don't have extended families, such as grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles. They don't have that therefore they need more love and attention. We haven't changed. We still keep strict rules, but with utmost love. We still keep our own tradition. We are not liberal, even though some way they are influenced by the Western culture which is more egalitarian, but for us. No, No. We are their parents. Not friends. We explain to them. We want them to listen to us with love and respect, not with fear. We trained them since they were little. Teach and train children when they're young. We watch TV together. If we don't understand English they will explain to us. But we also use the opportunities to teach them moral values. They were however influenced by the media but I explained to them that TV personalities need to look good but if you're knowledgeable, intelligent, you do not need expensive clothes or heavy make-up to make yourself look good, to push up your self-esteem. We used every opportunity to teach them moral values and reinforce the values of education and learning. We watch TV together, we do everything together. The basic principle is that the family always comes first. Elders placed high value on respect, cooperation, and harmony within the family and emphasized mutual obligations that bound members of a household to each other and to larger kinship network.

Traditional family values have remained strong. Older children were responsible for the welfare and behavior of younger siblings, as the parents have articulated in their litany of expectations. Think's father: *The elder teaches the younger. And the younger*

siblings have to listen to the elder siblings. Khanh's mother: But the brother should be gentle, kind, and proper to his younger sisters. Respect each other. And unite and care for each other. Solidarity. The youngest must respect the older. One time, one of the children showed disrespect, she was immediately punished. The traditional family valued harmony, filial piety, mutual obligation, hard work, obedience, and discipline. Children were expected to be loyal and to respect parents and to all elders. Tuen's mother: Absolutely, they have to respect parents and the elder siblings. Now they absolutely respect each other and their parents

The family members practiced family collectivism that combined the traditional belief in mutual protection and support and with the ideal of equality in family relations. Hang's mother: *We always involve each other in decision-making. We work with each other as a family. Never one individual. In my mind, it has always been my children's welfare that is the most important. I don't have my own interests. Whatever the children like to do I'd like to do too. They are the breath of my life.*

The parents consistently identified obedience, industriousness, and helping others as traditional family values. The themes of obedience, working hard, and helping others are consistently echoed. Khanh's father expressed: *Be useful for this society. Have good education. Whatever they want to stud, as long as they study, we're pleased. Both girls and boys, they spend studying as long as possible. We prefer they get Ph.Ds. So we told them that we are always there for them. We don't force them but encourage them. Every morning I wake the kids, get them eat breakfast and get them ready for school.*

Serving in Silence

Colourful and energetic, the refugee parents sing a wonderful, optimistic, life-giving song, about their own biographies and the futures they envision for their children.

As you will hear in their own words, these parents continued to believe deeply in family, religion, and culture for the sake of their children. As Long's father stated: *We have to raise them [children] to be educated and most importantly, good and moral citizens. Both are equally important. If they don't have the ability to study then they have to get training to be a technician, they can't do manual works, which means they did not try. Hard work is most important. I prefer they have the highest education, but if not they must have some technical training, or any kind of training, for a permanent career. They must be modest and kind to people, because we are Buddhist; life is only temporary, we have to have compassion for the less fortunate. Sometimes the children have to prepare the altar.*

Khanh's father explained: *I told my children that they have abilities and opportunities to study therefore they must try to study. We will do anything and everything to support their education no matter how long it takes. In fact, the longer they study the better. We will support their education to the highest level. We are and we will always be there to support them financially even if we have to go hungry. I also warned them that we, their mother and I, will stay with each other to support them. So they must fulfill their obligation unless they don't have the abilities, then we will accept that. There is no excuse for not pursuing education. Whatever they want to study, as long as they want to learn.* Ngi's father: *We expect that while at school they must study. There is no excuse. If they get bad grades it must be that they did not study enough, but it is not teacher's faults. It is their fault or their parents'*

These collectivistic tendencies have been found in Asian culture (Bond, 1988; Kondo, 1990; Lebra, 1993; Triandis, 1983), Hispanic (Marin and Triandis, 1985; Triandis, 1989), and African cultures (Boski, 1983). The parents emphasized obedience, industriousness, helping others and supporting siblings, and respect for elders, but discouraged egoistic values of independent thinking and popularity, which are most commonly associated with contemporary Western society. Khanh's father: *Even if we had money, we still wouldn't give them money because with money they will go out with friends. We don't want them to be emotionally dependent on friends, just on their family. We don't want our children to work to earn money either. Because we want them to learn to delay gratification, and set long-term goals instead, as our Vietnamese traditions, we don't reward them with money. We teach them to share, to contribute to the family, not be individualistic. Focus on family and community, giving back to community, not just the self. So each of them, if they have any time, volunteer work in the community and in their school.*

Hang's mother's stories are usually brief, immensely powerful vignettes. Van Oanh's mother's work is the work of resistance and the work of resiliency for the next generations. In her story, and in so many others, cultural heritage makes the collaborative threads for holding family and community together which after all is for their children.

In light of these differences, values orientations at both the individual and cultural levels would be expected to affect definitions of achievement, attributions for achievement, and effectiveness responses to attributions. So striving for success, in the sense of achieving the primary tasks emphasized in a culture, is different in different

cultures. Tuen's mother described: *In the Buddhist family activities we teach a three-word motto: compassion (to others), knowledge (to determine needs), and involvement (acting courageously based on knowledge). That is, if you have no compassion, you will not treat others well; without knowledge you are blind; but without involvement, your knowledge is useless. Knowledge without an action is useless; you cannot just sit. That is what we taught our children. We live in the spirit of those three words. When they get into arguments, I try to reprimand them by reminding the children with those three words. If they have jealousies, I explain that they lack involvement; if they have rancor, I point out that they lack knowledge. In this way, I show them that events of their everyday lives revolve around these three words. All of which are concerned with helping people, sharing, and learning.*

All the parents envisioned the future as it being largely in their hands to support and guide their children. These ideas circulate in the community wherein the children were told that they could do a great many things, irrespective of the dominant group's attitude toward the refugees. This braiding of understanding of oppression with a sense that the individual must keep trying to overcome obstacles is reflected in the children's discourse.

The notion that the individual and family is responsible ultimately for his or personal outcomes is nowhere more clear than in the narration about schooling. This notion of family responsibility runs through many of the narratives and matches the assumption that the individual is ultimately responsible for his own position. Kanh's father expressed: *At school, their teachers are their parents.* Added Long's father: *We expect them that while at school they must study. There is no excuse. If they get bad*

grades it must be that they did not study enough, but it is not teacher's faults. It's their fault or parents. The parents narrated their desires for their children, it is always in terms of school: they should pay attention in school; they should study hard; they should do their homework. The children then tried desperately to make it in the future.

Listening to Van Oanh's mother: *I told my children that when I was little I wanted to have an education. My parents loved us and wanted us to be educated, but my situation didn't allow me to pursue it. So now I have my own family I want to fulfill my obligation as a woman, as a wife and mother. I always respect and love my parents and always fulfill my duty as their daughter. I want to share what I have with my parents. So when I have extra money I send it to my parents, before buying anything for myself. I want to sacrifice for my parents, husband, and my children. I want my children to share the same values, sharing and sacrificing for family, not to their individuality. We have to share our materials and caring for others. As Vietnamese women we have to sacrifice more. We never put ourselves first.* Placing oneself in a "line" of women, as Van Oanh's mother described her life, there was a loving unwillingness to see herself as separate, autonomous, or concerned merely with personal interests. In poverty and hard times, as these women often describe, Hang's mother rose to the occasion. She worked extra hours, took in neighborhood children, sewing, cooking meals, doing laundry. She kept the family together.

This is another story which teaches us about the rescue of children, about cultural roots, and about definitions of betrayal from the refugees' standpoint. This is a piece of the oral history of Tuen's mother. Endurance lies at the heart of their resistance, and their resistance lies along a continuum of daily life. Tuen's mother's resistance, cemented in

the abiding love she had for her children, is a testament to the inner strength many of the Vietnamese refugees have displayed. Life now, at the time she was interviewed is still not easy, but it is infinitely better: *I left my husband because he was abusive and he had many affairs. He was rich and powerful, so many young girls fell for him. I then escaped Vietnam and took my children so that my children could have a better future.*

In the context of Tuen's mother's life, of the resources, choices, and options she had available, of her will to act, of the importance of belonging, and believing and loving in the lives of children this is also a story of resistance. It is a story of a woman's refusal to submit to the ravages of poverty and oppression: *When I left my husband I didn't have any money. I borrowed money from my friends and relatives and opened a sidewalk restaurant selling desserts. Then I saved up enough money and took my children to escape.* It is a story of a woman who drew upon her own strength and on the collective strength of other Vietnamese women: to pull oneself up and during the crisis, make something from nothing for their children's survival.

This magic of making something from nothing is described by the refugees over and over again in countless stories about their mothers and fathers. Telling as a cultural autobiography, recalled while in Vietnam Ngi's father described: *Our children under the Communist regime and as they were growing up...they didn't have any toys (wiped tears, everyone was crying) I dug dirt on the ground. I dug soil in the ground and baked it to make toys. I carved and crafted pots and pans, cars, for my children I taught them myself. My children did not have friends because I was ostracized as a traitor because I had been an officer under the old regime. My children were outcasts. Then even the children of the communist officers, they wanted to play with my children's toys. At first,*

these officers did not allow their children to play with my children because I was an officer in the old regime, but then they let their kids play with my kids. They came to my house often they even called me "daddy." Even their own children they didn't care. At the "Children's New Year," their children came to my house too because I didn't work at the time, even though my financial situation was better at the time because my friends helped me with some odd jobs. I didn't mind. Kids are kids; they are innocent. Their kids didn't have toys to play with, they were most of the time unattended or unsupervised.

Endless Love

The refugees offered their children the wonderful source of unconditional love. Long's father told: *In this new culture, I only give my children love. I believe love is powerful which will guide my children to accomplish to take responsibilities as a good citizen. With my love I wish I can guide them based on the ethics of love and caring relations. Love will keep us together, my children will come back to us because of love and caring. I don't expect them to make lots of money or give money to us. It doesn't matter how much they make... I don't care... just that love is reciprocal. I give to my children with all my heart and soul. To us the most important thing for our children is love. They are loved. I believe that the reason why children don't do well, or go against their parents' wishes because these children don't receive enough love. (they were crying and hugging each other).*

Khanh's father agreed: *I believe that if they disobey you perhaps you were not close to your children. If you love your children you would try your best to discipline them for their best interest. Your children would not rebel unless you don't love your children. My children trust us*

The depth of the love of the children for their parents, and of the parents for their children, shines through these narratives. They struggled on, the refugees, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, bonded, embattled, and battling with each other, with other children who came later, with poverty. This is a personal story of refugee's problems. But it also a political overture orchestrated out of the dailiness of Mary Hong's family's life and of the refugees I knew. Their stories, related in fiction and in oral histories, provide us with the evidence of another way of seeing these issues, and of thinking about resistance or of resiliency. The strategies they employ in their daily lives are relative to their conditions. Mary Hong's father: *In Vancouver, at first, I worked as a bus boy in a Canadian restaurant. I liked the job. I had two jobs. I managed to organize my work hour so that I could be home with the kids in the morning before they go to school and after school. I came home in the afternoon to be with the kids when they got home from school. I then had an accident which broke my arm. Now my right arm is weak. I couldn't do heavy work anymore. So I had to quit that job. My brothers bought a limousine for hire. I drive the limousine on the weekend. And now I work for an international adjuster as an interpreter and drive limousine on the weekend. They pay all the expenses. I work on my own time. When the client is at the hospital so then I have to go the hospital to meet them. I like the job because it's flexible.*

Everyday Struggles

Families arrived in North America in fragments. The nuclear family was often incomplete. When Vuong's father, for instance, escaped Vietnam the last time, he brought Vuong with him, leaving his wife and two daughters. In 1990, ten years later, the daughters received permission to reunited with the father in Canada. The mother had

become a stranger to her son, Vuong, and the father had become a stranger to his daughters. *When I escaped in 1981, I brought my middle son Vuong who was 2 years old, and two daughters stayed back with my wife. I had to work so that I could sponsor the rest of the family. I was alone raising my boy. He only knows me as a single parent. Six years later I saved enough money so I sponsored my wife and my daughters to come here. The marriage didn't last long. Six months later my wife left me but my children stayed with me.*

Resettlement in pieces complicated and exposed refugee families to many risks. For the incomplete families, reunification proceed slowly; loss of contact because of the war, imprisonment in Vietnam, or the escape to a safe havens aggravated the wait. Family reunification in stages such as these forced families to make continual adjustments to internal changes. Cultural gaps, financial strains, and crowded housing created high levels of anxiety and stress among Vuong's parents and children. This encounter produced tragic results. Vuong's parents separated. Vuong's father claimed: *I'm their mother and father. Sometimes I'm very tough as if we were in the military, but sometimes I'm very soft and sweet. I pay attention to manners. They have to have grace and good behavior, respect the older, be modest, and compassionate. I encourage them to work hard. But I was closer to Vuong because I brought him here and raised him by myself when he was only 2 years old.*

Vuong's father: *I'm looking through my living room window, waiting for my children and they are my future, the only hope and joy. I feel sorry for other parents who have bad children. These parents sure have no meaning of life to live. I'm unemployed now but I am old. I am unable to do construction work any more. It's too heavy and*

tough so I don't really know. I am a construction worker, not a pilot so my wife left me. I have to work hard to raise Vuong and now my daughters. Here I am not worried about hunger or being homeless, but I feel like an outsider even though I have been living here for almost 20 years. I don't feel I belong. There is no opportunity for us as Vietnamese. Lots of time I felt despair. We have no hope to make a better life. The children with their higher education... I hope they will have a better life than I have had. People here have no compassion, no sentiment. I still feel I have no place to call home, a homeless soul. As a former officer I still have to maintain my dignity and integrity. As a Vietnamese we lost our country. I'm sad. Most of my friends were killed during the war, in the re-education, and during the escape. I don't have anything to look forward to as a future. My children are my only joy and hope. Many nights I feel life is meaningless without my children. Racism has shattered my spirit. With education I hope my children will not have to experience what I have. I don't save any money because I want my children to have enough money for their education. So I can't dream. Everything requires money, planning for future, for retirement is out of my reach.

The material and cultural conditions for Vietnamese among the poor and working class are in crisis. Vuong's father continued: *I didn't have any training so I went to work. I was also a Jet mechanic. In the States, Vietnamese vets, my colleagues, got job training or jobs. But in Canada we didn't so I had to work as a labourer while raising my son. As a single father it was hard as Vuong was so young. And I needed the money to sponsor my wife and daughters. I worked as a construction worker. I didn't have a license so I only got low pay for very hard work. I was just trying to survive every day. After work I had to rush home to pick up Vuong from day care and came home, cooked*

for both us, only father and son. It was a very hard work. I was not in a union, only Whites can get unionized jobs. We tried many times but no Vietnamese ever got the jobs. None of the Vietnamese vets with training, education, etc. ever got those jobs. So we gave up applying for unionized jobs. In his despair, in his dark living room as well as his bedroom, a place of hopeless shadow, Vuong's father's soul fired with optimism: At his graduation I was very proud. My hard work has paid off. I am the luckiest father.

While one of the mothers I spoke to was on welfare, it wasn't always so. Most of them worked outside the home before they had children or worked at different times so that one parent could be home with the kids. Think's father described: *My wife is a seamstress in a factory. She makes minimum wage, but if she could sew more items she could get paid for the quotas. Sometimes she makes more and sometimes less. When the children were small she did not work full time because she didn't have a permanent job. She took care of the children when they were small. If she worked, she only worked part time or was on-call.*

Some worked at home sewing, sweat shops, homemaker, or fast food services. What is most stressful is looking for employment, not being qualified for any of the available positions in a tight economy, and being Vietnamese in BC. Some of the women also discussed unfair treatment as the result of prejudice and discriminatory actions from others in the workplace. Ngi's mother: *When I got here I got a job in a tailor shop. I work for a small shop. I have been working there for two years. I can speak a little English. I like it there. I work for them like working for myself. I try to get the work done before the break. When there are urgent orders, we work continuously and ignore lunch or breaks. Before that I worked for a big sewing factory, there were lots of*

Chinese who were very brutal to us. These Chinese workers tricked Vietnamese workers. They took our tickets which marked how much work we had done. I skipped lunch to meet the quotas, but the Chinese workers took our tickets. So we spent time looking for them. I told my children that we are Vietnamese. We have different skin colour. We will never be like whites. We must keep our values and traditions which are our identity. No matter how bad it is we would work it out so that we can stay together for our children. They can't have only one parent. Ngi's mother story is graphic. The powerless responsibility for the lives of children, the despair and violence of poverty; women whose labour to create a decent space in an indecent system is perpetually mocked. The refugees coped. This coping is a form of resistance

The mothers described their work. They work long hours at various jobs. They also had to make sure their children were safe while they were out working. Many of the women had to quit their jobs because they did not have anyone to watch their children, too much time was spent away from the children, and or employers were unbending in their scheduling of shifts. Think's father described: *My wife always makes extra food for the next day. When the children get home from school, they eat and then watch TV, and when we get home at around 5 pm we all start to prepare dinner. When they have exams we'll do the housework. After dinner, each will clean up, wash dishes, etc. Then they all go upstairs to do their homework. Then before they go to bed, they gather in the kitchen to have snack and milk, and then they go to bed at around 10:30 or 11 pm. When my wife did not work, she looked after the children. Sometimes she has to work on the weekend, and I'll look after them.* They focus on improving the quality of daily life, and on strengthening the connections between people in family, at work, and in community. In

the context of society in which the quality of daily life is continually undermined and in which connections between people are continually threatened, such strategies, which form the sinews of life, are strategies of resistance or resiliency. The borders between home and the public sphere of work became more difficult to negotiate.

The stress described by these women is linked to their desire to work in the face of scheduling conflicts and the lack of available childcare. Perched at the bottom of the wage labour structure, these Vietnamese women present employers as insensitive to the needs of their children. Some of the mothers, as a consequence, decide not to work outside the home at all while the children are still young, thus entering the welfare system. *I sew clothes at home and a company buys my products. I make a little extra money. We are qualified for public housing. We like it here. We receive assistance.* For Hang's mother, working outside the home meant that she did not have *time to spend with the kids, and it made it hard for me.*

All of the parents I interviewed expressed strong spiritual sentiments. Buddhism is a source that can be tapped into when and if needed in order to keep them strong, to enable survival. They spoke in a discourse punctuated by sentiments of both responsibility and redemption. *We taught them Buddhist philosophy. We present fresh fruit to the altar every week. We tell them [their kids] about Buddhist Bible, at dinnertime, at every opportunity. We fast once a week in a Buddhist diet.* And Tuen's mother has a different, if as yet partially articulated vision of the world, of her relationship to it, of her place within it, structured by the dailiness of her life, of her work, of her survival.

Mary Hong's father: *Now the older children get home later than 10 p.m. They*

*always come to my bedroom and let me know they are home, and tell me where they were and about their friends. They talk and trust me and ask my advice. And as always they want me to tell them stories before they go to bed. Now they are big now I only kiss them on their forehead. I miss their childhood when they sat on my lap, and listened to my storytelling. The kids like to talk to me more than to my wife. They don't hide anything from me and I talk to them in very a non-judgmental way. This vision of change articulated in disjointed or abbreviated images tied somehow to earth and growth, in an estimate rooted in experience, in their knowledge of the connection between growth and change in the human spirit, in their stubborn will to survive, appears repeatedly in the refugees' stories. Tuen's mother: *Leaving Vietnam and entering Canada was a big event which changed our lives. When we left Vietnam we didn't know if we would survive the journey, but we made it. So more than ever we tried even harder for my children, because we have been given a second chance in life, my children's future. So we greatly appreciate life.**

Khanh's mother told: *In the future I think I'd change because my children will be older we don't have to worry about them. They will look after us. In the future, when my children grown up have their own families. I want to help them to look after their children. I want to live nearby them so if they need me I will be there for them. When I'm retired I want to go back Vietnam to visit my parents and my hometown. But I want to live here to be with my children. I worry if my children don't have a good life. So I want to be available for them. The one wish I have is to visit Vietnam, my hometown.*

This vision of change is correlated to balance, to the interconnection of all things, to the urgent, deeply felt terror of the refugee parents that if you separate one thing from

the whole, moving swiftly forward simply because it yields to your intelligence and will, you upset the balance upon which all life depends and in ways which cannot be easily, if ever, restored. The parents' vision here reflects their Vietnamese heritage, and the understanding they gleaned from it. And the dailiness provided the informative thread for a collaborative weaving. The themes included the war, the escape, the race, food, spirit, birth, the body, and refugee camps.

Vuong's father: *The kids now are very independent. They make their own breakfast and pack their own lunch. But I watch them when they leave the house, making sure the girls dress properly. They walk to school and stay there for lunch. Then go I off to work. They get home at 3:30 p.m. I call them at 3:40 p.m. to make sure they are okay. Then they have to do their homework. I get home at 5:00pm. We make dinner and the kids wash dishes. And then they have to do their homework. When the kids were in elementary school, I taught them how to cook. So when they are in high school they all know how to cook. So after dinner they went to their rooms and study. Two girls in one bedroom, and Vuong has his own bedroom. On the weekend we go get groceries together. My children and I had such fun together. They wanted to stay with me even though I was very strict. Sometimes when I had to work late I phoned the kids and told them what to make for dinner. They saw their mom every weekend. Now the oldest is 19 years old. She is at Langara College. The youngest is in grade 10. I monitor each of them. This is the meaning of daily life. And in daily life refugees have always laboured to give meaning to their experiences.* Ngi's mother: *I have been staying home for months. So I do all the household work, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, vacuuming, and shopping on the weekend. In the morning, I make breakfast even though my kids can*

cook, I am worried that they may skip breakfast if they have to do it so I make breakfast and make sure they eat. And I also pack their lunch. In the morning they're usually very busy, they'd leave for school without having breakfast nor bringing their lunch. Since I stay home because of my injury, I do most of the housework. When the kids get home, they always want to eat, so I always have food ready for them. They are usually hungry and tired. After they eat they then have a nap and they then do their homework. But when I was working, my husband got home before me. He often picks up the children from school. When I was working, my husband and the kids made dinner. Now I do. The eldest one comes home around 1:30 p.m., except Thursday he has lab works. When Dan gets home he likes to eat. He eats rice every morning. His sisters, because they're still in high school, come home at around 3:00pm. Sometimes my husband picks them up from school.

In the context of the refugees' life, of the resources, choices, and options they had available, of their will to act, of the importance of belonging and believing and loving in the lives of children this is also a story of resistance. Describing his mother, Ngi's father related these feelings. *I was around 10 years old. My father left the family often; he was in the navy. He had other women. When I was 14 years old, my father left and never came back. Is it because you experience life without a father or parents. You don't want your children to have a life like you, without a father or a mother. I do everything. Children must have father and mother, it will affect their mental and emotional well being very early. I bought old books, my house was like a little library. Everyday I taught my children. Every night we taught our children until we came here, because my English is limited.*

This integration is one of the reasons for the extraordinary resilience of each person's character. Khanh's mother told me: *We have not changed. Life here is much easier because we don't have to worry about the Communists. We do whatever we want. It's up to us: success or failure. We have to do our best. Now the river is smooth, and the sea is calm. Our life is like a boat, the rough wave has left, we are sailing smoothly. We are satisfied. We are here, we appreciate the basic opportunities and freedom. We are together and we value this. I don't have to live under surveillance. We love each other even more. We went through hard times together and now we're going through peaceful times together*

The Families' Curriculum

The parents reported recounting their own stories to their children: of their childhood in villages, of family life, of politics, of war and of resistance movement. These stories formed an oral tradition, passed on to their children. Hang's mother described: *Before they go to bed, every night they gather in my bed, and I tell them stories. I read a lot of Vietnamese stories, and history so that I can tell my children: stories of warriors, of our ancestors, and of our heroes who gave up their lives to fight for our country from the Chinese, French, Japanese, and then Americans. I tell them Vietnamese legends, our famous people and our religion, the time when I met my husband, our wedding, our hardships and our escape, as well as stories of sadness and sorrows, and heartache. In each story, I also include moral lessons, and life lessons. I never run out of stories because we have 5000 years of history. They love every moment and every story told. They should never forget where they came from. I always want them to remember these stories, and never forget.*

The parents were teaching storytelling to their children. In Vietnamese culture stories are often handed down from mothers to daughters, fathers to sons and grandparents to grandchildren. Storytelling constitutes the heart of cultural survival, acts as moral guidepost, and teaches life lessons. Khanh's father: *After work at 3:30 pm, I pick up my wife and we go grocery shopping. Then we go home. Then all of us, the children, gather in the kitchen to help prepare dinner. The kids tell us about their day and we tell them about ours. We tell them our story of the day and what we saw during the day. Whatever we tell our children, we formulate a story and it always carries moral and life lessons. It's never just a conversation; it's always a lesson story.* Family folklore is rarely romantic. Stories of pain, understanding, talk, and wisdom passed on to generations, carrying politics, cultural memory, pain, loss and connection. Past knowledge experiences were transmitted to the children as well as an extensive understanding of the cultural traditions. The Vietnamese language and their old country heroes were maintained and passed on by the parents to their children who welcomed these experiences and were determined to succeed and resist oppression. These stories often integrated into a larger view of the person as a whole. Their stories transpired values upon their children. They are about having respect, about having decent values, about how to live properly, and about how to survive in complex cultures. Cultures shape stories in different ways, and stories pass on their children's consciousness as it has been shaped by the specific cultural, racial, and class experiences. Story telling is a powerful tool for teaching and learning for their children. Some of the parents reported that their "story-telling" is usually woven into evening activities after the children's homework. The parents' stories locate their cultures and designate meaning. The

mothers' stories transform and provide their children with social and cultural tools to protect themselves and to foster resiliency to their children. These stories also act as a moral guidepost for children. The stories provide a sense of belief and value systems. In the context of the history of the physical and cultural destruction of the Vietnamese peoples brought about by French and then Americans, storytelling became central to the struggle for the cultural integrity and physical and emotional survival. The storytelling, oral tradition, is the connection of meaning and the preservation of Vietnamese cultural identity. These stories, set in kitchens, in basements, and in laundry rooms, show us that although these are places of hard work, they are also place of conversation, art, learning, love, and comfort. From these scenes and stories we see the ways in which the Vietnamese refugees' ideas about change and progress and about growth and parenting to their children may be interpreted through the Vietnamese refugees' experiences. These are stories of the commonplace, personal stories of the exiles' problems. There are also political overtones orchestrated out of the dailiness of the exiles' lives. Experiences about race, class, and sex are put into word pictures. The entrapment of women, race, colonialism, and wars are drawn, bearing witness, out of life, so that what has happened (and still is happening) will not be erased. The stories are pieced together like a tapestry, arranged so that their children can see from these stories how their parents sacrificed.

Hang's mother told: *My daughters want to know about my childhood. They asked me why I didn't have an education. I told them about the war in the country where I lived. In the daytime we were worried about American soldiers when they came to our town. They drank a lot and sang loudly. They walked around the town looked for VC; they were young, innocent and evil. The countryside's houses are not made of concrete,*

but of bamboo and wood, with wide spaces in between. In the evening we worried about the VC (Vietnamese Communist) guerillas. And the bombing from Americans, and disappearance of neighbors. They [children] were very fascinated by these stories. They followed me to the kitchen, to the laundry room and to the basement, whatever I'm doing they want me to tell stories. They like our famous Vietnamese song "long me thuong con nhu bien thai bing" 'mother's love is larger than Pacific Ocean' and want me to sing this song over and over. We believe that the Vietnamese traditions are the parents' responsibilities for their children for everything from cradle to grave. Personally, I wanted to do lots of things, but because of the war my wishes were not fulfilled. So now everything is for my children. The only thing I have is the endless love for my children, for each of them. I explain to them everything in my story. I don't tell them what to do. Every day for at least an hour we talk to each other. Four of them gather in my bedroom, or if they're busy, I come to each of them in their bedroom. That is our ritual. I use my love to guide, to teach, and to shape them. Every weekend they gather in the kitchen and prepare a big dinner. In the Summer, we go to Seattle to visit our relatives. During the drive I tell them stories, make up meaningful stories, every day life stories.

Long's father: Now we can't help them with their school works because of our limited English so we talk every night about our homeland, our lost country, the old time...story telling.

As teaching and learning for their children, "story-telling" is usually woven into the evening activities after the children's homework. Story telling is used not only to dispense knowledge, to create emotional climates, but also as a model for family curriculum. The family curriculum is ritualised, intentional and educational. Stories

function pedagogically and socially. Pedagogically, they serve cognition and literacy; socially they help children see the connections between themselves and others, and between themselves and the world. Stories can serve different educational purposes.

The refugees' stories also transmit values and remind their children of the narrowness of the communist hegemony: the burning of books in every house, libraries and schools, because the Vietnamese communists said they came from a "decadent culture." They often integrated these into a larger view of the person as a whole. The parents believe that the paramount route that their children can take to belong to Canadian culture is through education. They realise that they represent the end of an era, a way of life that exists now only in memory.

Witherell (1995) says stories are valuable because they do not limit or exclude others by race, socio-economic status, and even various family dynamics, and sharing stories results not just in interpersonal growth, but also in an awareness on an individual's own limited viewpoints. According to Witherell stories are therefore communal, in that they "serve as a means of inclusion, inviting reader, listener, writer or teller as a companion along on another's journey (p. 41)."

The stories of liberation are told over and over. The legend of two women warriors is told again and again. For example, two sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi led an uprising against the Chinese invaders in which one of the sisters was proclaimed queen after their rebel army forced the Chinese officials to flee to Canton. As an expeditionary force recaptured the Red River delta for the Han Dynasty the Trung sisters are said to have committed suicide. They became immortalized in song and story and today are still held up as exemplary of traditional Vietnamese values. There are also

many versions, cultural variances, historical nuances, and continuities to be traced through migrations and settlements.

These ideas about the web of life are drawn from tribal consciousness and from what we are today, associated with value of sacrifices for the next generations. They have been passed on in stories one generation to the next, and these parents are passing them on to their children. These are stories for their children about how to live, about how to see beauty, about how to love, and about how to stand inside one's own experience, one's own "dance of life" and see out clearly and without fear. Above all else, these stories are about teaching their children how to love and to be responsible for themselves individually and collectively. Tuen's mother: *In each story it always conveys messages that encourage and guide them to study hard. I told them that I didn't have an education. They have opportunity so they have to study hard so that they would have a better life. At every dinner I tell them stories about my childhood with their grandparents, our tradition, histories. A little bit of story every day to teach them morality, to be decent persons.*

The parents provided their children with stories upon which to build their children's sense of culture, racial, religious and class identity, the Vietnamese identity. Hang's mother described: *I told my children that we are Vietnamese. We have different skin colour. We will never be like whites. We must keep our values and traditions which are our identity. No matter how bad it is we would work it out so that we can stay together for our children. They can't have only one parent. Children, family, ritual, community, connection to the earth, a belief in life, the need for beauty and art are some of the most evident of the Vietnamese values, the meaning of daily life. The stories have*

in common, however, an invocation of values, a vision of ancestral communities, and a centering in values associated with the refugees' everyday lives. They provide a philosophical model of a system of thought in which there is a reverence for the female principles as the source of life, and a balance between women and men, race, and class, all complementary as it were, in the arrangement of human affairs. Khanh's mother: *I tell them all these stories. They still remember. Every story carries meanings and moral lessons. It's ritual. They wouldn't go to bed if I didn't tell them stories. I tell them of their story since they were babies.* Ngi's father: *my children are very confident; they can do as well as Caucasians. They don't feel less. To me girls can do as well as boys. Remember the two famous women in our history: Trung Trac and Trung Ngi, these two women took the armies and fought with the Chinese.*

Conclusion

Under conditions of colonization, persecution, and subordination, telling stories is a way of articulating and passing on a systematic collective, a sustained way of knowing. The refugees' ideas, artifacts, imaginations, and heritage have been fragmented, uprooted, interrupted by wars and by immigration. Many things have been deliberately destroyed. Yet, many fragments have been, and are being, recovered through the parents' storytelling. In these ways the notion of an alternative way of seeing resiliency has been kept alive. Everyday life experience is preserved in the evidence that there is and always has been an alternative way to the beliefs, priorities, and values of resiliency from the dominant culture. Children, family, ritual, traditions, culture, community, connection to the earth, a belief in life, the need for beauty and art are some of the most evident of the refugees' values of resiliency and of resistance, the meaning of daily life.

The legend of woman warriors is an imaginative incitement, an instrument of survival, of resistance, sometimes an avenger wrought from injustice, from the imbalance in the arrangement of human affairs, from women's fury and the passionate need for redress. At times, the story of woman warriors is manifested in life, then enveloped in legend, refueling the imaginative spiral. In this way, storytelling acts as a historical force.

The story of liberation for the Vietnamese people, for women, is true, whether or not it is historically verified. It exists in the minds as vision, potent and empowering, a source of pride and self-esteem, an incitement to emulation and action. This story, and many others like it, provide ancestral connection, by weaving collaborative threads of resistance and resiliency and by inspiring comfort and confidence in the struggles ahead.

The powerless responsibility for the lives of their children, the despair and violence of poverty and the refugee parents whose labour to create a decent space in an indecent system is perpetually mocked. The refugees coped. This coping is a form of resiliency. They focus on improving the quality of daily life, and on strengthening the connections between people in family, at work, and in community. In the context of society, in which the quality of daily life is continually undermined and in which connections between people are continually threatened, such strategies, which form the sinews of life, are strategies of resiliency.

THE DANCE OF LIFE: THE CHILDREN

In this chapter I trace the common threads weaving through the lives of the youths in my study. I reflect on the sturdy warp, which constitutes the themes in the actual experience of telling, and listening to storytelling. I reflect on the colorful threads spun out of multiple realities from which I weave, and that might have to take the shape of three dimensional tapestry, a form open to improvisation, to complexity, to singularity. The message and meaning of each refugee student's story came from the interaction, of our duet, the litany of experiences. The context in which I speak and write is inextricably linked to the meaning I give to the concept, the situatedness of my thinking, of my being. I invigorate my ideas with the lived-world of the narratives in which I am engaged. The situatedness of my thought is not confined to or defined by the role of "objective observer," but it is enveloped of my by subjectivities, of my multiple and often contradictory identities that have shaped and continue to shape my take on the world and its take on me.

The storytellers in this chapter are extraordinary people. In the statistical sense, from this select group, there is no way one could hope to generalize. I asked each student to choose a place where he or she felt most comfortable meeting, the time of day, the day's tempo and schedule, and the rhythm and frequency of our conversation. In each of these safe spaces, the sessions were consistent in rhythm and ritual. It was a ritual dance of greeting, trusting and knowing. For the youths in this study, the progress of their

academic resiliency segued upon a deep grounding, on the collective survival of their parents. In the previous chapter I illustrated a larger frame in which to understand the parents' piece of this story that supported resiliency in their children. For the Vietnamese, resiliency means different things to different generations. For the children resiliency means academic scholarship. The refugee parents' endurance provides their children a story of collective resiliency, of cultural heritage and traditions that are the collaborative threads that weave the Vietnamese children's identity. As a collective identity it is an instrument for holding family and community together. After all, these struggles are for the benefit of their children. Resiliency for the parents is the sacrifice and the struggle of the previous generations for the survival and the futures of their children. The parents' endurance accumulated within their collective spirits over generations, and became a story of collective resiliency that formed their individual children's responsibility for their dance of life around their academic achievement.

For the students in this study storytelling allowed them to go home. Each has learned the power of double consciousness: the special insights that derive from it, the generative discomfort and restlessness it causes, the interdisciplinary explorations it demands, the improvisation and resourcefulness it engenders, and the creativity that grows out of loss. They know their lives and accomplishments depend upon resisting the measurement of their souls by others' tapes and upon their ability to transcend the impositions by charting a new and daring dance of their life. Their narratives were enhanced by memories and experiences that captured feelings, with ideas and with emotions. The narratives revealed the dance of their life journey, a dynamic syncopation

of home, and staccato sound of schools, a chance to reconcile roots and destinations. All these narrators were confident and articulate.

For each, language was the primary mode to express feeling and thought, to organize and shape their realities. Vuong's language was crisp and lucid. He assigned specific, defined meanings to his words and used them with precision. Van Oanh, on the other hand, used expansive, dramatic language laced with metaphors, with difference, and with multiple interpretations. She spoke with great passion, dramatizing contrasts, exaggerating, and relishing the irreverence in her imagery. Mary Hong's sesquipedalian sonorities wonderfully segued between her life events. Hang's storytelling with mellifluous flow of sophisticated terms mesmerized the audience. Think's language was organized. He was vigilant in his observations of detail. Think captured your attention and lured you into the centre of action. Long's language was more lively, and cautious as he relived the drama. His body moved, crouching down low as he tried to deflect the assaults of the gang of white students who jumped on him in his school, and the white teachers who said: "you must have done something to provoke it." May, majoring in biochemistry and mathematics, used a language that was neutral and correct, conforming to the rules of empiricism and moral rectitude. It felt measured and precise in comparison to Ngi, Hang, and Mary Hong's.

From 1997, I spent more than two years following the students engaging in deep conversations and interviewing each one on two occasions. The young storytellers are now in their third year in universities, each in their late teens, a developmental place from which we look backward and forward. In this chapter, you will also hear the parents' story of unwavering commitment and sacrifice to their children that promote their

resiliency, enabling the children to succeed. And the children told equally potent stories of commitment to their education achievement for their family, community, and nation, and creativity, of the deliberate and imaginative ways they have constructed their lives and future. They could feel the imprint of their ancestry, their heritage and their culture influenced by Confucian tradition, and rehearsed values taught by their parents. They told intergenerational stories that underlined the power of history and of ancestry: the wars and trauma revisited by each generation. They came to realize how difficult it is to reverse historic patterns of colonization. Having hit their stride, discovered their strengths, developed a craft and found a voice, they became more daring. Their dance of life is marked by hope, and purposeful design. They are resourceful, self-critical, and courageous in pursuing their dreams and in reconciling and connecting like spider webs to their roots and identity. Their success is partly due to their ability to embrace and live with contradictions.

The Dance of Life

On Culture and Tradition

Traditional Vietnamese values influenced by Confucianism placed a high value on education, but educational opportunities in Vietnam under the Communist regime were very limited by political affiliations, class and gender; only privileged families and young men were encouraged to do so. This has led many Vietnamese to flee the country in the search for freedom and democracy and most importantly, for a better education for their children. Vuong's father recalled: *Now my youngest daughter is in grade 9. When they were in Vietnam the oldest daughter had stayed with her grandmother in the countryside in Vietnam so she was not able to go to school. So when she came here she*

was actually illiterate. It was very sad. So now here in this new environment, the parents particularly emphasized education for their children, both boys and girls, as a means to escape poverty and class oppression. Vuong's father: This year I am very happy because Vuong got scholarships, more than I have ever dreamed of. I want my boy and girls to have higher education. Without education their lives will be hard.

Vuong's father: When they were studying I checked them but I couldn't help them because I didn't understand much. But I check them every night while they are studying and check their report cards. Vuong got over 95 % in every subject and every year. He got a congratulation letter from our premier, and he also received \$800 from his school.

He got a \$10,000-scholarship at UBC and is going to UBC this year. Other universities offered him scholarships too, UVIC, SFU and Oxford in England. I want him to be here so he is going to UBC. In his despair, in his dark living room as well as his bedroom, a place of hopeless shadow, Vuong's father's soul fired with optimism: At his graduation I was very proud. My hard work has paid off. I am the luckiest father.

The Vietnamese traditional family system carried the indelible marks of the centuries of Chinese domination that began in 111 B.C. Confucianism has long been deeply rooted in Vietnamese society and its family system. The family is the chief source of social identity for the old and the young. The family is the strongest motivation of force in life, much stronger than religion or nationality. The family generally consists of father, as head of the family, grandparents, the mother and the children, the sons- and daughters-in-law, relatives, and also all the spirits of the dead. In this study I visited ten families. In every house that I visited there was an altar with a picture or stature of Buddha and the family's ancestors' photographs. Confucianism

prescribes communal salvation, emphasizes ancestor worship, respect for authority, the belief in consensus, and a willingness to put society's or the families interests before individual interest. Ngi's father: *I attended parent-teacher meetings not for their academics but for their behavior or attitudes. To us modesty, kindness, respect for the teachers and friends and to become a good citizen is much more important than to have a snob child. No matter how well they do in school they have to maintain these value: being community oriented, having respect for other human beings, acting with responsibility towards our community. When I was in high school I brought gifts such as chickens, eggs, fruit to my teachers to show my appreciation and respect. I had to bow to my teachers. I bowed to them because I respected them not because I was afraid of them. They have to respect their teachers. They have to study so that later they can help their siblings and people around them, and our Vietnamese people. Since we have been in Canada, our relationship is closer and closer and more intimate.*

The students in this study, except May, believed that their parents give them courage. Van Oanh revealed: *I am motivated and study more and more because that makes my parents happy. So I don't want to make my parents sad. At first, I wanted to study for my parents, then now I want to study for myself and for them. My parents never tell me what to study, but my father tells me indirectly and hints. I know that he wants me to study law. They don't tell me directly; they beat around the bushes. I want to study law and psychology.* Their desire not to disappoint their parents became the motivation for their achievements and resiliency. They repeated, in the second interview, that they wanted to make it because of their family. Van Oanh: *I want to do well so that I could get a job to look after my parents.* Many students in the study stated

similar themes: they wanted to succeed in their lives to honour what their parents had done for them. As Van Oanh revealed: *The more I tried the more that I pleased them and when they are happy, I tried even harder. I don't want to disappoint them.* Their motivation for doing well was not based on wanting to reap the rewards from their parents, but rather, as Ngi said: *I owe everything to them.* Van Oanh: *I worked to help my parents out because we were new immigrants and my parents could not speak English so it was hard for them to get jobs.* More particularly, they implied that they had more desire to pay back their mothers because their mothers, according to the youths, had more difficult lives, than their fathers (Chapter 7). They did not take their mothers for granted.

Patriarchal order defined the status and the role of each family member. The father, the authority figure of the family, made all the decisions. Ngi's mother: *I still keep our tradition. I have not changed. I don't want to. My husband comes first. But he always asks me my opinion, and he respects me. Even though now I am in Canada, even though women here have more freedom, I always respect my husband and my children. They come first.*

Khanh's father: *Now we don't have to remind them to do their homework. I don't make them to study. The schedule was already established since they were little. They have been trained since they were little. They have to practice piano. But the oldest does not like piano. The second one practices about an hour. My children, if they succeed, one part of it is our responsibility and if they fail, it is much more our fault. That is the reason why I try to arrange everything for my children. They should not*

have any free times. In my opinion, they should not have free times. After nap, they do their homework.

Education is highly regarded as a means of mobility, clear rules of conduct, constant self-cultivation and the importance of face-saving. Ngi's mother: *We always tell them to be in their best manner with honesty and dignity. I'm very pleased because they are good kids: I don't care if I am poor. I don't care if I don't have nice furniture. I have everything: my children and their goodness as human beings. Most importantly, to them, their education is their top priority.*

Research on Vietnamese families in North America indicates that education and hard work are among the salient values that these families brought with them to their new environment (Zhou and Bankston, 1998; Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1991, 1992; 1989; Vernon, 1984). Think's father typified this: *They [the children] have to do well in school. So my wife and I then developed strategies as to how to deal with a particular situation. We worry that they 'd be too Canadianized, that is, having too much freedom, and too much socialization. They'd lose the focus and our values. We tried to control and manipulate, to shape them when they were in high schools. That is the crucial age to shape them to proper path. Now we are less vigilant with the older children. But they still tell us about their daily business. Saturday they don't have to study. Sunday they have to study and prepare for the week. In the summer, my wife and I have to work. Every summer the children have to take summer courses in July, Math and English. It becomes a pattern so they don't complain. The older siblings select courses for the younger. I don't understand much. During summer school, they don't have to do their homework that much. In August, they stay home. But they have to do all the house*

chores. Before we go to work we give each of them an assignment, write at least three or four pages of English. Even though I don't understand the content I still order them to write. I don't really expect them to do 100% but 50% is okay with me. But my intention is to help them with their self-discipline and not to have too much free time. In the summer, in August, they tell us their schedule, their time. It's dangerous to let children have too much free time.

In their study of Vietnamese refugees, Dorais, Pilon-Le, and Huy (1987) contend that parents in Quebec City were unanimous in considering higher education for their children, and regard this approach as a strategy to ensure economic success and upward social mobility. Think's father: *But the more education the better. That is what I always tell my children. Think is like his brother, always plans, organizes and sets goals. He wants to study medicine so he is studying very hard. Hung, my oldest son, one year his grades dropped and he was not admitted to UBC. Reluctantly he had to go to a technology two-year program. He got up at 4 am went to school, and attended evening school at Langara to improve his grades so he got into UBC a year later studying electrical engineering. I was very pleased for his determination because I wanted to see him get higher education rather just be a technician. Now he is in third year. He is goal oriented; he sets up his goals and is determined to accomplish them. I don't know much about the educational system here. I don't know what my children study specifically, but I am confident that they are working very hard to achieve their dreams and our dreams. I always use sweet, gentle and loving talks. Kids need that. We shaped them when they were little.*

Coleman et al. (1987) found that students' achievement was affected least by facilities and curriculum within schools, but that families provided tangible supports such as income and social positions, and intangible supports such as family stability and expectations for future achievement. Recent research has found that dropouts are more likely to come from large families (Natriello, Pallas, and McDill, 1986; Rumberger, 1983; Wagenar, 1987), a characteristic negatively associated with academic performance in most segments of the American population and as risk factors in risk and resilience studies. In this study, each family has at least three children and that is consistent with Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy's findings indicating that family size, promotes a high level of schoolwork among Vietnamese children because siblings work together helping and tutoring younger siblings in a well-integrated family environment (Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1991, 1992; 1989). The students, who are academically successful, in this study came from large families which had more than three children. Van Oanh described: *My two younger siblings and I are very close. We play with each other. I help them with their schoolwork.* Long reported: *My brother helped me with math and science. That's why I'm good at these subjects."*

On Allowance

The students, further divulged that they were indulged by both parents, mothers and fathers, who rewarded them with money for achieving high grades. But they did not receive an allowance. Think said: *My parents reward us with money for our grades. They got \$ 5.00 for one A.* Vuong's father: *Vuong made lots of money from me.* But the kids were discouraged from having a part-time job before grade 12. Khanh's father: *I didn't want them to work after school, and didn't give them allowance. But I give them*

money for having good grades. It's just an encouragement for them to study hard. If they wanted anything I'd buy it for them. And Mary Hong's father, like other parents in the study: I don't give them allowance, but always keep emergency money in the drawer in the kitchen and when they need anything my wife and I will buy it for them. I don't want them to work either. My oldest daughter started working when she was in grade 12, but she didn't work before that. Vuong's father: I don't want them to have money. With money they want to spend and may become too materialistic. I want them to be simple. The girls were not allowed to wear short skirts or open-necks or low necks, no high-heel shoes or make-up. The boy has absolutely no long hair. I sleep in the living room so I just sit at the couch and watch them when they go out. So they wouldn't dare wear any things without my approval.

Caplan, Whithmore and Choy (1989) note that rewarding children with money for academic achievement is a common practice among Vietnamese and other Indochinese parents in the United States (p. 105). The boys and girls were discouraged from having part-time jobs prior to grade 12, their only allowance came from the rewards they received from their parents for academic achievement. In the Vietnamese family, however, the mother is the most important person in managing the family's finances and is known as minister of family's finances. The mother keeps the money for all family members. Khanh's father described: *If they want to work to earn money, I don't really want them to. We don't want them to work to earn money now because their priority is to study. Even if they earn money, their mom will keep the cheque. Their mom keeps their money. We never give them money for spending or allowance. If they need anything their mom will buy it for them.* Ngi's father: *Even when they get paid*

from the Cadets, their mom keeps their pay cheques. They never complained. My wife makes their clothes and cuts their hair.

The family functions as an economic unit. Think's father described their activities *We go shopping on Saturday, and the kids clean the house. If one has an exam then the rest will do the chores, but that one has to for others when he or she has time. We show them how to spend money, teach them how to watch for sales and what to buy, when to buy, and how to spend money. Their uncle gave them a car but we told them to think carefully; is it worth it to use the car: insurance, gas, maintenance, parking, etc. They should save this money and buy bus fare for three years. Save the money for the tuition. So they gave up the car and take the bus to UBC.*

On Hope

Out of this resiliency, of endurance, social change comes. But here it comes slowly, and time is measured in generations. Changes are marked by the ages at which the children of the refugees will enter university. Most of the mothers in this study only got through elementary school, but their children received scholarships to go to university. In Long's family, Long's parents' oldest son is graduating from a medical school, a testament to the refugees' resiliency. Then gradually their oldest will escape the poverty. This also happened in Think's family. Their oldest son is graduating with an engineering degree. A few others had gone before, and more would follow; this small rupture in the cycle of poverty would be widened. The story could be read as one's luck, or as one's own personal pay-off for their hard work in school and for their family's devoted efforts. This individual reading is true. But it is only one reading, and it misses the larger and more significant frame.

Each of the youths envisions the future as being largely in his or her own hands, and this is very common among these youths and their parents I interviewed. *I want to travel and to finish my degree. Five years from now I want to be working on my Masters or PhD and then I should have a boyfriend,* said Mary Hong. And Khanh described: *I receive scholarships at SFU every year. I am majoring in biology and chemistry. I was given a scholarship at UBC too but I turned it down because I like SFU. It's smaller than UBC and more Vietnamese.* Ngi: *I have been awarded a scholarship at UBC so I'm going to UBC. I'm majoring in science and aiming to study medicine or to get a Masters and Ph.D in Nursing.*

Current data on Vietnamese families in North America indicates that children and adolescents are highly motivated to achieve educational goals. Zhou and Bankston (1998), and Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore (1989, 1991, 1992) found that these tendencies toward high achievement were evident from the initial entry into formal education and this standard was maintained throughout the school years.

The girls and the boys were not only enthusiastic about school, but also were very committed to doing very well. Khanh stated: *I am doing very well with my studies, and my parents are very pleased with my grades. And my sister and brother are also happy about their grades. Last term we got all A's, with the exception of one B.*

Khanh's mother expressed her view: *I hope that they will be successful in pursuing an education. I have taught and shaped them through their childhood and adolescence. I believe they are concretely formed, that is, they are good persons. When they are in university I can't help them much but I will always be there to support them. Higher education is important so that they can think critically about racism in this*

country and as poor refugees we have to escape this poverty. Also it's always very difficult to get a decent job so they have to have higher degrees, higher education, higher training in order to get the same jobs as the whites.

The notion that the individual is responsible ultimately for his personal outcomes is nowhere more clear than in the narrations about schooling. Hang described: *I tell them [parents] what I am taking, or studying, and show them my report card. My mother opens the envelope first. If I have lower than A's my mom will encourage me to improve but for a particular subject that I don't have the talent for, like math I only have A- my mother understands that I tried hard. So she understands. University courses are more competitive. So I study on the bus.*

I heard recurring motifs: themes of optimism, of hope, of anxiety, and of fear. They believed that they could reach their ambitious goals through hard work and persistence. Hang: *I want to get a Ph.D in Geography. I want to do research in Vietnam for my graduate work. Geography there is good, especially in the country. UBC's Geography program is the best in the world. Long, for example, You want to do something. You have an opportunity to do it. The youths felt motivated and obligated to work harder for themselves, their families and their communities. Think: Five years from now, I hope I will be in medical school and working in the ER It's more exciting. That's why I volunteer to work in the ER at the hospital. I study most of the time.*

Mary Hong spoke of her choice: *Because the problems with the nerves in my hands I have to get treatment, so I stay home now for a year. My parents think that I'm just too stressed out because I have always been very competitive in school. They said that I should complete my Bachelors; they think just study and complete the degree. But*

to me, I am taking it seriously not just finishing it. I have lots of serious thinking to do. I want to make sure that I'll study what I am good at and interested in and I want to make sure I'd do well. Hang explained her anxiety: Not enough time to study, and the weather. I don't like cold weather, because I don't want to get sick. That may affect my studying. So my mother buys me lots of sweaters.

The weaving of an understanding with a sense that the individual must keep trying to overcome obstacles is reflected in the students' discourse. Khanh expressed: *They [parents] always tell us to try and that if we don't try hard enough we won't make it because we are a minority and it will get harder and harder. And that if you can't explain what you have learned it's worthless, you have to know more and more. They expect my siblings to work hard too. They check our report cards every time. My siblings are also doing very well. They got A's. Tuen said: Schoolwork is my top priority, because it's so important. It leads to a better future, and it depends how much I put it in, the more effort I invest in education, the better I will get for my future. Without education I will be nothing. I will not have good jobs, I will not be a manager, I will be at the bottom. If you don't have higher education, you will be looked down upon. Van Oanh responded: My main concern is education. I have to have at least a bachelor's. Other concerns are kept in the back burners. I want to study law or psychology. If I decide to study psychology I want to get Ph.D in forensic psychology. I'm fascinated by the subject.*

And Think: Now they [parents] don't ask me about my grades anymore. But I want to get good grades so that I can get into medical school. So I'm pretty busy. I'm preparing for the MCAT. I'm taking a course for this. So this term I have about 9

classes. My first year at UBC, it was a big transition and adjustment. I didn't get all A's. In my second year I basically received A's and now I am at the beginning of my third year. Besides my regular classes that I have to take for this year, I'm preparing for my MCAT exams. I'm sitting in biology and chemistry first year classes to refresh my memory for the MCAT, and sitting the fourth year classes for my next year. I also work as a volunteer in the ER at the hospitals. I work in a Submarine shop on Sunday. So I'm very busy. I don't have time to go out I'm also sitting in the MCAT preparation classes. I also taking a writing course for my MCAT exam too. In the MCAT class, it teaches basic chemistry so I just sit in chemistry and biology classes and math classes. I minor in math so that if I don't get in medicine I will get in Education to become a math teacher. But my first goal is medicine and then teaching. My parents know that I want to study medicine

Some of the girls and the boys in this study prefer the Arts subjects in which they reported excelling at school, but Ngi's comments typified the similar response from the youths: *I have to work harder in math to get good grades. I'm interested in English and Modern Languages, but at the university I feel that I could never get good grades in Arts subjects. Math tests too, they're either a right or wrong answer; no subjective opinion so I received high marks. I'm interest in Arts but I am worried about the biased marks. So I decide to study medicine, taking science courses so I don't have to worry about the instructors' biases.*

The students in fact are inspired to "make it" by the difficulties they see around them. Khanh's father typified this: *We told them that we didn't have these opportunities when we were growing up because of the war and poverty. Now his mother and I are*

working very hard to provide them the opportunities. If they love us and themselves they should study hard. Think, for example, acknowledged: When I was in high school, my parents were very strict. I had to do well. When I brought my report card home, if I had a bad grade like a B, then in the summer I had to take a summer course. I was rewarded for having good grades. My parents do not give an allowance to us, but give us money when we have good grades. Thirty dollars for all A's and if we got B's, we would lose our freedom. We would not be allowed to watch TV during free times or we would have to stay home.

Khanh added: Every day when we get home from school, we eat and then watch TV. Then start to do homework at 6:30 until 10 or 11. I only take a short break, every night. We don't go out often. We only go to restaurants only for special occasions such as a birthday. We don't take vacation because in the summer we have to take summer courses. At dinnertime we talk about what happened during the day. But I don't tell my parents about my problems because I don't have problems. I always do well in school. I don't talk to my brother about problems. My parents listen to my opinions, as I grow older.

Long told me: In grade 10 and 11, in the summer I took a math course because I wanted to get ahead in math so that grade 12 would be easier. I had Caucasian friends. My Caucasian friends did relatively okay but not great. They had problems in math. They were mediocre students. Their parents were professionals. They enjoyed having good times more than Asians. I was treated well by other students. There were no Vietnamese in my class. In high school marks were important to me. I stayed up late to study. I am a night person.

Hang described her schedule: *I spend two hours for each subject to work on at home. I get home at 1:00 pm eat, and then watch the news, then I start my schoolwork at 2pm. Then 6:00 pm I then help my mom to prepare dinner, but usually my mom does everything because she wants me to study. So I study from 7:00 pm until midnight. But I take a break in between to watch CNN. I get up at 6:00 am and get to school at 8:00 am. Sometimes dad drives me to school or we carpool.*

The students told me that they want to be role models for younger children through their involvement in the youths activities at their temple, church, community services, and in their own ethnic community. Because of the devastation in the Vietnamese community, they are more determined than ever to make a difference.

Although Van Oanh described her family as "very poor," she did not place much value on the accumulation of wealth. She has a larger vision of her future, which included getting an education, learning, and working hard. Like all of the youths in the study, Ngi felt: *school is the most important. I worry about grades. My parents usually can read my face when I am sad so they usually talk to me and comfort me. I am sad when I don't get good grades.*

To the boys and girls studying to be a better person, to help their parents, to be compassionate, kind and generous to others are their goals. Khanh displayed his accomplishments: *Here are the medals and certificates of achievement. The yellow one is for leadership, the other one is for initiative and sportsmanship. And these are the certificates from school for academic achievement. Since grade 8 every year each of us received two certificates. At the end of grade 12 we then received a large scholarship to the universities. I prefer SFU.* Ngi explained her activities: *I received the same*

certificates from grade 9 to grade 12. I was in the top 10% of the school. This picture was taken last year when I was in Victoria, on training for the Navy. We go for training in the summer. We went to Quebec, Toronto, Montreal, every summer for training and learning etc. We attended meetings every Wednesday, so after the meetings we have to stay up late to do our homework, and practice piano.

On Responsibility

The inner-city Vietnamese youths, when speaking about their school performance, credited their successes to their families. Some implied that if they lacked ability in some subjects they should work harder to have a better result, and this belief seemed to prevent feelings of hopelessness. They believed that they could work harder to achieve academic success. Ngi acknowledged her responsibilities: *During weeknights my parents prefer us to stay home to do our homework. If I have go out it is only for schoolwork, so my parents trust me. Also I don't like partying. My siblings and I don't go out. School is very important. I enjoy schoolwork. It's stressful when I don't get A. But I would forget and try to work harder. The schoolwork is not that competitive but in the honours program it's competitive. My parents want me to get good grades. Now they don't insist, but they encourage me. But when I have a bad grade and they don't say anything. I feel bad and I work harder. I want to get good grades for myself, I know what to do. They insisted that the problem lay with their own "efforts" and "weaknesses," Long, for instance, described: They [parents] asked me about my school. They checked my report card every time. They'd get mad if I had a B. They wanted me to get all A's. I had only a few B's all these years. I had a B in French; I wasn't good in French so I didn't do well. I wanted to do well, to have A's. When I got an A my parents*

were happy so I felt happy. So when I wanted to go out I would say that 'I am doing well so let me play too.' They couldn't put anything on me so I wanted to do well so that I could go out. My parents always insisted that we must get good grades. But I didn't discuss in detail what course to take or what career to choose. I didn't think that I had to discuss that with them. As long as I know what to take and what I want. As Long said, My brother does extremely well because he works harder than I do. He has more goals. Every subject he got over 90%. He has a lot of influence on me. He is an example for me. But I don't compete with him. I just feel great. I watch TV more than he does. He is more disciplined than I am. When they didn't achieve the grade they wanted, they blamed themselves for not working hard enough. They sustained mainstream cultural values about individual responsibility and effort. They unyieldingly maintained that their difficulties in school were primarily or exclusively due to their lack of effort or understanding of the concepts.

Mary Hong is very perceptive. Her knowledge of the relational world springs from her experience. She is grounded in that experience. The differences she can readily pick up in teachers' expectations can lead students to differential achievements: *I didn't prefer any particular subject but it depends upon the teacher. If a subject is taught by a good teacher then the subject becomes interesting which motivates students. There were some subjects I thought that I'd prefer to take, but then it was taught by a terrible teacher. I then lost the interest for that subject. To me, for high school students, bad teachers can be dangerous for students in their decision in choosing right subjects. We only wanted to attend the courses that were taught by the teachers we liked. When I had a good teacher I had A.* And adults' expectations, Mary Hong continued: *School is*

important to me and my family. It's my priority; that's all I do. And I want to do well in everything. I feel good when I do well. I remember when I was in grade five I got an award and I felt very good. From then on adults expected me to do well, teachers for example. I didn't expect myself to do well, but when I was expected to do well I then worked harder to meet the adults' expectation. It's a compliment when I was expected to do well. It didn't bother me. It motivated me. Since then I always wanted perfect marks because it's what teachers expect from me so they gave me good grade too. Sometimes I could feel that I didn't do that well, but I still got top marks. I think because of the teachers' expectations so they gave me top marks to meet their expectations. It worked in both ways, the teachers felt good and I felt good. I then tried even harder so that next time I'd not disappoint myself. We never talked about these expectations.

Ngi reported: at home I spend about 3 to 4 hours a day on studying. I spend lots of time on physics and biology since there is so much information. I like literature. I only like math when I do well. I prefer arts. The students have been taught through movies, television, school, and even by their families to believe - that "with hard work and determination anyone can succeed." The effect of this belief is that those who do not succeed have only themselves to blame.

Van Oanh described her education: My parents insisted that I should get A's. They checked my report cards. I always tried my best and my parents knew that. I wanted the best for myself so my parents are confident in me that I would do well. Long explained: When I had lower than an A grade, they [parents] didn't worry because they knew that I would try. I didn't get allowance. But when I needed money my parents would give it to me. When I was in high school, I didn't work during school, but I

worked in the summer, at the PNE (summer fair). Then I kept the money. There are rules that I didn't go out on the weeknights. I watched sport shows. My brother and I are not given many rules but my sister has to follow more rules. But my brother did really well. He got all A's. I don't like fashionable clothes, but my brother does; he has more clothes than I do. I use my own money which I received from Christmas, gifts, and work to buy my clothes.

Van Oanh, May and Thu knew that they could point to racism and oppression of minority as a cause of minority students' failures in school. They resisted it. Yet, as May, Thu, and Van Oanh knew about the quality of their education, and the unfairness of their teachers (Chapter 6, on Race), they also knew not to make a fuss with authority figures who promoted inequality and the idea of individual effort, responsibility and success. These students knew it was too risky

Having examined the value placed on education by the students in my study, I asked the following question to elicit the views, of parents and children about the quality of education for girls and boys: Do you think girls should have a different education from boys? What are your expectations for your daughter and son? If there are differences in your expectations between daughters/sons, why are there differences? What are your aspirations (wishes for future success) for your daughters and sons? If there are differences in your aspirations between daughters and sons, why are there differences?

All of the youthss believed that their parents supported equal education, equal expectations with regard to education. The parental pressure on the boys and the girls to achieve academic goals is not only high, but sustained. Mary Hong's father: *I want my*

children, daughters and son, all to have higher education, as much as they want. I treat them equally. The parents have the same expectations for high achievement for their children of both sexes. Khanh's father: *Our expectations for our sons and daughters are the same. I want them to be well educated. If they prefer educational path I will encourage them to develop their full potential.* Ngi's father added: *There is no difference between aspirations or expectations for our daughters and son. We expect them both to do well. They should have A's. A B is a red warning. When they got B's when they were in junior high, they would be reprimanded. Now if they got B's we encouraged them to do better. But now they want to do well so we do not need to tell them. We want our boy and girls to have the highest education possible, no matter how long they spend time or money for their education. We are always and will always be there for them. It's our honour, our obligation, and our greatest pleasure to support our children.*

The parents emphasized education as a ladder to climb up and out of oppression and of poverty. They wanted to give their children a vision of empowerment, of beauty of life, and of hope for future. Long's father: *I try to maintain our Vietnamese values, but we are more flexible rather than too strict, we explain to them rather than push moral lessons on them. Starting at grade 10 they have to take summer courses, English and math, every July. I let them have more free time. We use tactics that invoke their love and sympathy for us so that they will try harder to have a better life than we do. We always tell them to appreciate the opportunities being offered to work harder to accomplish things, to have education so that they will have a better life. We use every*

trick as long as it works in encouraging them to be a better person, to study hard. We would use that trick over and over until it no longer works.

Khanh's father: It seems Asian people share similar values about children's moral values and obligation...that is my children, I expect, in any way they are able to look after themselves and the society, people around them. That is my happiness and my greatest satisfaction. Particularly for this society, if my children have any talents to contribute to this society, to this country.

The children in my study were constantly reminded of their duty to respect the elders, to take care of younger siblings, to work hard, to make decisions only with the approval of their parents. As Vuong's father described: I pay attention to manners so they have grace and good behavior, to respect the elders, be modest, and have compassion. I encourage them to work hard.

Mary Hong: On the weekend I have to work or do my volunteer work. When there is a big celebration I definitely take my grandparents.. I enjoy time there. I watch others, and meet others, and the monks. So we pray and chant. And afterwards there is lunch. I then help in the kitchen to prepare food for the Buddhists. Recently I don't go out with my parents that often because I have to work. I only go grocery shopping with my parents.

On Career Choice

In addition, while the majority of the students are open to parental suggestions in decision-making, except May and Thu (because they do not live with their parents), they are striving to extricate themselves from their parents' direction as they entertain ideas of independence and value autonomy. Nine out of ten in this study clearly asserted they

make their own academic career decisions. Hang made the following comments which typified the others in this group: *They [parents] should not [make career decisions] because it reflects their wishes and dreams which may not be useful for their children because it's a different generation, culture, and individual differences.* As Long reported: *They want me to be a doctor like my brother. Whatever that makes the family look good. Now I study computers, I don't want to study medicine. They would kill me if I studied to become a teacher because teachers do not make as much money as doctors do and do not have a high status as doctors have. Both my father and mother want me to study medicine. Parents should not choose a career for their children because they would choose what they want, what they dreamed of, not what their children are capable of. I would kill myself if my parents choose a career for me. My brother studies medicine because he likes it not because of my parents' decision. He is 22 now. He has one more year then he'll complete his program.* The parents would choose a career for their children because of the parents' desires and dreams not from the children's interests or ability. Mary Hong noted: *My parents never told me to be a doctor, lawyer, or dentist, etc. But definitely I don't want to be a doctor because I don't like blood. I don't know what I want yet. I am interested in psychology. I'm taking a year off because of my medical condition. My scholarship has been deferred until I return to the University. In my opinion, parents should not choose a career for their children because the parents may want their children to choose a career that makes the most money or a career of the parents' dream, not that of the children. My parents want me to study something that is easier for me because I'm physically weak. They want me to be a professional but with*

no pressure. , May Hong's response is evidence of separation from traditional Vietnamese norms relating to the saliency of parental authority

These values constituted a source of direction, guiding children to adapt to Canadian society. In this collectivistic culture, maintaining group harmony and fitting in are viewed as the primary cultural tasks that lead to favorable evaluations of the self, while in individualistic cultures, being unique and standing out is important for positive cultural evaluation.

The students in this study were high achievers; they maintain high levels of academic performance. Like other populations of students, some showed strong preference for math and science as subjects, some preferred courses in the Humanities. They all feared for the biases of instructors, because of their race (refer to chapter 6), in the courses. As they tried to circumvent this situation some of them then focused on Science subjects. But some were willing to take the risks. These Vietnamese girls also knew their occupational goals were hindered by societal constraints.

The girls and the boys in this study emphasized the importance of family and educational values. During the interviews they indicated that their primary worry is achieving and maintaining an A grade average at school, in keeping with the expectations of their parents.

On Home Language

Van Oanh, May and her sister, Thu, began school in Canada in their teens with less than a full command of English. Most of the parents in this study spoke very little or no English. They also lived in linguistically isolated neighborhoods with other co-ethnics. This area of concentrated poverty is divided by race and ethnicity. Racial

polarization is a fact of life in British Columbia. And their children were attending schools where their peers overwhelmingly spoke either foreign languages or nonstandard English. Linguistic isolation makes English acquisition even more difficult. Children living in the isolated neighborhoods do not have much contact with people who speak standard English. Nevertheless, the children faced tremendous pressures from parents to become proficient in English. The parents and children agreed that English acquisition is necessary for success in school, but should not be at the expense of Vietnamese language proficiency. In fact the Vietnamese children are bilingual. Because of the parents' limited English language skills the children are required to speak Vietnamese at home. The non-English speaking parents pushed their children to do well in schools, as the parents at the low social status in the society see schooling as a means to upward social mobility and also to improve social contacts within the ethnic group. The refugees believed that in Canada basic education is equally available. The traditional Vietnamese view of education as a source of prestige has made parents eager to have their children successful in this educational system.

The students in this study speak Vietnamese at home to their parents but English to their siblings. *We speak Vietnamese with our parents but in English with each other, brothers and sister*, Long said. Caplan et al claim that speaking Vietnamese language at home helped the families to cope with a variety of problems by strengthening emotional ties between non-English speaking parents and their bilingual children, by sharing wisdom in stories read in Vietnamese, and by reinforcing mutual and collective obligations among family members (Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1992). This finding is consistent with other research which showed that ethnic language abilities contribute

to greater overall scholastic achievement (Cummins, 1991; Lindholm and Aclan, 1991).

Many parents, unable to speak English, rely on their children as interpreters and translators. Van Oanh, for example, reads report cards and notes from school, fills out the forms to obtain public assistance benefits and other social services, arranges visits to doctors, banking, paying bills, and answering phone calls. The students are interpreters and mediators between their families, schools, and the society. Van Oanh described her duties: *I helped my parents in everything because they can't speak English, taking them to doctor, bank, shopping, appointments, etc.* And Hang reported: *When my mother was in the hospital. I stayed there with her because she couldn't understand what the doctors or nurses said. As their interpreter I take my parents everywhere.* The refugees' children quickly became responsible, showing strength in discipline, maturity, and reliability.

The students in this study showed a strong ethnic identification as Vietnamese. This strong ethnic identification motivates and improves the retention of an ethnic language. The struggles and victories of their ancestors in achieving independence for the country may contribute to the strong ethnic identification by committing oneself to work hard to overcome struggles ahead. A study by Margaret Gibson (1989) found that Punjabi children outperformed American children in school because of the influence of their ethnic culture.

Perhaps the learning of their culture and history, afforded by the experience of reading their language, reinforces the sense of group identity. Knowledge of their home language can connect them to a system of ethnic supports that encourage and direct accomplishments by promoting effort and reinforcing attitudes which are conducive to

learning. Ethnic membership produces positive attitudes toward education while also promoting constructive behaviors that can facilitate both present and future achievements. Envisioning university education as important leads students to put more time into their homework.

The students in this study were driven to achieve in school because of family responsibility. Achievement motivation or attribution theories emphasizing individualized efficacy and independence as the motivating forces for students are culturally and historically bound. With collective memory of wars, loss, dislocation, trauma, and family separation, obligation and determination to survive, the youths in this study shared a deep desire for peace, healing and connection. Their experiences forge resilience and determination. Experience has shaped their perspectives and identities, their strengths of survival and sacrifice, strengths of shared support and loyalty, and strengths of values with regard to education.

Friendships

Both the girls and the boys in this study tried to balance the influence of their friends and the attractions of adolescent culture, while they were expected and willing to sustain the family norms and the cultural traditions within which they have been socialized. Tuen's mother: *They only keep friends who share the same values, education and hard work. It's very important too because kids are more influenced by friends. I am very worried about their friends. But my children are very responsible; they study very hard. They don't hang out with friends. Their friends are doing well in school too, and involved in sports like them*

polarization is a fact of life in British Columbia. And their children were attending schools where their peers overwhelmingly spoke either foreign languages or nonstandard English. Linguistic isolation makes English acquisition even more difficult. Children living in the isolated neighborhoods do not have much contact with people who speak standard English. Nevertheless, the children faced tremendous pressures from parents to become proficient in English. The parents and children agreed that English acquisition is necessary for success in school, but should not be at the expense of Vietnamese language proficiency. In fact the Vietnamese children are bilingual. Because of the parents' limited English language skills the children are required to speak Vietnamese at home. The non-English speaking parents pushed their children to do well in schools, as the parents at the low social status in the society see schooling as a means to upward social mobility and also to improve social contacts within the ethnic group. The refugees believed that in Canada basic education is equally available. The traditional Vietnamese view of education as a source of prestige has made parents eager to have their children successful in this educational system.

The students in this study speak Vietnamese at home to their parents but English to their siblings. *We speak Vietnamese with our parents but in English with each other, brothers and sister*, Long said. Caplan et al claim that speaking Vietnamese language at home helped the families to cope with a variety of problems by strengthening emotional ties between non-English speaking parents and their bilingual children, by sharing wisdom in stories read in Vietnamese, and by reinforcing mutual and collective obligations among family members (Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1992). This finding is consistent with other research which showed that ethnic language abilities contribute

Khanh's mother: *I watched my children's friends carefully. I asked them to bring their friends here so that I can evaluate them. If their friends dressed crazy, coloured their hair and had cell phone and expensive clothes, I told my children to stop playing with them. I didn't let them go to school dances until they were in grade 11 or 12, but only once or twice and they had to be home at 10 pm. And Vuong's father: They had to call me and tell me where they were. My daughters were not allowed to go out in the evening. Vuong was allowed because he is a boy but he didn't want to go out. He only wants to study so I'm very pleased. I didn't allow my children to sleepover. Vuong has never slept-over. But their friends could stay here to sleep but I am always very reluctant. They had to ask me when they wanted to go out. Their classmates were Asians because their school had only few Caucasians. Ngi's father recalled: Once I remembered, I saw one of my children's friend's older sister smoking while waiting at the bus stop. I told my child don't play with that friend anymore and they listened.*

Van Oanh stated that her best friend is the same person each year, who also came from Vietnam, and is not only her best friend but also the person whom she admired. The encouragement, competition, and inspiration from her best friend, whom she identified along with other close friends, as her most important relationships, motivated her to work hard in school. *My friends are Asians because there are very few Caucasians in my school.*

Hang: *I don't hang out with friends, because I am busy. I do volunteer works and chores at home after school so I don't have time. I also play basketball, soccer, swimming and tennis. I like sports. I only talk with my friends at school. I am proud of my place because of its warmth. My parents advised us about friends, and they were*

always right; I noticed. I really appreciate their input. Before, I had a friend she wanted me to lie to her mother that she was spending time with me but actually she was with her boyfriend. My friend's parents provided her with lots of stuffs, TV, stereo system, computers, stylish clothes, etc. Her room was full of expensive stuff. Her parents were very rich so they tried to lure her with gifts and gave her lots of money, to motivate her to study. But she wanted more and more and always found herself alone and with no guidance. She borrowed my money too. I don't need that expensive stuff because I am happy that my parents are always there for me. .

There was a flexibility in the girls' perspectives and actions on friendships. Van Oanh said she and her friend shared similar aspirations, experiences, and struggles. She liked her best friend because she is honest and she can tell her "everything." Since Van Oanh does not have a sister, her friend is like her sister. She also had a boy friend, but she did not think that the relationship would last long because she wanted to get a Ph.D in forensic psychology. Her main focus, like the rest of the boys and girls in this study, was to study and then to help her parents. But there were also limitations. Mary Hong's father: *I always answer the phone and screen all the phone calls. I take the messages. I wouldn't let their friends bother them. I would not let them talk to kids who are not polite and who don't do well in school.* And Khanh's father: *I explained to them that they only talk on the phone on the weeknights only for schoolwork. If they talk too much they'll lose their time*

Ngi shared her experience: *During weeknights I don't talk on the phone. My friends and I only talk about schoolwork. But my parents never asked me to get off the phone, or go study, etc. They only tell us to go to bed. But I don't want to talk on the*

phone anyway, maybe on the weekends, because I don't want to get distracted so I only talked about work. My parents are very worried about our friends. Our friends must be well-behaved, polite, dress properly, conservative, and most important at all they have to do well in school. So my friends are like that. They never tell us specifically about which friends but I know what they really want. We never slept-over at our friends.

Hang revealed: *My mother knew [about the friend who lied] and told me not to see her anymore. I stopped seeing her. Eventually her mother found out about her lying. She didn't like school. She ran away and dropped-out school. I am glad my mother told me not to play with her. Warned by her mother about trusting others, Hang explained that she has learned "not to be trustful" because one of her friends asked her to lie and borrowed money from her. But she continued to have friends when I interviewed her again. Instead the girls continued each year to find exceptions among their female peers. Hang explained: My parents want us to associate with kids who study hard. I'm popular in school. I have lots of friends. I didn't have Caucasian friends. I only have Chinese friends. Now I have Canadian friends who are more relaxed. Chinese friends are very anxious. They always complained about their grades and worry. Now I have Caucasian friends because in all my classes there are only one or two Asians.*

Khanh's father: *At school, their friends are Asians because in East Vancouver schools the majority are Asians, so they don't have Caucasian friends, but whites play with whites, Asians with Asians, but my children only play with high achiever kids, not ethnicity or colour. Their friends are doing well too so they don't have time to play on*

the weekdays or night, only when they finish their homework. They also compete with each other so they all study.

And Tuen's mother expressed: *I ask them to bring friends home so that we can see their friends. They know what kind of friends I prefer they should have. So they generally choose friends who are working hard and are competitive. But they still are not allowed to socialize with friends much. I don't give them much free time so they don't spend much time with friends. They are accustomed to this now.*

Hang shared her feelings: *I have some friends but I don't go out often because I have to study. Only on graduation day, we went out with my friends until late. We live in public housing. I am not embarrassed about it; I don't feel less about my family position because I am loved by my parents. They are good people and good parents. My friends wish to have a family like mine. I am always happy so my friends envy me.*

The boys' discussions of trust and maintaining close relationships with other boys took on different shapes and forms both across and within their interviews. Tuen: *During weeknights I don't talk on the phone but my mother does not want me to talk too long now. I don't want to talk on the phone either because I have to study. I would tell my friends that I can't talk to them. My friends like to tell me their problems but I tell them that I have to do my homework. I spent more time on the phone when I was in grade 8 but my mother told me to stop. Later on when I have too much homework, I can't talk to friends. When my friends call on the weeknight I will tell them to talk to me the next day at school. My mother does not have to tell me any more, because I don't neglect my schoolwork. I get good grades.*

Long recalled: *I was allowed to sleep over, but not often. I didn't have my friends sleep over because I don't want my parents to scare them away. For people she [mother] doesn't like, she'd give a mean look. I don't want my friends to feel uncomfortable about my parents so I don't want to bring friends home for staying. My parents always advise us about which friend to hang out: "don't hang out with bad people."*

The parents did not pressure the children to separate from the family. For example, Hang's mother offered her opinion: *We don't want them to be emotionally dependent on friends, just on their family. We don't want our children to work to earn money either because we want them to learn to delay gratification, and set long-term goals instead, as our Vietnamese tradition. We don't give them allowance. We teach them to share and to contribute to the family, not to be individualistic. Focus on family and community, giving back to community, not just the self. So each of them, if they have any time, volunteer in the community and in their school.*

The parents expected their children to willingly delay gratification in favor of schooling, Mary Hong's father told: *If they worry about money too much they lose their focus and want to make money for their instant gratification. I want them to learn to live without things and set long-term goals. My daughters are very frugal and very simple. Whatever we buy they wear. They don't wear make-up.*

Khanh's father: *I don't give them allowance. So every time when they get report card we sit down and calculate. We give them money or they have to pay us. But we have to pay most of the time. So they save reward money and they can spend it on their own. They buy their own clothes but we still watch how they spend. We are frugal so the children*

are very wise with their money too. They have to pay their own tuition, books, clothing and their own expenses. When they were in high school, they wanted fashionable clothes, but we told them that when they earn their own money they can buy whatever they want but now we can't buy for them. Also we tell them that they don't need to wear expensive clothes because they are only students. To gain respect, to feel good, to fit in: do well in school then they don't need to wear expensive clothes. Furthermore, we are refugees, wearing expensive clothes is unrealistic when we have to labour, to sweat ourselves to make minimum wage to survive. So invest in the future, to have an education, save money for tuition, and books so that they can have a good job later and then they can buy whatever they want. We teach them learn to sacrifice and to delay gratification to plan for the future.

Danziger (1971) said that the relationship between delayed gratification and educational aspiration is particularly cogent in the acculturation of immigrant adolescents, since their motivation to succeed reduces the possibility of ethnic marginality in the larger society. Think's Father shared a similar view and was even more adamant: *They can't sleepover. They have to sleep at home. There is no reason for that. Just like the brakes, you have to prepare to stop them in developing deep emotional relationships with friends. They were not allowed to go to school dances. Absolutely not. Only when they are in grade 12, they can go to a school dance but only one a year. Under grade 12 they were not allowed to work, and only when they are in university. Getting good grades is their work. We don't want them to be competitive with material things. If they earn their own money when they are not mature they will spend carelessly and become too independent from their goals and lose their focus. We*

give them money for having good grades to reinforce them to work hard in school. We want to be able to discipline them and want them to use their times to study rather than to make money and then to spend. "Your obligation is to study that's all, while we have to work we fulfill our obligation, so your obligation is to study, so do it. There is no reason for not studying or not doing well." My wife and I show our solidarity. If we have any disagreement we never discuss it in front of the children. We organize ourselves how to deal with each child.

Mary Hong's father had a similar perspective: They are not allowed to sleepover. When they have to work on school projects, no matter how late that is I would wait for them outside their friend's house until they are done and I would pick them up until 3 or 4 am. Then I drive their friends home too and I am always at home when they get home from school. I make dinner. I always ask them what they want for dinner. If they want to learn how to cook I'd show them but I wouldn't let them cook or clean every day. When they are busy studying I then wash the dishes. I don't let them be too tired. I then read and answer the phone. No one else answers the phone. Later in the evening, I ask them what they want for breakfast, for dinner the next day. I then go to bed. I don't encourage them to have part-time jobs after school.

Thin: We didn't get allowance. We didn't work after school either. We use the reward money for good grades. If I need anything they will buy it for me. I didn't have Caucasian friends so I don't know if they get allowance. I didn't go out with friends, even if I was allowed to go out because I had to get good grades. But I didn't hang out with friends. We didn't mind the rules. We accepted them. My parents are more

watchful towards my sister. She is not allowed to go out. She has to ask. I was not allowed to talk on the phone. They would monitor the phone conversation.

The girls and the boys in this study did not spend their time talking with friends on the telephone. A few of the girls were allowed to attend the odd birthday party on weekends, then they were collected by a parent or an older brother. The parents were determined to keep their children from the attractions of North American adolescent culture. Think's father: *We never let them sleepover, no matter how late it is. Even now Hung is 22 years old and Think is 20 years old, they still have to come home and sleep at home. They have to tell me and ask my permission.*

Now in their late adolescence, the students have had part-time jobs, and they reported that they selected and purchased their own clothes. Yet, they did not generally experience parental restrictions related to their clothing choice as they had in their early teens, when they hesitated to select styles that they knew would meet their parents' disapproval. This behavior suggested that parental disapproval was implicit. Hang's mother: *We are very close. They tell me everything. I never stop them from having friends or boyfriends. But I also tell them to focus on education. We left our country our family and our hometown because of their future. Their future is in their hands. So friends or boyfriends should not be their focus. They should be competitive and striving for the best. They understand this. I am very happy because they seem to listen to me. They never ask for anything. Whatever I make for them, they wear it. Hang the oldest daughter, is always glad to wear what I made for her. Her siblings are the same. They don't complain. I don't them give an allowance. When they need money I always have it*

for them. Every thing I do is for my children. My life and future are for my children. I watch and nurture them every step every moment with my heart and soul.

Some of the girls reported that when they were in high school, they noted that the favorite pastime of their Canadian friends was to go browsing in the shopping malls and sometimes attended a matinee. The girls and the boys stated that they were denied these activities, and besides, unlike their Canadian friends, they often had no spending money.

Mary Hong: We never got an allowance. We didn't need money because when we needed anything our parents would buy it for us. We only get money during Christmas or Lunar New Year. I got to choose my own clothes, but I didn't want expensive clothes; why would you want pay 100 dollars for a jacket? We didn't have rules, we were expected to be on our best manners when we go out. Don't stay out late, call home. But we don't go out. I only went to the parties twice during my graduation. With my friends, we went out for dinner. My siblings and I don't like fashionable clothes because they are expensive. Whatever my parents bought for me I'd wear it. I only asked for a nice gown for my high school graduation and because I was receiving five or six major awards so my parents wanted me to look good so they bought me a nice gown. I was allowed to go to the party after the graduation. I got along with most people in my school. Most of my friends are doing well. In the evening I visit my grandparents, and on the weekend I work. Holidays, earlier on we went on vacation, but now I work or do volunteer work. I work in a day camp in summer and on holidays. I can stay out if I want to but I don't.

Discussion of best friends, being role models and most important relationships were rare among these youths. Role models were either unknown figures in the media

or adult relatives, and most important relationships were their mothers or, for Vuong, his father.

On Dating

The students in this study were not allowed to date until they completed their university education. When asked about what these girls hope for in the future, Van Oanh and other girls in this study, said *I'm not into looking for a marriage and a family for myself. I want to be working to help my parents, and my parents' relatives who are still in Vietnam.* Canadian data indicate that the widespread dating behaviour among adolescents is monitored and sanctioned by the peer group (Bibby & Postereski, 1985; Kostash, 1987; Mackie, 1987). Among certain immigrant groups such as those came from the Mediterranean and Asian countries, "it is the family which intervenes decisively to curtail this practice among adolescents, especially girls (Kostash, 1987, p. 95)." Unlike Western adolescents, the Vietnamese boys and girls did not focus on dating or romantic relationships, as the parents and the children see dating as disruptive to their children's study habits and educational plans. Two years later, I interviewed Mary Hong when she was in her second year at the university: *When I was in high school, I noticed that the Canadian girls started dating much earlier, some as early as twelve or thirteen. I don't out go on dates. I have to do my schoolwork and my part time job. Long: I was not allowed to have a girlfriend. Hang: I don't worry about my appearance or boys because I don't have time. No one calls me on the phone because I don't want to get distracted. I wear whatever she [mother] bought. She knows what colour I want. Tuen: I didn't go to any school dance because I was busy. My main focus is on schoolwork. My family's religion is Buddhist. I went to the temple. Think:*

*When I want to get married, I want to marry a Vietnamese girl because I want my wife to talk to my parents and grandparents. And also we'd share the same values as Asians. So I'm consciously only paying attention to Asian girls, but not yet. Relationships outside the family before the students graduate from university were seen as not realistic and impractical because they felt that they had the responsibility with themselves to be "educated," to have a good job, and to be independent, and to take the responsibility to look after their parents who sacrificed all their lives for the children. None of the girls were interested in romantic relationships when they were in grade 12 and two years later when I re-interviewed them. The responses to the interview indicated that both female and the male students in this study experienced similar restrictions. Here, some of the young adults described their experiences: Think: *I don't have a girlfriend. I have never had a girlfriend. I was interested in girls a little bit when I was in high school. But now, no, because it takes lots of times and energy. My parents never encouraged us to have a romantic relationship. My parents prohibited us to have it. Now I don't say anything but I am not interested anymore because I want to go medical school. Having a romantic relationship takes lots of time. One of my brothers was doing well in school but then when he got a girlfriend his grades dropped drastically. So to me it's not a good idea to have a girl friend now.**

Ngi : I don't go out for dates. I don't have a boyfriend. I prefer not to. The only exception was Van Oanh: I have a boy friend who is a cook in a Japanese restaurant. He is very nice. My parents don't want me to go out with this person because he is not in university. But I like him. I somehow feel that I will get bored with him because as I am getting higher education and he is not. We would not have much in common. He

doesn't want to go to university. He, like my brother, was in the group whose spirits got shattered by ESL teachers and other teachers.

My interviews with the parents indicated that they have the same expectations of their children. The parents actively discouraged their children from romantic relationships. The parents articulated the expectations as follows: Think's father: *We discourage them to have romantic relationships. Now the oldest child, Hung, is in his third year He has a girlfriend, but that we allow. She studies too. This relationship might help his study, but if it distracts him we will stop it. But he is very focused because he wants to have a good job. So the relationship does not interfere with his schoolwork. He is mature and responsible. They are not allowed to go out on the weeknight. We have instilled in them the importance of education. So they are very much under control. They are very focused.*

Khanh's father: *We don't encourage our children to have romantic relationships. Only when they complete their education. When they want a romantic relation they have to have good positions such as education, job, and emotional maturity. We told them that it's normal to feel romantic, and long for a relationship, but only when they are well established mentally and emotionally. Most importantly they must be well educated, to have critical thinking, to know rights and wrongs, to have high values so that they will appreciate a good and right romantic relation for them. We don't encourage our girls to wear make-up but we worry about our daughters' complexion because it appears too dark so we buy facial creams for them to nurture their complexion. We want our children to graduate before they get married. If they meet someone, we still encourage them to focus on studying, not love just yet.*

Long described his parents' disapproval of his relationship: *I had a girlfriend for three years, from grade 9 to 12. She is Cambodian. I was not allowed to have a girlfriend. She did very well in school too. My parents didn't know I had a girl friend. One day I lied to them that I was going to school, but there was no school. My father followed me. Then he found out. Then they asked to talk to her parents. My mom and dad talked to her mom and dad. Both parents didn't like it. They always nagged about it. My mom worried because I was too young and that may affect my studying. But I continued doing well. So she then kind of gave up nagging. She later liked my girlfriend too because my girlfriend did very well in school.*

On the Ideal Family

A romantic relationship or marriage is neither a primary nor a particular attractive goal and is not linked to having children. But rearing children to Mary Hong, and to all youths in the study, was joyous for the most part, and all were hoping to become the mothers or fathers of an average of three children each: *When I get married I would like to have three children*, Khanh said. Caplan, Whitemore and Choy (1989) found that five, six, and seven children were not an uncommon feature of Indochinese refugee families. Haines (1986) has also commented on the large number of children in Vietnamese nuclear families in North America. It could be inferred that the positive attitude to parenthood on the part of the students in the present study has a basis in Vietnamese cultural traditions and expectations.

Let us now then consider how the girls and boys in this study plan to balance their occupational and domestic roles. Specifically, how will they arrange for childcare? I found that the students held negative view of the use of day care services for young

children. Van Oanh elaborated on this generally held perception: *I don't like daycare. When I have children I will work part time because I want to look after my children. I will only work when they are at school and be home with them when they are home. I don't like other people to look after my children. Parents should look after their children. There are so many neglected children in daycare because parents are so busy working. Children should come before career. That is one of the reasons I want to study psychology so that I can understand, teach my children, and raise them properly. I want to have a better understanding and to help the next generation. I want to understand about human beings so that I can treat people with compassion, fairness, and help people around me. Mothers should spend more time with their children. An ideal family with two children is a well-educated couple, and the husband and wife work together in harmony to raise their children. Parents should and must put their children's interests first, not parents' interests. Parents should put their conflicts aside and pull together to teach their children and shape the children when the children are young. Parents should be the role model for their children and teach their children at home before they start schooling. They should have a good head start.*

Ngi expressed her view: *Daycare is not good because there are so many kids in a daycare. I don't want to work when I have children because I want to take care of my children. Long said: I prefer mom or dad, one parent should be home with the children when they are young. I don't think anyone could raise your children better than you do. If it's my own situation I think I have to discuss it because one of us should take turn and look after the kids.*

While the majority of girls and boys in this study evaluate daycare in a negative light (and these derogatory views about daycare are traditional), two male students, Vuong and Think, and Hang, were supportive of daycare. Think expressed his view: *To me it's up to women if they want to work outside the home. Daycare for children is good for children and their socialization and also it helps mothers who want to work or just to have free time. I support daycare for children. The ideal family size is two children. I would share with my wife in order to stay home. We both can take turns to work and to look after our baby. So no one has to quit working.*

Most of the students in this study support the idea of young children being cared for at home, preferably by the child's parents. Three students support daycare services, and made references to the demanding and repetitive aspects of providing care for young children. They also applauded the flexibility daycare allows women to engage in their occupations, while reducing concern about the well being of their offspring. It also reduces the domestic responsibilities for women.

The girls paid no emphasis to physical appearance, as advised by their parents. Mary Hong's father: *I don't encourage my daughter to have boyfriend either. I also do not encourage her to wear make-up or fashionable clothes. She has to wear decent clothes, conservative clothes. We choose the clothes for her. She listens to us. She does not wear low-cut, or sexy clothes or heavy make-up.* Even in their late adolescence they mentioned that they no longer had restrictions placed on the use of make-up. Van Oanh: *When I was in high school I was very busy, and I was also very conservative. I didn't want to go to school dances or wear make-up or fashionable clothes.* Khanh's father: *I bought their [children] clothes. They are even more frugal than we are. Sometimes I*

ask them to buy some nice clothes, but they are very reluctant. Only my son likes brand clothes like Nike, but he is conservative, too, because he would be criticized by the grandparents, aunts, and uncles. They are very close to my siblings. The daughters are very careful. Their mother bought them jewelry but they don't wear it.

Long described his conflicts when he was in junior high. He wanted to fit in with Canadian friends, and what happened at home. He was not a passive player in such dramas so he acted out: *I wanted to fit in but I didn't want to wear anything that radical. I wore earrings. My father went crazy. So as soon as I moved out the house I got my ears pierced. My father went crazy. He says "oh no! you're bad boy... crazy!" I didn't want them to feel bad all the time. I wanted them to deal with it. But I had to take them [earrings] out, that's why they were mad. Later I grew out of it. I took them out. I liked baggy clothes. My parents complained for about a week then they kept quiet. My friends wore the same kind of clothes. Towards grade 11 and 12, I went to parties once or twice, but only on the weekend. Lots of people smoke, but I don't. My parents didn't like my friends who smoke. They found out and told me "don't hang out with these people; they smoke." My schoolmates were mostly Caucasians and East Indians. There were not too many Chinese in Surrey, mostly Caucasians.*

Kostash (1987) noted that smoking cigarettes is a commonplace habit among Canadian adolescents. When asked: Do any of your friends smoke? There was, in their responses, a strong moral overtone to the condemnation that rejected smoking as a health hazard. Hang remarked that *in Vietnam, it is only prostitutes and street women who smoke cigarettes, because no decent woman would be forgiven for smoking.* The students valued their parental guidance and expectations.

Conclusion

A strong ethnic awareness exists and families appeared to establish an external boundary around themselves and their Vietnamese friends. The students were loyal to their roots. Ethnic awareness and ethnic loyalties were strong as the parents made deliberate efforts to connect with the activities of extended families and of the ethnic community. Central to this tapestry are events associated with the Buddhist temple and the maintenance of social ties with other Vietnamese families within community (Chapter 6)

The girls and the boys did not worry about friendship and sexuality issues, or issues of self-image and appearance. However, they all were concerned about the purposes and future of their families and their lives. They did not seek to form or nurture friendships within their peer group or participate in related activities.

In chapter 4 I have attempted to illustrate a larger cultural-historical frame in which to understand the parents' stories of resistance that fostered resiliency in their children. For the Vietnamese, resiliency means different things to different generations. For the children resiliency means academic scholarship (Chapter 5). The refugee parents' endurance provides their children a story of collective resistance, of cultural heritage and traditions that are the collaborative threads that weave child and family intergenerational identity. As a collective identity it is an instrument for holding individuals, families and community together. After all, these struggles are for the benefit of the next generations. Resiliency for the parents is the sacrifice and the struggle of the previous generations for the survival and the futures of their children. The parents' endurance accumulated within their collective spirits over generations, becomes a story of collective resiliency that

formed their individual children's responsibility for their academic achievement. As the parents use their limited resources, courage, and available skills, they weave the web of resiliency, and creates a force for social change as a crucial understanding of the Vietnamese refugee parents' labours. The will to nurture, and its attendant labours of their children's acculturation, education, ethnicity, race, and history, becomes a form of resiliency, of the web of hope that serves to emancipate family and community from the oppressive society. Here we see the ways in which the children, their parents, generational spirits, extended family, and community remain connected by necessity and by choice. These stories are interwoven with purpose.

CHORUS DANCING: ISSUES OF RACE AND CLASS

Cacophonous Dance - of Struggles and Survival

Many of the Vietnamese students lived in government-subsidized rental housing and participated in free or reduced-cost lunch programs. Most of the Vietnamese parents were relatively uneducated and unskilled mainly because educational opportunities back home were scarce after the revolution. The parents arrived as adults therefore they have been unable to make up for their deficient education through formal schooling because of their age and family responsibilities. To make their *"refugee status and their race less of a handicap,"* as Van Oanh explained, the youths devoted themselves to their school work and all became excellent students, admired and respected by their teachers and peers. For the girls, they did not want to be seen as pretty, but as brainy.

The parents reported that they rarely attended parent-teacher meetings because of the language barrier and felt disparaged and intimidated by schools' authorities. So in practice, the rhetoric of parent/community involvement in mainstream practices of power sharing reduces concrete engagements of deliberation and action to mere lip service. Consequently, many efforts to democratize schools do not go beyond the inclusion of a few token parents (Borman & Greeman, 1994). In addition, "the so-called community empowerment approaches to school restructuring and school-based management are also designed primarily to increase efficiency rather than to empower the community" (Snauwaert, 1993; p. 95). In fact, community partnerships are often "based on a

mainstream, middle-class model that assumes that parents have particular outlooks, resources, and time frames available for schoolwork (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Cummins, 1997, p. 202).” So the critical problem is that parental involvement is often not recognized as being determined within specific and unequal relations of power (Bloch & Tabachnick, 1994). The refugees felt, as Malcolm Levin (1987) describes, “parents also know that they are helpless in the face of the school’s power to evaluate them, their children and their culture (p. 273).” With these subtle and not so subtle forms of exclusion, let alone more overt forms of cultural devaluation and disrespect, it should come as no surprise that low-income and minority families are rarely found on school boards or at PTA (Parent Teacher Association).

The students lamented there were few minority teachers in their schools, only a sprinkle for decoration, to whom they might want to turn to or to emulate. Tuen described: *At my high school most teachers were whites.* Long reported: *At the university, I am majoring in computer science so there are more Asians than whites.* However, rebutting the assumption that skin colour somehow implies multicultural education, Sleeter (1993) states her view that “some teachers of colour who have successfully entered the middle-class accept much about the social class structure that ought to be questioned (p. 169).” While the struggle to gain representation of different groups on school faculties and staff is crucial, educators should be wary of the misconception that the mere presence of “different” people implies presence of mind, or that colour coordination ensures ideological diversity. Having conservative public figures from racially subordinated populations would not represent the interests of many

racially subordinated people. Besides the particular problems for the Vietnamese youths, Giroux (1997) has illustrated this problem for youths in general

Lauded as a symbol of hope for the future while scorned as a threat to the existing social order, youths have become objects of ambivalence caught between contradictory discourses and spaces of transition. While pushed to the margins of political power within society, youths nonetheless become as central focus of adult fascination, desire, and authority. Increasingly denied opportunities for self-definition and political interaction, youths are transfigured by discourses and practices that subordinate and contain the language of individual freedom, social power, and critical agency. Symbols of a declining democracy, youths are located within a range of signifiers that largely deny their status as active citizens. Associated with coming-of-age rebellion, youths become metaphor for trivializing resistance. At the same time, youths attract serious attention as both a site of commodification and a profitable market. For many aging baby boomers, youths represent an invigorated referent for midlife consciousness aggressively in search of acquiring a more 'youthful' state of mind and lifestyle. (p. 36-37)

Unfortunately, public education availability does not guarantee that children of immigrants, and more specifically a poor immigrant minority, will succeed in school as their parents expect. Inner-city, socio-economically, and educationally disadvantaged, Vietnamese children are likely to encounter an unfavourable school context. Here schools pose great challenges to working-class Asian parents, but the challenge which includes an environment filled ever-increasing anti-Asian sentiment, is far greater for Vietnamese parents with limited educational backgrounds, limited English skills, and few resources. For many Vietnamese children, living in a low-income neighbourhoods, infected with crime, and violence, and attending minority-dominated schools has meant studying in a social environment in which those attempts to learn are not only discouraged but also punished.

Life in School

Life in school was not easy for most of the students in this study, as being minorities and especially, Vietnamese. Thus, when the youths were asked about experiences of racism, they did not pause or hesitate; they leaped into their personal stories of racism. In each of these following stories encountered, there was a raw penetrating force.

Van Oanh's personal story is about her ESL classes and the painful and failed spirit story of her brother is as follow: *I was born in 1979 in Ha Noi. I left Vietnam when I completed grade three. I stayed in the refugee camp five years. I didn't go to school there. I came here seven years ago, in 1992. When I came to Vancouver I was placed in grade eight and in an ESL (English as Second Language) class where I thought I would learn reading, writing, and speaking English. I spent one year at one school and one and a half years at another school in an ESL class. In both schools I didn't learn much. Most of my friends didn't learn much. The teachers at both schools were uncaring, cold and mean. We wrote about three essays a year. Everyday we were asked to draw, colour or cut pictures and the teacher was doing her/his own things.*

May and her sister, Thu, shared similar experiences in ESL classes. Thu described their experience: *When we came here, I started at grade ten and my sister at grade nine. We didn't know a word of English. We spent two years in ESL from 8:45 am to 3:00 pm. There were three levels of ESL. We had to pass each level. In ESL class we learned grammar, writing, reading, and speaking in English. We spent two years in ESL. But most of the ESL teachers let us watch movies, and do colouring and drawing.*

Van Oanh, like other refugee children, only wanted to learn, and to have an education. That is why their parents risked their lives to escape so that their children can

have a better future, and be "somebody." Racism, especially institutionalized racism, made it difficult for the refugee children to embrace that opportunity. Here mainstream education is seen as isolated from politics, economics, and culture. When mainstream educators fail to account for power dynamics in schools, workplaces and the socio-economic context that shapes them, specific processes of domination and subordination of students and other individuals cannot be exposed. In the place of specific exposures of institutional racism, the individual behavior of irrational-prejudiced men and women is embraced as the cause of unfair treatment. While such isolated irrational acts of prejudice certainly occur, they are not responsible for most of the oppression of racial, sexual and economic "outsiders." To get to the point where we can explain the particular processes of subordination, educators must understand not only the dynamics of race, class and gender but the ways their intersections in the lived world produce tensions, contradictions and discontinuities in everyday lives (McCarthy and Apple, 1988; Amott and Matthaei, 1991).

Van Oanh continued: *It was so boring. I was 13 at the time. So it was not pleasant because I had to hear the teacher tell us how stupid we were as refugees. The teacher never talked to us in a friendly way like other teachers in regular classes. The kids became bored so they asked permission to go to the bathroom frequently. Then the teacher got angry and said that we were trouble and undisciplined kids. If any one of us answered back we would have been taken to the principal's office and accused of violence and disobedience.* Students often recalled occasions of verbal harassment. Recognition of minority status emerges amidst isolation, institutional categorization, and ongoing experiences of discrimination.

Van Oanh recounted the nightmares: *One time, one of the students brought a pair of scissors, as we had been told, to cut the pictures from the colouring picture. The teacher didn't like this student because once he told the teacher "don't be so rude." He got mad at him. So the next day we brought scissors to cut pictures to hang on the classroom wall. The teacher then took this student to the principal and this student was suspended because the teacher alleged that the student threatened him with the scissors which the student had been told to bring to class. I sat near this student, but I didn't see or hear anything. I just saw the teacher approach and take him away. Later on I asked him and he told me. We were not allowed to go the bathroom. We were told to behave even though we didn't dare do anything or say anything and to act more civilized. Whatever we did we were corrected because it was not the "Canadian way." I felt tortured. We were told that we would be jailed if we talked back, etc. Police here do not like Vietnamese. So we were afraid of the police, teachers, and school. There was no way out. I felt sorry for the Vietnamese boys in my class because they were treated harshly by the teachers and the principals. When they told their parents they wouldn't understand them, but complained because they didn't do well in school. The school called the parents in to complain. No one could complain because we couldn't speak English, but even if we could no one would believe us because we were seen as if we were guilty; we were in gangs, involved with drugs, etc. Even though we didn't know what drugs were. We had just arrived in Vancouver. In ESL classes students can't speak English so they can't complain. Two years later had I not taken many extra English classes, I would not have been able to read or write. I was determined to learn English and to do well. My classmates spent three or more four years in ESL classes*

and still they couldn't read or write, but only got expelled. Many of them then were put in jail for no reason but no one would believe us because they only believed the teachers. As a girl I received less pressure from my parents, but my older brother was expected to do well in school. My parents did not understand that my brother suffered from racism in school. Boys were suffered more of the discrimination. They became discouraged and pushed to drop out of school because the schools were so hostile to Vietnamese boys. These failed boys accepted each other, so they found comfort in each other, and hung out on streets, and then they got into trouble with the police. At home my parents showed their disappointment, so my brother felt frustrated and lost his spirit. Now he speaks neither English nor Vietnamese well. It seems to me he can't think critically, as if he lives without a consciousness. He only responds to his survival instinct like living in the jungle.

May recounted her experiences in her ESL classes: *We would not say anything because we would be suspended or expelled. There were lots of Vietnamese students who were expelled for no apparent reason. We were very scared. We were silent. We didn't know who would be the next to be expelled. I even saw one Vietnamese boy who was hit and pushed by a white student, who was also in my ESL class but the Vietnamese student was suspended. No one could defend the Vietnamese student because the teachers and principals did not like Vietnamese students. Everyday, we sat in the class colouring, and drawing.*

As we have seen high drop rate in Vancouver, from Gunderson's personal communication (2000), and from Van Oanh, May, and Thu's reports of their experiences in schools, educators successfully and deliberately destroyed Vietnamese

students. The schools hold middle-class students in, and often expel the poor and minority males (Fine, 1992).

Van Oanh described: *My heart is broken. I want to help my brother but it seems he doesn't know how to think anymore. On the other hand, my parents at first didn't expect me to do well. So I felt I escaped the attention from my parents and bad attention from teachers. Thus I was able to breathe and to thrive. It must be a horrible experience when you are constantly vigilant and suspicious. I felt sorry for the boys. I was very angry with the teacher. My parents didn't understand because they came from Vietnam. They expected us to listen and respect teachers. They didn't understand anything about racism because they were new in this country. I was born after the revolution so I didn't see white people. I thought that the only way to escape from these teachers was to study hard. My impression of Canadian teachers was changed.*

The teachers are in a position of power from which they can oppress children who are institutionally powerless. In ESL classes, as we've heard from the students, Vietnamese children experienced verbal abuse, were condemned, expelled, and neglected by their teachers, a common story in ESL classes, the 'shared epistemology' for all refugee children. Van Oanh recounted, *I like Canada because the government puts lots of money in education because education is the most important. It also controls its environment very good, clean air, conserves fish, air control, etc. What I dislike about Canada is the laws which are too lenient. When they accept refugees the government should be more careful because they let criminals into the country. Although Canada promotes multiculturalism, racism, discrimination, and biases are so rampant. It hurts*

everybody, not just the target group. People treat other groups based on their negative stereotypes which is very unjust.

Van Oanh continued: My brother is studying to be a mechanic. He only lives day by day. He has no aspirations, no hope, and no dreams. His spirit has been shattered by the ESL teachers who gave him a hard time and expelled him just because he is Vietnamese and a boy. He couldn't not speak English or write because the first year in school here we had to attend ESL classes, but the teachers there never taught but punished and expelled Vietnamese students. We stayed in the refugee camp for five years so we didn't have schooling. And before we left Vietnam my brother was in grade four so he missed eight years of schooling. Now he is uneducated. My parents are very sad. Then we went to another high school. At the new school we had different ESL teachers but still teaching never took place; instead only drawing and colouring, while the teachers read, or did their own work, or came in late, or took students to the principal's office.

So the social psychological effects of this legacy of racist stereotypes, social practices, and institutions have served to degrade racially subordinated groups, as Paulo Freire (1973) explains:

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority...The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them. (p. 151).

As long as they play the role of the "good minority" (attacking "difference") they will be rewarded by the dominant groups.

Long put it this way: *We moved around many times, eight in total, until my parents bought a house in Surrey. My first year at high school in Surrey, I was the only Vietnamese. I could feel the looks by my new teachers. I was frequently picked on. So I wanted to fit in with the white students. I tried to act and dress like whites but only got pushed and jumped on by a group of white students. But my new teachers suspended me. I didn't understand why. Luckily I was always doing extremely well in every subject, my brother helped me a lot. Later on the teachers were nicer to me because I got top marks in most of my subjects, except French.*

As Long admitted that he wanted to act like white, to 'fit in', Fordham's research (1988) revealed that some students and professionals, in an attempt to appear to be "raceless," take on attitudes and behaviors that are characteristic of the dominant white society. He argued that blacks and other racially subordinated groups sense that they have to give up aspects of their identities and their fictive kinship if they hope to achieve academically and socially in schools, as well as in the business world. Faced by educators and the general public's deficit view of their realities:

Because the high-achieving students believe firmly in the "American dream" they willingly, and in some instances not so willingly, seek to distance themselves from the fictive-kinship system in the Black community. The organizational structure of the school rewards racelessness in students and thus reinforces the notion that it is a quality necessary for success in the large society. As a result, the students are also led to believe in the view of racism and discrimination as the practices of individuals rather than as part and parcel of institutionally sanctioned social policies. (p. 80)

As Trinh T. Minh Ha (1989) explains, "being accused of 'ignoring one's own culture' and 'looking whiter than Snow White herself' also means taking a trip to the promised land of White alienation (p. 52)." According to Fordham (1988) people who attempt to

be raceless and who uncritically buy into the stigma do feed into sociopolitical strategy that functions to sweep the realities of racism under the rug. Consequently, whiteness remains elusive, invisible, and uncontested. Ironically, those willing to try to "fit in," regardless of how hard they try to assimilate, will never be welcomed members of the dominant group. "A child cannot be taught by anyone whose demand, essentially, is that the child repudiate her experience, and all that gives it in sustenance, and enter a limbo in which he can no longer come back, and in which he knows that he can never become white. Black people have lost too many black children in that way (Baldwin, 1985, p. 652)."

In urban schools, the Vietnamese students reported experiencing or witnessing racial conflict, harassment, and unfair treatment and marking by their teachers. As May reported: *In high school they gave bad marks to Asian students even though we did better than white students. So we had to work harder than white students in order to get equivalent marks. We compared our work with white students. So we all knew; white students knew. We challenged it only when it really was out of line, but teachers were whites, all whites, so no one supported you. In fact, we were retaliated against for complaining. Then we received really bad marks. White teachers helped white students and ignored us. The teachers said that we had to prove a good argument as why we should get the same or equal marks.*

As with Vuong and Thinh, stories of racism come easily for May. They told me stories of blatant racism. The students in my study acknowledge that racism exists in the world; their stories are of racist incidents in schools and in the universities. These stories spoke to how much discrimination Vietnamese refugees face. As race, class, and gender

forces interact, sometimes in complementary and sometimes in contradictory ways, the school experience cannot be viewed simply as an uncomplicated reflection of oscillating power. The school experience is exceedingly complex, and while there are general patterns of subjugation that occur, such patterns play out in unpredictable ways with particular individuals (Apple, 1996).

The minute May and her sisters were asked for an example of racism they quickly proceeded to give several detailed accounts of incidents that have since become part of their daily lives. Every day survival skills get them through. Racism is random and frequent. Like their parents, who learned survival skills to hide from American bombings and raids and their grandparents during the French War, here and now the children have inherited those survival skills. It is often as unpredictable as their parents described their life during the war. Mary Hong's father described: *You didn't know when we would be bombed. When you heard the airplane sound even it was far away... Instinctually we could hear, then quickly we ran, hiding under the buildings, holes, bridges, etc. until they stopped the bombing then we came out and carried out our daily business. We had to navigate and monitor the minefields on the roads.*

Here and now these parents teach their children the same survival tactics but with different strategies. In response to these traumatic events, they identified the pain, spoke about it, named the pain, and they channeled it into productive energy: *It made me work harder, try harder, and solidified my goals*, May said. She sometimes sounded naïve and awkward in her emerging recognition of the virulent and subtle forms of racism that she encountered, as if she were learning how to read a complicated cultural text, as if she had no idea of where the minefields are located. In her chemistry class, she described how

she caught her image in the eyes of the whites, staring looks, she saw her Asianness, she recognized her loneliness in this all-white world. *At the university, professors are really prejudiced too; the way they look at you; the way they answer your questions; the way they help you; they really put more efforts in helping white students. It happened to me just yesterday, when I sought help for my math homework. I sat there and waited for the assistant for one hour. I received two minutes while other white students received more time and attention. There were two Asians and three white students, each white student got more than 15 minutes help. The tutors then came to the white students and asked if they had any more questions. It's quite obvious, quite blatant. There are some white professors who are nice. If they want to be there and want to help you understand the subject, they don't care about the colour; they help you to understand the concept. They want to help you to understand the subject so they don't really care if you're Asian or White. So in that situation it depends on the individual, but you can never go without experiencing discrimination.* May continued: *At the university in most of my classes, there are only 8 or 9 Asians out of 300 students. Discrimination is everywhere, in high school too. If you are Asian you would be treated badly anywhere and everywhere. They don't talk to you in a nice or respectful way, even though you are extra nice to them. We knew who was prejudiced and who was not. At the university my classmates are whites. Some whites are nice. So we can't tell. We asked them questions. They treated us worse than animals, while they treated white students kindly.*

The boys reported experiencing more racism or discrimination than the girls. Stories told of being harassed, watched in high school by teachers and by the police on the streets, in stores, and down the streets. The girls reported fewer direct experiences of

racism in these places than boys. However, the girls reported more racist attacks by white males on campus than the boys. Hang: *I feel that white teachers give white students higher marks than Asian students. I didn't see that when I was in high school because the majority of the students are Asians but in my university classes there are only one or two Asians. In English class the marking is biased because I'm Asian even though my writing is very good. I won writing contests yet I don't get the equal grades with the white students. But other subjects such as math tests or lab work that are more objective: either you get it wrong or right so there are no biases. So I can compete with others. I'm disappointed because I am very good in English literature, and writing. I won essay contests. But I received lower marks than Caucasians. There are only three Asians in English class. I felt that I could not get good marks no matter how hard I had tried. I didn't feel that when I was in high school because in my high school classes were mostly Asians.*

Only through an understanding of the sociopolitical context in which students' lives take shape can we understand the often-unseen ways lived sociopolitical reality takes shape. Van Oanh described her experience: *I enjoyed high school because I was treated equally since students were Asians. When I had bad marks I knew that I didn't study hard enough. But at the university I feel that I am being treated as second class. Professors focus on white students. I don't feel that I belong. In psychology classes I feel like an outsider. But in English classes I feel I belong because I am treated equally and I receive equal attention since all of students in this English class are Asians. So I feel like I belong. I enjoy it. In my Abnormal Psychology class, I am enjoying the course but I don't like the atmosphere. I am glad that we are using multiple-choice tests, so there is*

no bias by the instructor. So I think I will major in psychology, because it has multiple choice tests, even though I feel don't belong. I can try my best without worrying about the unfairness of the instructors.

May similarly described her experiences: *In high school, our school was mostly Asians; most of the time, but not always, we were treated equally. And Thu added: Everywhere you go; you're Asian so you can't avoid that. I encounter discrimination at UBC everyday. For instance, yesterday I had a CD I brought to the Zoology computer lab. I put it in a computer, but I couldn't get it to work. My assignment was due next week so I wanted to get it to work. So I left the lab and came to the computer assistant office to ask him for some tips as to how to get it to work. He told me to me to wait in the hall so that when the other class is out then he can help me. I waited until the other class ended and left. He was just sitting there chatting to another guy who just got there; and ignored me. I waited for another 15 minutes and it seemed they were just chatting and I had other classes to attend. Although I was frustrated, I approached him in a very calm and polite manner. Can you help? He snapped and yelled at me. Try again or just leave!!! He told me to leave. I was terrified.*

In reporting university experiences, the students conveyed the fear they felt toward the sea of white faces staring at them as they entered all white classes. Mary Hong: *I feel intimidated at UBC. I'm shy so I am quiet and that affects my marks. I feel that I'm not being expected to do well because I'm not white. I feel ignored in Psychology, political science, and English classes. I don't understand because I got awards for my English essays and highest English grades but I don't understand why I get low marks in my English class here. But the psychology exams are usually in*

multiple-choice format so I felt that the marks reflect my work. Math tests, too: they're either right or wrong; no subjective opinion so I received high marks. I'm interested in Arts but I am worried about the biased marks.

The youths' stories speak to a kind of perspective taking, a stance, an awareness that every refugee Vietnamese child must learn in schools for survival - a "guerilla posture," or a "jungle posture." It is not a hostile position. It is a self-protective watchfulness from which creativity can grow. The eyes are trained to be discerning, can recognize both danger and beauty in human scenes. For the youths, this jungle posture is part of "the ancestral wisdom," passed from one generation to the next. This "epistemological privilege of the oppressed" is a powerful piece of our legacy. In such a posture "you can be in touch with the ancestors" you tap that wisdom, mine it, pass it on," and share it with the others. But even when they receive the ancestral wisdom and learn the silent revolution, they will still face the wounds of racism. There will be shattered spirits. Our heroes will fall.

Vuong came to Canada when he was one year old: *I only have Asian friends. I don't feel full Canadian, just half.* Vuong: *I try to avoid a situation where racist attack may occur. I have encountered a few incidents but I'm over that* While Vuong's initial response was tentative and evasive, *I know there are prejudiced people but I don't let it bother me because I am a good person. At the university I have Caucasian and Asian friends. I'm proud as Vietnamese. I don't care if the whites are prejudiced because I'm Vietnamese. I'm very proud.* Hang said when she was in high school she had not actually encountered racism because she was surrounded by Asians or other racial minority groups in her school. Hang lives in public housing. Mary Hong shared a

similar view and experience: *I'm glad I'm living in East Van. There are more Asians so that I don't encounter racist attacks everyday.*

Mary Hong and Ngi repeatedly stated that while they have witnessed racist acts against their Vietnamese classmates, they have not been the direct victims of such acts themselves. Again and again, like perpetual rhythms, I heard stories of discrimination. Like their escape stories, many students have discrimination stories to share. Long: *Racism holds us back. It is everywhere. I know that! I have learned to accept it. Some are rude. It's like an everyday experience. One day in the bus, an old man said "Chinese get out of here! Get out of the country!!" No one said anything. I didn't retort to that. What's there to say to that? The bus driver didn't say anything.*

Fighting the Odds

The Vietnamese students in this study believed that they could "fight" the odds.' Like the common stereotype of the "invincible adolescent," the youths in this study remind us of examples of invulnerability when they spoke about dealing with racism and discrimination in their future. Van Oanh, like May and Thu, for example, discovered her own resilience and the connection between her strength and her vulnerability. She showed the same daring in her determination to face the obstacles ESL teachers presented to the Vietnamese refugee students and the sadness of racism that has consumed her because of her brother's academic failure. *I studied extremely hard in order to escape their prejudices. I couldn't wait to go to regular classes where I could learn English. I didn't learn English when I was in ESL classes in both schools. So after I realized that these were bad teachers, I tried so hard to get out of the trap.* In telling this story she broke the family silence. *My parents are very proud of me. It works in a vicious cycle.*

They showed their disappointment in my brother. He became more discouraged and more depressed, more stubborn and more rebellious. She confronted the mystery and terror, and traced the reverberations in continuing to pull herself up by the bootstraps and “search for safe harbour” in regular classes. Van Oanh’s story and responses to the multiple challenges of the effects of the escape, life in the refugee camp, and of racism powerfully demonstrated the long-term effects of trauma and injustice. Yet, Van-Oanh’s life also teaches us about resiliency and strength in the face of adversity. She strove to excel academically in a social climate that destroyed many refugee children. Much of her coping in response to the refugee camp reflected internalized strengths fostered by her Vietnamese cultural and historical heritage.

Similarly May and Thu showed their resilience and determination to escape the confinement that the institutions imposed on them: *So I told my sister study hard on our own so that we could get out of the ESL classes. Usually you worked in one level each year, but we passed all the levels in two years so that we could go to regular classes because we wanted to get on the honour roll. Every year we were on honour roll. We got on the honour roll in the first term even though we were in ESL classes.*

Even the cloistered life which shielded Mary Hong from some of the racial warfare in the real world did not protect her from the colour castes within the university. In her “Vietnamese arrogance,” Hang was self-protective and watchful. From her forebears Hang inherited a stance and style that challenges her white classmates’ white sense of entitlement. Even though bigotry is often more veiled in these elite university circles, even though Mary Hong received academic awards, she was conscious of subtle racism and low marks given to her. Over time they could erode her spirit. As a young

child, Van Oanh witnessed police raids in her community, and watched the teachers abusing her brother and other Vietnamese students. She felt the injury and she noticed her parents' dignity would not allow them to reveal the hurt and disappointment or permit his emancipation. Because of that occurrence and many others in ESL classes, Van Oanh, May and her sister have been sensitized to the special "vulnerability of our Vietnamese boys," who are victimized and destroyed by the very society that offered them an asylum from the unjust world of communism, by a society whose primal fears would not allow Vietnamese students to attend to their learning. Here in this new country arriving with the hope for a better future, the refugees' children have not been protected from the blanket abuse of minority students. Van Oanh never forgot as she tried to develop her own gentle version of jungle posture. As Giroux (1996) explains:

Resistance has been defined as a personal space, in which the logic and force of domination is contested by the power of subjective agency to subvert the process of socialization. Seen this way, resistance functions as a type of negation or affirmation placed before ruling discourses and practices. Of course, resistance often lacks an overt political project and frequently reflects social practices that are informal, disorganized, apolitical, and atheoretical in nature. In some instances it can reduce itself to an unreflective and defeatist refusal to acquiesce to different forms of domination, or even naive rejection of oppressive forms of moral and political regulation. (p. 162)

Van Oanh, like the rest of the youths, in the study volunteered in building the Vietnamese community, attempting to buffer Vietnamese children from the traumas of racism in schools, and build their academic skills, confidence, ambition, discipline, and responsibility to the community.

Although they bear scars of racist assaults and vividly recall the moments of humiliation and terror, all of the narrators refused to be defeated by the abuse of racism

that echoes through each of the stories, in their families and in their daily lives. They refused to be passive. They had no time to lament. They have developed a "resistant stance," a way of guarding against the erosion of their self-confidence and the wounding of their spirits. Each one has discovered ways of responding creatively to injustice, to the dual realities of being Vietnamese and Canadian, of roots and of destinations, of yellow and whiteness, of poverty and privilege, of risk and resiliency, of loss and liberation. The youths in this study have made courageous attempts to cross the border into a space in which only the privileged can enter to express their "truer selves" in the pursuit of emancipation from oppression. They have recognized and embraced the contradictions. They have reversed the lens and adjusted its focus. Knowing the particular difficulties they faced as refugees and minorities, the youths were determined to achieve and felt a responsibility to their community to be successful. Vuong thinks that he experiences racism only when he "dresses a certain way." He does not think that his experiences are based on race or ethnicity per se, but rather on the image he presents. And they have also created strategies to cope as effectively as they can with the very real challenges they confront

They were aware of the reality of racism, and these Vietnamese students found common ground as they spoke passionately about their determination not to allow discrimination to block them in their pursuit of their goals. Most of the students in the study said they would not let discrimination interfere in their lives. They felt confident that racism would not present insurmountable obstacles for them in the future. They believe that there are always racist or prejudiced people who have already determined who they are going to hire. Vuong: *But I believe that if I'm good then they will hire me.*

Therefore, I know that I have to study harder and have higher education and training. I would not be discouraged by it. The boys did not seem to believe it will prevent them from attaining their goals. Vuong, Think, Khang, Tuen, and Long shared a similar view that they will let not this understanding discourage them, although Long seemed tentative that while he may experience racism, it will not hinder his ambitions. Think expressed similar views but provided more details about the strategies he tended to use when confronted with racism. Think's affirmation of racist stereotypes and his determination to prove these beliefs to be false suggested that he, like the rest of the youths in the study, used stereotypes as a motivator for them to study hard and to succeed in the white world. Vuong spoke about challenging the stereotypes of the community. He was aware of the difficulties he may experience because of his race, but he also believed that, if given a chance, he could "prove" himself to others and, ultimately, challenge racist stereotypes.

May and Thu believed that racism only made them *try harder, study more* according to Thu, and May: *Do better...make me stronger.* Ngi reports similar feelings. Hang and Mary Hong were aware of the "reality" but refused to be discouraged by it: *try to avoid before it happens.* The girls identified with the Vietnamese community and were very involved with the community activities to help other Vietnamese children. *I'm doing volunteer work at Mosaic where I meet Vietnamese children. I heard many stories about Vietnamese students being treated badly by teachers, schools, etc. I heard these stories every day. And I knew every story they told.* They resisted being victims and this resistance led them to a collective struggle with the Vietnamese community. They wanted to empower Vietnamese children. Mary Hong condemned the stance of the victim when asked whether racism will be an obstacle for her in the future. All the girls

expressed the culturally enforced optimism or, as many put it, *if you work hard, you'll get lots of opportunities*. She acknowledged that the structure of opportunity may be more complicated than she has been taught to believe. However, *you have to face certain obstacles*, and she believed she could make it. She was intent on challenging the stereotypes of her community and was determined to give back to her community by becoming a role model. Knowing the particular difficulties he faces as a Vietnamese youths in Vancouver, Vuong was determined to be a success, and felt a responsibility to his community to be successful. The girls met racist stereotypes with a determination to prove these beliefs are false. This is to heal the wounds of racism and sexism in a racially oppressed community.

They resisted and challenged the stereotypes and wanted to prove to those outside of their communities that they could succeed despite the negative prediction of success based on racism and discrimination. When I engaged the youths in discussion of discrimination and difference, I heard a difference between race and ethnicity as they experience racism regularly and expect to in the future. In discussing their futures, the youths' perspectives on discrimination and difference were both from the margins and from the inside. They knew about rampant racism, but they were determined to overcome such barriers. They were fully aware that race and ethnicity make a difference, but they did not want it to make a difference. They suggested that they are continually creating strategies to cope as effectively as they could with the very real challenges they confront.

Identity

For two students who came to Canada at a very young age, six-months old and one and a half years old, Vuong and Mary Hong described themselves as "half and half." In contrast, eight students who came to Canada in their preadolescence or early adolescence view themselves as Vietnamese. They implied that the degree or extent of their contact with Canadian society generally serves to discourage positive identification with Canada, even though some of them enthusiastically wanted to be "fully Canadian" but are prevented because as Ngi expressed her disappointment: *I don't feel like a Canadian. I thought that when I got the citizenship I would be Canadian but I am still looked as an alien. I don't feel I belong or am accepted. Most of my Chinese friends they consider themselves as more Chinese than Canadian.*

Similarly, Think shared his feeling: *I never feel that I'm Canadian; I am aware of my skin colour. I'm very proud as a Vietnamese. I watch the History channel about Vietnamese war. I feel proud of our country but I also feel sad because of the struggles with the Chinese, French, Japanese, and then Americans. Canadians are more reserved. It's more subtle. But I can notice and I try to avoid it before it happens. I am interested in the Vietnamese wars. I am sad for our people. But I also feel proud. I don't like or trust the media here. They also portray the Vietnamese here in a bad light. I am sad that the South lost to the North. But I am glad that as a nation we won the American War.*

The fundamental premise in the work of DeVos (1973), especially in looking at oppressed groups who have been subjected to systemic degradation incidents, is that all human behavior in any form, even if viewed as primarily structured by political, economic or other social institutions, is influenced by personality variables that are culturally transmitted from one generation to another (p. 1).

DeVos (1990) also argues that ethnic identity cannot be measured by examining the cultural content of various groups:

Ethnic identity cannot be studied through specific attention to objective features of physical differences, territory, language, religion, occupational and economic features, or other specific cultural traits. One cannot be content with any etic approach to ethnicity. Rather, as Barth (1969) saw it, the problem is an emic one of *boundary maintenance* – whatever the contrastive features employed to defined a group. (P. 207)

DeVos (1990, p. 208) contends that ethnicity goes together with social class as “a central topic of social theory,” and that in order to understand group affiliation (social belonging) it is necessary to look at social behavior; consequently, the most productive approach to the study of ethnicity is to examine the dynamics of conflict in society, rather than the static formal structures or integration of society, because change is “the reality of human history.”

May: I found that Canadians are more in the present. They seem to have everything. We don't have anything so we have lots of dreams. In Vietnam children have to work very hard to survive let alone get an education. So we are lucky to be here. I am proud to have a Vietnamese identity. Identity is one thing but to grow up to be a better person is another thing. Vietnamese here have got a bad rap. One Vietnamese told me that when his son arrived at the airport, he was arrested as he was accused as a drug dealer and gangster. They assumed that he was in gang. He didn't know what a gang and drugs were. Now he is working on his master's degree at UBC. He still does not know any one in a gang or use drugs.

The youths' stories provided evidence of realities. There was always absolute silence while the stories were being told. The silence hung there at the end.

The Space of Resistance

The Vietnamese in Vancouver lived in low income residences that concentrated in the poorest part of the poorest area in East Vancouver, a situation that might seem hopeless. They lack financial and cultural capital, and experience an abundance of racism. Vuong's father: *My colleagues, former pilots, are in the States and they are doing very well. They received training when they arrived in the States so their lives have not changed, but improved, better than I have. They have permanent and secured jobs. Some are technologists because they went to school. Here I didn't receive anything. Even for a labour job, if it is unionized there is no way we can get in that place. I was very active in the community to fight for the Vietnamese here but most government agencies are not supportive towards Vietnamese. They are very brutal to us. The Vietnamese community is so poor and as the first generation in this country, most of us are unemployed unlike the Chinese. So no one cares or even respects us. We get blamed for social problems.* Lacking education, job skills, and proficiency in English, Vietnamese men frequently found themselves unable to provide for their families and depended on the help of their wives, their children, and public assistance. Vietnamese who settled in early 1980s became sponsors for the secondary migrants and newly arrival refugees, replacing the organizational sponsorship of the first year. Think's family was sponsored by his uncle.

In some spaces, in some communities, Vietnamese are carving new sites for a mooring of identities. Border identities speak of the lived experiences of the oppressed people. Whites locate minority subjects as "ethnic" whereas white people are rarely accorded this status (hooks, 1992). White people universalize the Other as ethnic and

themselves as existing metaphysically beyond all forms of ethnic significance. In trying to connect marginal communities and critical theory, Anzaldua (1990) unmasks the pretensions of Western identity formations and dismantles false images and formulates marginal theory.

Marginal theories are partially outside and partially inside the Western frame of reference (if that is possible); theories that overlap many "worlds." We are articulating new positions in these 'in-between,' borderland worlds of ethnic communities and academies, feminist and job world...In our *mstizaje* theories we create new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of the existing ones. (p. XXVi)

Homeplace – Space of Resistance

The poor Vietnamese must negotiate the border that divides the home from the street. They must keep children safe in the midst of street violence. Vuong's father: *I stay in the living room, and sleep on the couch. I am very strict. I sit in the living room and watch them, [the children's every move. With fears for their safety and that of their children, they are vigilant about keeping the kids "locked in the house after school."* Hang: *I'm not allowed to go out on during the week. When I go out with friends I am only allowed to stay out until 10 pm.*

The parents have created the "homeplace" as a dual site of love and resistance. Tuen's mother: *Every night, I keep them inside. I lock all the doors and windows. I check them to make sure they are warm, make sure their windows are closed, make sure they don't have a nightmare. I remind them to go to bed on time so that they will not be tired. They work very hard. They often ask my advice and tell me about their friends about their conflicts, their struggles as teenagers.*

Mary Hong's father: *During the weeknight they don't go out. I also answer the phone. So if their friends call for school homework then I will let them talk, but if just for a chat I will take the message. I would not let their friends disturb them while they are studying, nothing can disturb my children*

Hang's mother: *In the morning I make breakfast and pack lunch for the kids, and their father drives them to school. Then I clean up the kitchen and prepare dinner, while my husband cleans the kids' room, the house and washes clothes. The children have lunch at school. I then start sewing until 3:00 pm. I then stop to prepare snack for the kids and look through the window to watch them as they enter the front door. The boy plays hockey, and the girls play volleyball or tennis so they usually practice after school. So when they get home from school they are usually very hungry. They watch TV a little bit and then go directly to their bedroom to do their schoolwork. I then prepare dinner, tailoring the menu to each child's preference. We can't help them with their schoolwork because we don't understand the language. The girls come down before 6:00 pm to help me with cooking dinner. While we are preparing dinner, I tell them stories of my childhood, my neighbors, my town, my parents, etc. They enjoy my stories. I don't let them help me when they have exams. We don't disturb them. We leave them alone. Now and then we knock on their doors ask them if they need drinks, or snacks, and if they are okay.*

In the narrations are the emergent themes of creating and searching for "safe spaces" in which to live and to raise the next generation. Van Oanh's mother: *I love to make breakfast for them. I want them to have a little bit more sleep time. I make sure they have dinner at 6:00 pm. So no matter how busy I am I drop everything and make*

dinner for them. There are always snacks, cold meat, sandwiches, ice-cream etc. I check the fridge everyday. When I'm tired they then take care of everything. They worry for my health. They remind me to eat, to get warm, etc. I use love to train, guide and teach them. I know that they wouldn't do anything to disappoint me. Mary Hong's father: My oldest daughter is now 22 years old, but she always comes to see me when she gets home late and tell me where she's been. I stay up and wait for her. I can't sleep until she gets home. So I wait until she gets home.

The parents narrate their children as being "under siege." Their movements are further and further restricted. Tuen's mother: I ask my children about their friends' families to see if their friends' families are decent families: if they care for their children and if they monitor their children. I don't want children who have too much freedom, no guidance and no discipline. Most of them live in fear. Concerned mothers and fathers maintain their children locked inside their apartments in determined attempts to keep street culture out. Mary Hong's father: As an interpreter I can work at home. All I have to do is talk to the client on the phone and write the report to the insurance company. So I am still able to keep an eye on the kids. I take them when they want to go outside in the evening. I wouldn't let my son drive because he'd be stopped by police. I was stopped a few times but I'm used to it. I'm a good citizen so I'm not worried about it. But I worry for my son because of the street culture and the police are not very kind to Vietnamese here.

Khang's father: Last month I went to San Jose to attend my brother's wedding. It was the first time I went away without my children. I was very worried. I was fearful that they if they go out in the evening they would be stopped and suspected as if they're

in gangs. I wondered if they ate, wondered if they stayed up late, I wondered if they turned off the stove before they went to bed. I called them five, six times a day. I was always concerned about them. I couldn't wait until the wedding was over to go home and be with my children. In the summer Kim kept her window closed. I was worried that she wouldn't have fresh air or it would be too hot for her so I check her window every night. In the winter I check their windows too. I make sure they're warm.

Van Oanh recognized the problems associated with her youths. *My brother hung out on the street sometimes but he was not in a gang as the media and police portray most Vietnamese youths here.* She knew young street people who were destroyed and expelled from schools because they were simply minority refugees, not only Vietnamese. And yet, at the same time these mothers, like all mothers, get up every morning, walk their children to school, cook dinner, struggle through housework, and put their children to bed. Tuen's mother *I make dinner. I always ask them what they want for dinner. If they want to learn how to cook I'd show them but I wouldn't let them to cook or clean every day. When they are busy studying I then wash the dishes. I don't want them to be too tired. I then read and answer the phone. No one else answers the phone. Later in the evening, I ask them what they want for breakfast, and the dinner for the next day. I then go to bed. I don't encourage them to have a part time job after school.* The parents are trying to set up safe space in their homes as ways of protecting against the outside streets. These "safe spaces," these places of homesteading, are, however, not always safe, or as under the control of women as they might like. These are their borders.

This is a study of the way in which the refugees have juggled family and work to raise their children in the world that is so hostile to Vietnamese children. In juggling they have carved a wedge of resistance through their children's academic future. Central to the refugees' resistance has been the struggle to care and nurture their children. My study focused on the dailiness of the refugees' lives and weaves an understanding of their labor that fosters their children's academic resiliency as a force for social change. Van Oanh's father: *I told my children that they have abilities and opportunities to study. Therefore, they must try to study. We will do anything and every thing to support their education no matter how long it takes. In fact, the longer they study, the better. We will support them to the highest level. We are and we will always be there to support them financially even if we have to go hungry. I also warned them that we, his mother and I, will stay with each other to support them. So they must fulfill their obligation unless they don't have the abilities then we will accept that. There is no excuse for not pursuing an education. Whatever they want to study, as long as they want to learn. We are always and will always be there for them. It's our honour, our obligation, and our greatest pleasure to support our children.* In this context the will to nurture and its attendant labours of acculturation, education, race, and heritage pride becomes a form of resiliency.

One set of borders the refugee must negotiate is that which divides the home from the street. They must keep their children safe in the midst of street violence and, at the same time, prevent children from falling prey to the lure of bad friends as they grow older. Vuong's father: *When they were in grade 7 or 8, I watched their friends carefully. I wouldn't let them have bad friends. I made sure that I would meet their*

friends and I am very strict. Vuong is very responsible. He comes home after school and studies. I bought him an advanced computer set almost two years. I don't smoke, drink, or go out. I save the money for my children to buy for their educational needs. Every summer we go camping, and travel. On the weekend they rest and we go shopping together. Vuong doesn't go out. On the weekend he goes to work. They are vigilant about keeping the kids inside the house after school to do homework. As bell hooks called the "home place" as a dual site of love and of resistance. In this urban story is the tail of the constant search for "safe spaces" in which to live and raise the next generation. Mary Hong's father told: I am always at home when they get home from school. I always answer the phone and screen all the phone calls. I take messages. I wouldn't let their friends bother them. I would not let them talk to kids who are not polite, those who I feel are bad kids.

It is important to note that, although Lower Mainland is so called a multicultural or multiethnic community, in my experience, whites people have little real interracial experience. Their coworkers are white, their friends and families are white. Although their children may attend de-segregated schools, they remained separated by race; none are truly integrated. Thus, their construction of minorities are rarely rooted in any real life experience.

Mary Hong described her fear: *I avoid going where there is a group of whites, a white neighborhood. I don't like it when I have to drive through that area before I get to the university. I am fearful from their looks. I feel good as a Vietnamese but I'm also part Chinese. I saw mistreatment or bad comments towards Asians. I tried to avoid the situation. I tried to avoid when there is a group of all Caucasians. I avoid going to the*

area that is near UBC. People there don't give us friendly looks. They are not outright racist but their look said more. So I tried to avoid it as much as possible. I could feel it when I had to visit the West side, even to drive by, or stop by. It's not very pleasant.

Tuen's mother: I am so worried when Tuen comes home late after spending most of his time in the lab. One time when his car broke down in the UBC area, you know, only the rich and whites live there, the neighbour there called the police and Tuen was punched in his stomach, and head, and was interrogated as if he was trying to invade the white people's homes. He missed school for few days. A "good" community initiative in the interests of engagement across difference thus doubles as a legitimate form of border patrolling.

On the other side of the city, the refugee individual and community efforts went into resistance of racial and class oppressions as provisions for children were made. Many mothers were forced to leave their children to go to work. Individual and community efforts went into sustaining the children as providing care for the children. Temple- and church-related activities were organized.

Community Dance

It was within this nadir that only a small number of refugee children not only survived the white gatekeeper teachers but completed their public school education and went to university. The collective labours shouldered by Vietnamese parents who harboured and nurtured new generations had began to reap their rewards. In succeeding generations, in Vancouver, fewer and fewer Vietnamese children would make it to university as parents, every year mostly women worked together through the Greater Vancouver Vietnamese Women's Society to encourage, counsel, and raise necessary

funds to supply the scholarships necessary for the children's education. The accumulated effects of women's resistance summoned in the labours of daily life stagger the imagination. One knows that in addition to the tuition, scholarships, and supplies their labours funded, it was the nurturing work of Vietnamese women, the mothers, grandmothers, and neighbourly consorts, that provided the children with sufficient emotional resilience, the intellectual curiosity, the racial and pride of heritage to tackle the rigours of higher education. Gunderson (personal communication, 2000) found that only 5% of the Vietnamese children in Vancouver made it through high school. So the Vietnamese conquered the Chinese, French, Japanese, and American wars, but have succumbed and have been annihilated by BC teachers and its society. And in this case social change came slowly, over time, and with generations. But it did come, particularity of the refugees' resistance visible with historical hindsight. Stories of resistance become visible in the telling of ten students and their parents in this study. The means by which people find meaning in life and their religious, philosophical, or ethical understandings underscore their courage, commitments, methods of confronting suffering, ideas of justice, and efforts to change themselves and the world.

Building a Cultural Home with their Own Bricks, Mortars, and Lumbers

All of the participants grew up in homes in which religion was woven into daily life. The Buddhist temple is a site of hope and connection. However poor they are, families have dug into their meager savings to keep and maintain the Buddhist temple which has been central to Vietnamese life for many generations. The sanctuaries typify the secretive character of Vietnamese folk religion. They combine Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, pagan practices, and ancestor worship. People visit them to give thanks

for happy events or to pray for favours in times of need. The temple is the community meeting place and prayers where the spirits of those who have passed on to join the spirits of those who are living. In the ways of the ancestors the balance between men and women is restored, there is no hierarchy of class and race inferiority, scorn, punishment, or hatred. Living under unbearable brutality and severe abuse by this society, the refugees rely on religion. Wrapping themselves in spiritual wholeness of the ancestors, life is stored for this refugee community, however arduous their material existence. The connection is in this ceremony and ritual, about growth and balance, family, and roots, and community. Nearly all of the parents I interviewed related innumerable ways in which they have acted to improve the quality of their daily lives. In enacting their own view of emancipation, the refugees and their children have built the sense of community, rather than citizenship, and of a collective peoplehood, rather than individual personhood, that has informed the resistance strategies of the refugees. From the refugees' standpoint the forging of cultural heritage is often a weapon of resistance against racism, ethnocentrism, and anti-Asian sentiment of the dominant culture that seeks to degrade, punish, and dominate those it decries as different and "other." The point is that these ideas about life and about how to sustain it, about relationship and community and connection to keep their young surviving through this deliberate genocide are generated by the nature of refugees' labours, and these labours, and conditions under which they act, inscribe a particular form of consciousness.

The parents reach out to other Vietnamese, crossing family borders, to discuss aspects of their lives at their temple and churches. The nine parents I interviewed are not only negotiating their relations with local violent communities, but they are also

balancing the public sphere of education, jobs, welfare, unemployment insurance, job training, and the private sphere of home and family life. In this juggling they have carved a wedge of resistance at the temples and churches which also are sites for regular worship and other formal religious practices. They also function as informal social services and as integration into ethnic community subjects to social control in the community. Observation and judgment are pervasive. The community is watchful and ever-vigilant, and there is consensus about norms. Violations of the norm brings shame not only on the individual violator but also on the family as well. Vietnamese in Vancouver know one another well through family and friendship networks. They meet often in such places as the church, the temple, restaurants, and marketplaces.

Funeral and wedding ceremonies are big family and community events. During the celebration of these events, themes of spiritual wholeness, of intricate balance of life, are told by the elders in their story of ceremony at the temple. In this story there are also layered stories of resistance to the dominant culture, to racial oppression. Yet there is a subtle something that connects them to one another in fiction, in history, and in life. These occasions often involve as many as two to four hundred people, and provide opportunities to socialize with each other, and to exchange gossip, rumors, and compete about their children's achievements and accomplishments. They discussed whose children have won scholarships and whose child have dropped out of school or whose children are involved in shameful activities. They gossiped over who has bought a new house, who has just opened up a store, who is having an affair, who is going through divorce. Violators are going to be punished, especially when the rule breakers are children. When a child makes good grades or wins awards in school, the community

honours both the child and his or her family.

There are not so much as a hymn to the beauty of everydayness as there are testimony to the sufferings and small joys of those who live in East Vancouver. Sensitive and compassionate witnesses, the elders re-create the neighbourhood in which they as Vietnamese children grew up, evoking the smells and tastes and the feelings. The effects of racism, poverty, and the loss of culture and language are told with searing simplicity. The elders are the narrators of these stories. Van Oanh's grandmother goes to the temple every Sunday. She is a small, beautiful woman. She misses her real home. She speaks no English. She wants to go home. This is not home. *No speak English. No speak English*, and bubbles into tears *no, no, no*, as if she can't believe her ears. But there is no home to which to return.

At the temple and church, they celebrated weddings and births, retirements, birthdays, and other special occasions. When there was a death in someone's family everyone pitches in to express condolences with flowers or cards. Everyone, regardless of one's piece-rate grievances, contributes money for presents and participates in these life-cycle events. These events are part of a strategy of refugees consolidation. Hang's mother, for example, revealed: *We take the children to Buddhist temple every Sunday. At the end of the lunar year, at the temple, they have a big event for the children. They give musical performances and receive prizes, while their parents prepare the feast. Rather than hire professional singers, we prefer to encourage the children to perform and to make their own costumes and props so that they develop confidence in themselves.*

Think's mother described: *For adults we have the main altar where they can worship. On it we have many images that are designed to remind us of Buddhist teachings. These include the Sleeping Buddha, who reaches the Nirvana, and the Bodhisattava Kuan Yin (or Quan The Am), who helps those in distress. People in great distress depend on Kuan Am. She is part of the Mahayana tradition. Buddhists come to the pagoda for help because they feel at home here. Everything looks like their homes in Vietnam, the atmosphere, the furniture. Here things are informal and not expensive, so they are not too removed from their own experiences. They come here to meet others. When they see old people here, it reminds them of their parents in Vietnam. When they see young people, it reminds them of their younger brothers. When they lived in Vietnam, they heard their mothers citing the canon, but they never paid attention. Now they visit the pagoda.*

Most of the Vietnamese are Buddhist. Some attend the Buddhist temple on a regular basis. Some rarely go. The parents interviewed expressed strong spiritual and ancestor worship sentiments which are sources that can be tapped into when and if needed in order to keep them strong, to enable survival. The refugee poor and working class speak in a discourse punctuated by sentiments of both responsibility and redemption. They believe that in Buddhist' hands, people can turn their lives around. Evil can become good; greed can become generosity.

It is Phat Ba Quan Am (Female God) who cradles refugees as they try, in the midst of poverty, to live their lives and to raise their children. Bordered by an inhospitable economy, community violence, racial oppression and poverty, Phat Ba represents at times, for many, the only solace, the only space in which real homesteading

takes place. There is no vibrant social movement to suggest that life can and will get better for poor refugees. In spite of this, poor refugees hold together to raise the next generation, retaining connectedness by sharing resources and by many individually leaning on Phat Ba in the midst of public assaults. Imagination is survival.

All of the students in this study went to temple when they were in their early teens, but still Van Oanh takes her grandmother. Mary Hong: *I take my parents to the Temple every Sunday. There I watch the Buddhists pray and chant, and afterwards there is a lunch party. I then help to prepare.* May and Thu too go to the temple every Sunday. Van Oanh described: *You see, the temple is the thread that joins the refugees together. And what you feel on Sunday at the temple is a thread that the refugees weave.*

To the refugees this thread is spun into a web of resistance, a protective shield against oppressive society in which the refugee men and women are forced to labour to protect their children, but most have failed. The temple sustains the life of the refugee people, sustains and nurtures the refugees and their young. The temple embodies the web of life.

Ritual of Survival

At the temple, every Sunday, the lunch party is the Buddhists' orchestrated event. In this way, the meal has purpose and meaning. It is a ritual of survival. Here is a lunch party, a ritual of connection and ceremony. It combines myth and history, ritual and ceremony, reality and imagination with craft and art; it uses both symbolic and narrative forms to tell its stories. It is individually conceived but collectively executed in ways that decisively affect its original conception; it is a ritual of survival. These lunch parties after religious ceremonies are rituals of continuity and connection to

family, friends, community, religion, history, tradition, and culture. They mark rites of passage and commemorate significant events. They provided children with the stories and ceremonies upon which to build their sense of cultural, racial, religious, and class identity.

Drawn from temples and spiritual communities, only belief in hard work and hope in their children's academic resiliency will save our communities. Amidst the pain and the despair, hope survives. It is Phat Ba Quan Am who cradles the exiles as they try, in the midst of poverty, to live their lives and to raise their children. Bordered by an inhospitable economy, community violence, and structural decay of all forms, Phat Ba represents at times, for many, the only solace, the only space in which real homesteading takes place. Despite the financial stretch, the social difficulties, and the personal pain they experience, these mothers take great pride in their children and great pleasure in their moments with "the kids." *When they were little we took them to the temple, but now they are busy. We go alone but when we get home we always tell them what the monk has said, what the Bible says, and the moral lessons we learned from the temple. So even if they don't go to the temple they still learn the about the philosophy.* Stories are passed on across generations. They are determined about how they are raising their children in a world hostile to their children, wondering if the "kids get enough" of what is needed to make their lives successful, and what awaits them. But they are also very proud.

I write in the space which exists between despair and hope. Although I heard much despair, I also heard from them whispers of resisting despair and building hope because that is the space within which we can live. The structures oppress, but we must

have hope that things can be better.

A full sense of community is fictional and fragile, ever vulnerable to external threats and internal fissures. These are stories of pain, passion, violence, fear, and enormous strength. These refugees gather together for mutual support in a reconstructed environment that resembled the homeland. They come to see people in an environment because of the familiarity of faces, language, habits of minds. They do not feel out of place at the Buddhist temple. The community has a Vietnamese language school that children attend every Sunday where they speak, read, write, and learn Vietnamese culture and history. The ethnic media serves the community with a newspaper, radio station, and television studio which produces a Vietnamese language program.

The community is the informal network of families and friends. It provides emotional, cultural, and spiritual support, as well as job information, education, and housing. It provides its members services that are unavailable or not easily accessible in the larger society. It offers social supports, established goals, reinforces community standards, and shields group members from outside influences in their underprivileged community. It preserves the status quo within the community and creates a symbolic homeland, where traditional values and a sense of ethnic identity can be nurtured. The community fosters the development of social capital that enables members and their families to surmount structured barriers, to minimize the effects of living in socially isolated and disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to develop habits and skills for socioeconomic advancement. The first generation still has a guest mentality toward their new country, and their political-civic lives continues to be dominated by thoughts of the lost homeland.

Vuong's father: *I belong to the Vietnamese war vets group where we provide mutual and moral support. We support each other for our children. If one of the men goes astray, we scold and advise him that the man should put his family first which means his children's interests come first. We provide each other moral guidance. We celebrate our anniversary every year. We still honour our Vietnamese Republic Vietnamese flag. The men wear their military uniforms. We bond as Vietnamese and as vets.*

Here the Vietnamese also reclaim their cultural identity. They want to protect and preserve the pride of being Vietnamese in North America. They are staking out identities carved in quiet resistance. The refugees found their refuge here and was self-consciously carving out and affirming a counter-hegemony. The refugees are concerned about the future of their children. They expressed strong emotional attachment for their children to the notions of family. They hang on tightly, though, to the ideology of family. Yet the refugees are anything but nostalgic about the past life. Vuong's father shared his feeling: *I hope that someday my kids will be more curious about their country of origin so that they will learn about it and visit the country. I also told them that they tried their best for the Vietnamese community as Vietnamese. I also join the Vietnamese association and I explained to them why. I also told them the importance of hard work, honesty, and dignity.* For them, Vietnam occupies a nostalgic space of incomparable beauty. Hang's father articulates nostalgia. Experiencing distance, they attempt to reenter the country of their nostalgic dreams. For others, Vietnam is all that it should be: romantic, magical, beautiful, and a source of inspiration and strength. They are proud to assert their identity as Vietnamese. They now accept their second class status as

outsiders, but they are silently defying this through their children's academic achievement. This is their revolution strategy, as they did with the Chinese, Japanese, French and Americans. Life is a quiet revolution, silent defiance.

The refugees come together at the temple to recognize their strengths and value their contributions. The men, women, and children are re-weaving their identities out of the cloth of history, the wisdom of tradition, and the power of resistance.

THE DANCE OF CONNECTION AND CINDERELLA'S STORY

Cinderella's Story: Solo Dancing

This chapter presents another study of a life in progress, a deviant story. This case study is of May. Although only a single individual's story, May's story as presented is a tribute to human strength and resiliency. Her mother's death is followed by a story that resembles the first, unhappy part of the Cinderella story. She continued to search for a family with mother and father. In addition, academic and psychological research on risk and resiliency have traditionally framed immigrant, refugee minority families on a deficit model. The use of white, middle-class families as a standard and basis for comparisons draws out and highlights areas of deficiency and neglect among minority children. May is not privileged by her race, gender, or social class position. She is neither white nor middle-class, and she was not raised within the bonds of a cohesive nuclear family. Yet it would be a grave mistake to characterize May's life as deficient, when her life and accomplishments, are in fact remarkable in their richness.

May told: I'm in my third year at SFU, majoring in biochemistry and mathematics and my sister is in her second year in nutrition at UBC. My father had escaped to Canada and then my mother died when I was 7 years old. I didn't know my father. When my mother died we didn't have any money. We [May and her younger sister, Thu] were homeless. We stayed in Vietnam with our maternal grandmother and uncles. They were very good to us. In Vietnam when we went to school we had to study about Uncle Ho and

the Communist party. We went to school only half days because the schools were so crowded, so we didn't learn much at school.

Eight years later, our father sponsored us to come Canada. I was 15 years old. We came directly to Vancouver. Our father and stepmother did not pay attention to our education. Unlike like other families, we were not encouraged to study. We never talked to them. Perhaps it's tradition. We couldn't express ourselves. We didn't get along. There was a lot of criticism. Our stepmother was very mean to us. She didn't like it when we studied. She wanted us to clean the house, to cook, and to help them with their business. We had no freedom and every day was a matter of survival. We had lost our mother when we were very young and our father didn't care for us.

May's "dance of life" has engaged in a brave maneuver of "interpretation" and "reconciliation." She confronted the echoes of her painful childhood experiences, cultural notions about the self and relations with others. Cultural discourse on the family left her with a lingering ambivalence. *We set our own goal to study. No one cares for us. Our mother died. We are orphans. The first worst thing that happened to us was when our mother died. No one cared for or guided us. Only a mother can provide you that but we lost that. So we accepted our situation. Since we got here we were treated badly. We were hit at any time. When we studied, our father and stepmother couldn't care less. They made us work on their fishing boat. There were many times when we were not able to study.*

May experienced the dance of life as a dichotomy. In analyzing what went so wrong with her family, May has been working with the cultural discourse on the ideal

family, deconstructing it as she analyzes the social, cultural, and political forces at work, which contributes to her sense of coherence in her life story

May's memory of her years at her father's house is a painful experience. *We had to do everything for everybody. Our father didn't want us to study. He listened to our stepmother. Then three years later, I (May) went to work after school, but I still had to do the housework. Even though I was busy with exams they didn't care. When we had to do extra schoolwork at school and we got home late we were punished. They didn't listen to us because they thought studying was selfish. They wanted us to work for them. So we had to do everything. We had to clean the house every day. When we were in grades 11 and 12 we studied all night for exams. We were not able to do the housework because we were very tired, so our stepmother got angry with us. My stepmother complained about me to my father often. My father hit me with a big stick.*

May's teenage years seemed devoid of any nurturing parental relationships. She retreated into her studies. There she found peace from her chaotic home, and began living a double life as a closet intellectual. Her father saw her intellectual pursuit as a diabolical plot to make his life difficult. At every phase of her life May described reading voraciously, but when she was at her father's house she often had to conceal her reading material and homework. *I had to study in the dark so that my father wouldn't see me studying. Sometimes I studied when I washed the dishes, when I cleaned the house I put my notes in my pocket, and I read them as I worked. At home there were layers of concealment, always.* May was given the primary responsibility for managing the home, a responsibility she admits she performed marginally. She said she always got in trouble because when she had exams she would be studying instead of doing her chores. In the

inner life she fashioned for herself, she wanted to get on the honour roll. Her father wanted her to follow his moral strictures and perform her chores with enthusiasm, so as not to disrupt the household. The thought that he might develop May's intellectual resources never occurred to him. *Rules were very ambiguous. They were not laid out clearly so we didn't know what to expect. It was only when our father and stepmother got mad that we knew that we had broken the rules. For example, there were times when we had told them that we had work to do at school and we would be home late, but when we got home we were punished and we were accused of breaking the rules. We never had free time. We never had time to spend with friends. We had to move out. I moved out first, and then my sister, Thu, moved in with me a year later.*

May's first initial break-up of a sense of family occurred when she was a small child, but she continued to reflect on the loss of her mother. While mourning this loss, her father escaped from Vietnam. Eight years later when they were reunited in Canada, there were many daily tensions with her stepmother. Occasionally these tensions erupted into conflict. Then she moved out of her father's house. These events occurred at a critical juncture in her adolescence. Her narrative is a cultural discourse on the normal family. Implicit in May's story is the idea that her experience does not match her notions of the "normal family."

May was at a crossroads. While she was frustrated because of her abusive father and his wife, she looked to the future as she set new life plans into motion, plans that reflect the Eastern values and participation in community. Although she was plagued with self-doubt, having plans enabled her to create a bridge between her old life in Vietnam and her new one in Canada and lent her a sense of community.

May endured one of the most difficult transitions of childhood; the loss of her mother and then others in her life due to immigration. Despite the dramatic change in how she lived her life, she was attempting to restore a sense of continuity. Her story demonstrated perseverance, acceptance of her situation, and efforts to reestablish control over her situation. In looking at her situation, she transformed it; she brought it under her control. *We got on the honour roll, in grade eight, right at the first year in our second semester in Canadian school. So our teachers were very impressed. They treated us very well, but other teenagers didn't like that; they were jealous. We were very busy, so we couldn't make friends. We were picked on and ridiculed. But it pushed us to work harder. It motivated us to work harder. But we are sisters and friends so we don't need more friends. I got on the honour roll at grade 10. We were not very interested in sports, although we received a cross-country ski championship. We received other scholarships from other programs because we got the top marks: Alumni, scholarships etc. School Bursary, and the University Scholarship. We also joined many clubs.*

As she acclimated to a new life in a new country, although she is a very attractive young woman, she was not waiting for a prince to rescue her. Instead, she is taking advantage of its benefits and trying to ignore everything else. She immersed herself in schoolwork, which she found immensely satisfying and fulfilling. Indeed, to her, education is the key to further transformation of her life. In orchestrating a new dance of life for herself that carried into it meaning from the old life, May began to leave a cacophonous dance of life behind.

Black feminists emphasize the need to explore interconnections between gender, race, and social class when investigating black women's identities and experiences with

oppression. In addressing May's identity I want to heed Patricia Hill Collins' (1992) advice of not starting "with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, [but rather thinking] of these systems as part of an interlocking matrix of relationships (p. 20)." As a young woman, May struggled with understanding this kind of complicated matrix in her own identity. May's life story is marked by an ongoing struggle to cope with personal misfortunes and institutionalized systems of racism and sexism.

May identifies her search for close, familial relationships as a salient theme resonating throughout her story. May lived with one of her high school teachers when she left her father. She found a significant female mentor and role model in her high school teacher. She found her real home at the teacher's house, a place of stability, order and ritual; a place where she found a "good mother" who offered guidance, encouragement, and mentoring. Afterwards, when she moved out to live on her own she visited her teacher frequently. May also found refuge at the temple to which she felt deeply attached, to its heavy authority of rules and relationships, to its deep bonds of connection and constraint. She also maintained close connection with her mother's friend who lived in Vancouver and who treated May like her own daughter. A significant source of May's strength lies in her ability to foster and then make the use of relationships and surrogate family systems. Her father was unable to create a cohesive family unit following his wife's death, and May quickly learned that she would have to rely on a foundation of relationships with people outside of her immediate family to gain strength and nurturance. Her relational coping strategy is consistent with psychological literature on "resilient children" who function adaptively in the face of severe and

enduring strain. Stable relationships with adults buffer these children from a host of adverse life circumstances (Rutter, 1979; Werner and Smith, 1982).

May's intellect peeked out from the veils of her childhood. She felt comfortable and accepted by the Vietnamese community and at the Buddhist temple. *Our grandparents are Buddhists. When we were in Vietnam they took us to temple. They had an altar at home. Here we go the temple every Sunday. When we lived with our father and stepmother we were not allowed to go. Now we live on our own so we go every Sunday unless we have too much schoolwork. At the temple we go to the kitchen and help other Buddhists to prepare lunch for the attendants. We prepare food for about 100 people. There are more older people, not too many people our age.*

Caught up in the sweep of energies, May felt renewed and invigorated, drawn back to her own cultural and spiritual roots. May recalled that her formative years were spent learning historical stories of female warriors which taught her femaleness is honored and respected. In these stories she learned of a culture in which balance and harmony, a respect for Earth and its cycle, and a passionate commitment to peace are prevailing values. May was able to ask herself: What it means to be a human being. To articulate this May said she must take herself out of, place above us, give an overview of the warrior society in which we are lodged and provide us with an outline of an alternative structure from the fragments of human memory, from values embedded in women's lives. One of the Vietnamese warrior stories, the Two Princesses, is May's emissary, bearing a gift of thought. It is crucial to May's purpose that the emissary be women. The Buddhist temple with colourful traditional food and its motif in brilliant colors, is *a symbol of transition and change.*

During adolescence May and Thu rejected the values of the dominant culture (of separation and independence) and subscribed to their own distinctive cultural norms, creating a sense of solidarity, internal cohesion, and the adoption of communitarian values in which they took pride. The invisible tenets that guide their ensuing effort to create a sense of coherence became more apparent. Despite that disruptions to her family, cultural notions of the "normal family" remained an ideal May and Thu hoped to experience. May's narrative is employed to bring her identity as a Vietnamese to the forefront in her efforts to reconcile the challenges of her life. She needed to connect, to be part of the circle of surrogate family and community. She embellished further on the cultural discourse of normalcy by calling attention to the link between the Vietnamese family and the Vietnamese community, and, beyond that, by calling attention to the goal of empowerment of that community. Her vision of the community springs from the cultural base she believed the family should afford. She called on cultural meanings of being Vietnamese to create a sense of coherence and connection that sustained her through adversity. Her strong emphasis on community and its connection to cultural discourses on both the family and normalcy suggested that there may be a formulation of cultural discourses about self, family, and normalcy specific to Vietnamese: the community becomes the repository of those discourses on family and normalcy.

When I asked May about things that she worries about, without hesitance she responded: *Family, and school, even though we don't get along with our father and stepmother, we always dream about having a good family that is caring, loving, and nurturing. Because we don't have a mother we have lost a family relationship. When you have a mother you have a normal life. So now we lost our mother and we still live in*

grief. If you have both a mother and a father you have everything; your life is so stable, so good, thus you don't dream about having a good family. It's painful when we don't have a mother. Our mother died when we were too young so we lost the greatest love from our mother. We live in pain and mourn our loss, our grief. We don't have a mother so we dream about what we don't have. You have different dreams. There are parents who don't care for their children. They gave birth to their children, yet neglected them. So the children would leave their parents and live on streets when they turned 13 or 14. Luckily, we have our mother's parents, our grandparents, who love and care for us, otherwise we would have lived on streets by now. They gave us their wisdom, their support no matter what. They gave us salvation.

At this point May has had the life experiences to understand the hideous connections between society's racism and opportunity. She resigned herself to accepting discrimination as part of the way the world worked. Her life is marked by her strong-willed determination to overcome the personal and societal obstacles that fall along her path. The obstacles have been numerous and significant: the early death of her mother, her family's limited financial resources, the disruption of her life, the absence of parental supports and family unity, and discrimination in a new country. May did not simply persevere and cope with these obstacles. She resisted their limitations and excelled beyond the boundaries that were imposed on her. She attained exceptional academic success. May also rescued and provided a home for her younger sister, and mentored other Vietnamese children. Strength does not allow us to circumvent the forces of systemic oppression, but May and other young people in this study have given me courage and inspiration for continued struggles. As a woman of colour, Vietnamese, and

refugee I am drawn to May and the way in which she has lived her life despite many obstacles.

A last thought, a last image for the collage. In May's case the great loss of her mother and the breakdown of the nuclear family was the probable motivational event. The thread of a great, lost battle ran discontinuously through the collage and through May's narrative as she reminisced. May viewed the times living at her teacher's house in very different terms. They offered her peace, a seclusion, a sanctuary from the craziness of her family. The life was structured, the demands were reasonable and easy to fulfill, she was no longer a "bad girl." She was accepted for who she was and she was able to satisfy her intellectual needs which were important to her. Although her description of these first two years in Canada was beatific, an adolescent who could not speak English and who was in a new country and was kicked out of the house must feel scared and rejected. May's relationship with her father was a constant battle. Her father's disciplinary measures included corporal punishment, and May also lived with a variety of strictures, both moral and real, that reinforced her notion that she could do nothing right. Nevertheless, May sought and found early positive role models among extended family when she was still in Vietnam. Now she also found a way of escaping at the temple, attended mostly by the older people in the community, teaching younger Vietnamese children, and visiting her mother's friend. Her mother's friend, who was a schoolteacher in Vietnam was a positive role model for May. May was able to use this network of relationships to facilitate her own emotional growth during her difficulty with her father as an adolescent newcomer in Canada.

Throughout her adolescent years, May hid her intellectual predilections. Yet, they were such a vital part of her person that she was forced to nurture these skills in clandestine ways. The entire society loses whenever a gifted woman hides her intellectual skills, and is put in situations where she cannot develop or use those skills, or is discouraged by a culture from trying to succeed in an "atypical" profession. Of interest in May's life is the fact that she was able to give fuller voice to her intellectual skills in successive environments. Although the story of May's unconventional route to academic success is poignantly heartwarming, it also illustrates how her life was powerfully shaped by the ties she established with others.

The Dance of Connection

Now, twenty years later, the Vietnamese students are reconnected to their homeland, and they felt passionately about the connection with their parents' homeland. Some of the children have returned for visits. Hang and her siblings have returned home with curiosity about the war and the place their parents once called home. Long, Think, and Vuong, who have not visited Vietnam since they were toddlers, felt passionately about seeing their parents' home-place. This generation does not have the same hostility and hatred that their parents find difficult to forgive and forget. For some, though, Vietnam occupied a nostalgic space, a space of incompatible beauty, Hang reminisced: *I went to Vietnam when I was in grade 10. I was 18. I loved it. I didn't like Saigon, but I liked the countryside. I met other girls of my age. They had to work to support their families. I felt sorry for them. If I were still living in Vietnam I might have to do the same thing. When I was visiting Vietnam, I had more fun. Because the school doors were widely opened so I felt more freedom and closer to nature. Here the school doors*

are always closed. When I was in Vietnam, I felt I belonged. Even though kids there were working much harder, they had freedom to do what they wanted, to be themselves, and to be children. Here we have to be in our best manner, or we would be judged and stereotyped.

The youths in this study framed their ideal personal characteristics as those that help others and that actualize the larger goal of developing their community. Their values reflect a sense of moral self that is communal and connected to others. They are demonstrating what Lyke (1985) would call a notion of "social individuality." The portrait of Vietnamese youths that I am painting here is one that emphasizes their strengths. This strength is tied to their connection to others and a view of self as a moral agent responsible for the well-being of others. Their values and sense of self are attributable to the family and cultural values; alternatively these values may be attributable to their socialization within a culture that emphasizes the well-being of the group over that of the individual. This examination raises questions about the universality of the psychological models that posit an individualistic, separate self as the end point of development.

Mary Hong described her family involvement: *I visit my aunts, uncles and my grandparents. I take my grandparents to the Pandora when I have time on Sunday. I try to make time for my grandparents.* Long offered the analysis of his feeling and relationships with his family: *We have a close relationship; my dad and I are really close. Our family environment is good. Family is really important. I stay home in the summer. My oldest brother is at McMaster University. He is studying medicine. We are very close. I am kind of feeling bad because I live on campus. I should live at home to*

look after my sister. When I was at home, I was kind of looking out for her. She is 12 years old. She is going through the adolescence stage, but I am not very worried because she is really mature for her age. I guess my brother taught her that. I talk to her once or twice a week. I talk to my brother frequently. My brother always checks on me and provides me support and guidance. He's got to know how our uncles were. If I don't know he'd think I was a bad boy. He thinks I should relate well to our family and relatives. Think expressed a similar theme: My parents are very important to me. I appreciate their guidance and their disciplines. ...I really appreciate their advice. I love both of them equally. I feel obligated to do well for them and for our honour as well as for myself. But my family is the main motivator. And our Vietnamese history. I like to watch Vietnamese history. And as Hang commented: I discuss schoolwork with my parents. I don't hide anything from them. I can't stand hiding or being secretive to my parents. If I have concerns, I will tell my parents. I need my parents' input. I value their advice. Likewise Khanh: Family is important. My family provides me emotional and moral support. I appreciate the values they have taught me.

But dualistic categorizations of self as offered by cross-cultural researchers and difference feminists are insufficient because they fail to tap the power of status, the multiplicity of selves (Hsu, 1985), and the changes that occur within shifting contexts. McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) write,

The challenge before us is to move beyond tendencies to treat race as a stable, measurable deposit or category. Racial difference is to be understood as a subject position that can only be defined in what Homi Bhabha calls 'preformatted terms' - that is, in terms of the effects of political struggles over the social and economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, and cultural and ideological repression. (p.xxi).

The children's relationships with their parents are ingrained with the cultural traditions and meanings. Tuen explained: *My mom takes us to Buddhist temple. My mom teaches us Buddhist philosophy.* Jerome Bruner (1995) suggests that the self is as much as product of our culturally mediated ways of making meaning as it is a presupposition. As a psychologist, Bruner explores relations between the concepts of meaning, culture, and the self. He suggests that no single theory of meaning can be adequate. His focus is on how meaning is made in human beings' interactions with each other and in their world, a world that is a product of their modes of interpretation as it is an antecedent influence upon them. Listen to Hang: *I like to listen to Vietnamese music because it always conveys meaningful moral values. It praises Vietnamese mothers, it teaches us to be good daughters and sons, to learn to appreciate and love life and care for others. Western music is too individualistic and too empty or promotes violence.* To make it short, narrative has a crucial role in Bruner's scheme of things. He suggests that we must see the self neither as a kind of metaphysical essence nor as a purely formal subject of thought, but as a creature of narrative. Thus we are storytelling creatures. Thinh described: *My family is Buddhist. Two years ago my mom rented an old Vietnamese movie. The movie was funny and it had lots of action. But it taught us Buddhist philosophy. I was impressed with the moral values the movie conveyed. I learned from that movie. I believe in Buddhism philosophy because it teaches us to be kind and generous to others. When my grandmother comes here she goes to Buddhist temple and to pray at the altar. So I learn more about Buddhism from her. The movie was about a monkey and a pig that came to pick a Bible. I watched about fifty episodes. I learned and became more conscientious about the values of life.*

Stuart Hall (1988) finds the very effort to shape the materials of lived experience into narrative to be a source of meaning making, "that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position (p. 29)." The search for narrative has imparted a shape to individual childhoods (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986).

Mary Hong's father put his natural linguistic and persuasive talents to good use. Mary described her father as some one who could weave music out of language. He had a talent for language and through his charismatic qualities he could generate deep feelings in others. Visiting her grandparents every Sunday or every other day, her grandparents' home was like living an independent duchy in the middle of a large foreign country. *I take my children to visit my parents every night after dinner before homework, and on the weekend. The children love their grandparents. If I'm busy they will visit their grandparents on their own. On Sunday they take their grandparents to the temple.*

Likewise in Van Oanh's family, Vietnamese was spoken. The talents developed, the traits admired, and the values were Vietnamese. The food, the grandparents' friends, and all the rest that makes up the web of daily life reflected the Vietnamese ethos. *I eat Vietnamese food. My parents don't have Canadian friends. They only have lots of Vietnamese friends. Often they invite their friends home to eat. I have to cook and clean the whole house. They take turns going to each other's homes to have a big feast. They go to Vietnamese concerts too. They are enjoying themselves. They party frequently, while I go to party only once a year on my friend's birthday. We celebrate Vietnamese holidays and events, and children's new year.* In their homes, there was a sense of pride in being different from the great majority of Canadians.

The effects of this kind of “non-normative” experience on young girls and boys could be potentially disastrous, but it wasn’t for Mary Hong. She, like many other youths I talked with, perceived her family milieu as different but superior; thus her capacity for individualism and independence. *I go to Buddhist temple Sunday school. I also read Buddhist bible for my grandparents.* Khanh, too, grew up in a family of prayer: *In Vietnam, people are closer to each other. Here people are very individualistic; it’s pretty isolated. Like my neighbors, we’ve lived here for years yet we don’t know each other. I participate in Vietnamese community activities, such as Youths at Temple, my father’s Veteran Association, and the Vietnamese New Year community celebration.* Van Oanh: *I used to volunteer to work with Vietnamese youths. At the Vietnamese community centre, children bring lanterns and parade on the streets and eat cakes.* And Long: *I don’t have close Vietnamese friends but I participated in the community events. But now I am too busy so I don’t participate that often. I should be more involved. My brother was very active in the community.*

During her elementary school years, Mary Hong did well academically, but was not challenged by school. She was athletic and liked playing basketball and tennis, and took piano lessons, and French lessons. In the fifth grade something changed, she received an award. In the intensity of her studies, school became increasingly stimulating. This pursuit of learning continued through her high school years. But her social development took, like other youths in this study, a different path from that of her Canadian peers. Although she had many friends, Mary Hong did not date and found she had, like most of the young participants in the study, no desire to do so. She, the daughter of two tall parents, inherited their height and was always many inches taller than

other Asian girls her age. She was regarded by her family as attractive. She and her parents were not especially concerned with her lack of conformity to Western dating norms. Mary Hong's father revealed: *They study all week so on the weekend they visit their grandparents and go to the temple. That is what we prefer them doing.*

Van Oanh assumed more responsibility for her parents than her older brother did, because they cannot speak English. Her brother was clear that he wanted to exit the Vietnamese ethos and be independent of his early upbringing. To Van Oanh he always seemed to be in a separate world because he did not meet the family criteria for success.

In looking back over her young life and selecting the most influential family experience, Van Oanh noted that she was always given a sense of her potential and the need to take pride in whatever she did. She projected a sense of honour about the high-quality of her work: *The intrinsic mobility of man ought to rule. One should be kind, just, and honest even if it is to one's detriment.* Her grandfather is still with her.

On Parents

The girls spoke about their relationship to their mothers, but they can not discuss with them their academic and future careers. They felt that then their parents would chose the career that they wanted, not what the children want. Van Oanh expressed her opinion: *I think that parents should not choose a career because sometimes they may want their children to fulfill their dreams or to make lots of money, not their children's preferences or ability. Parents should guide their children but not decide or tell their children what to choose.* On most concerns they listened and followed their parents advice. Ngi also explained: *My parents give me advice about school and career but it's up to me. I don't think parents should choose careers for their children because they*

may not know their children's abilities. Only the children themselves know their potential, their interests. I like literature. I don't like computer that much. I like public speaking.

Psychosocial Development

The broad cultural critique of ethical individualism and epistemological rationalism has been supplemented by an equally far-reaching attack on methodological individualism. Like the communitarians, some feminists have rejected the universalist account of human nature and relationships, as it is morally and existentially impoverishing as well as methodologically inaccurate (Coole, 1995). Such feminists have asked a re-appraisal of femininity as a source of sociable and associative ideals. They have challenged the formal, rationalistic accounts of human nature by instead adapting sociological and psychological theories about the actual development of human subjects within society. In this context, socialization theories have been used extensively to explain the nature and the origin of gender.

Work on socialization argues that gender is rooted so early and so profoundly within personality that prior to its acquisition there is no self at all. Femininity is no longer seen as an impoverished identity but is praised for its social rather than individualistic qualities. It is object-relations theory which emphasizes the social aspects of the self as it focuses on the development of selves through their relations (of separation and intimacy) with others (their "objects"). The object relations theory associates maturity with separation and autonomy, but feminists detected in this a specifically masculinist bias and urged a focus on the differential evolution of feminine selves. While Millet associated gender difference with masculine activity versus feminine passivity,

object-relations theory equated it with separation versus attachment. Nancy Chodorow (1977) explains that distinct different masculine and feminine personalities are not as a result of internalizing different values, but as a function of the asymmetrical family: women, mother, elicit contrasting responses from daughters and sons. Girls, deeply identified between mother and daughter, remain longer in the primary relational mode. Boys are pushed to separate from their mothers earlier and develop a self in opposition to the feminine with more rigid ego boundaries but a weak and defensive gender identity. In effect, boys are drawn to a value system and subject-orientation centered on autonomy and detachment. Girls' feminine selves are constituted through relatedness, connectedness and intimacy. Female selves have a stronger tendency for experiencing the needs and feelings of others as their own; they feel more continuous with nature and more embedded in social contexts.

When speaking about their mothers, the girls in this study talked with great love, respect and sympathy. In this account of feminine self, there is an internal relationship between the conditions that self's production, its feminine characteristics and its normative commitments. The specificity of girls' socialization lies in their special closeness to the primary caregiver; the distinctness of the feminine personality lies in this capacity for empathetic connectedness. The girls showed respect and admiration for their mothers and fathers. And their parents showed confidence in their daughters' abilities. The mothers believed that their daughters were smart and through their guidance would make intelligent decisions. This material reality of one's economic, social, and power status and one's cultural history affects one's sense of self and gives rise to a womanist ethic of liberational care, as Toinetter Eugene (1989) found among Black women. Listen

to Van Oanh: *My parents do not insist on what I should study, but they explained to me that it's important to have a career and to be independent. My mother tells me as a girl now with opportunity I should have as much higher education as I can so that I can be independent, and not be dependent on any man.* Similarly, in their analysis in "Women's ways of knowing" of working-class Black and White women in the United States, Berlenky and colleagues (1986) reveal distinctions in sense of self and ways of making meaning that are affected by ethnicity and class as well as gender. As Van Oanh said, *I also want to have a higher education so that I can have a control of my life. No one can tell me what to do.* Similar distinctions have been drawn by Lykes ((1985) in her study of autonomous individualism and social individuality. Lykes's (1989, 1985) examines conceptions of self among workers and Guatemalan women living in exile in Mexico, which includes conditions of power or powerlessness. Her analysis demonstrates the critical roles that power status and material conditions exert on one's sense of self as social and individual. In equating ethic of care with powerlessness, Puka (1989) relates Gilligan's ethic to women's subordinate positions and describes care as a defensive response to sexism. These researchers view status, not gender, as the basis for the development of a moral self.

Evidence of psychological health and resilience are also apparent in Ngi's description of her relationship with her mother. When she was in grade 12 Hang reported that her relationship with her mother was important because *I can talk to her about anything...I ask her for advice...my mother is my mentor and my role model.* Hang said that her mother teaches her *to grow up to be a kind and responsible person.* She reported the same feelings about her mother when I interviewed her nearly three years

later, when she was in her third year at the university. As she spoke about her family this time, she seemed, like Hoang Anh, to be using the strategy of keeping to herself to deal with her difficulties.

Over the three years of my study, the girls seemed to adopt the conventions of femininity and womanhood in both the dominant culture and their own culture. At the same time they also have well-articulated critiques of double standards in the families and societies. For example, Ngi said: *I don't think we are totally equal yet (men and women). I want to see more females in higher positions. Men are still at the higher positions. There are many talented and intelligent women with great potential but I don't think women receive enough encouragement that they need from the society. So they dropped from competition with men.* Van Oanh: *Definitely men should share housework with women. In order to live together for a long time a husband should share housework because if everything is placed on one's shoulder she would leave the marriage. They should share and care for each other and for their children.* Hang: *Everybody should do the housework so that women can work outside. The housework should not be just the women's priority. To work out side is very important for women, too, in order to contribute to the family. If she is too busy at home she can't work outside the house and that's not fair for the woman. Children have their own priority and they still have to do chores too. My mom has to work outside the home because my dad prefers to do the housework.*

But the girls and the boys said that they realized that in most of the Vietnamese families that boys have more freedom and less responsibility for household chores and activities. As Long noted, *I cut grass, wash the car and do general cleaning. My sister*

does more chores than I do. My older brother didn't do many chores either. Now my sister does everything. Most of the girls (except May) in my study felt that they were treated equally in their families.

When the girls in this study spoke about the difference they see between their mothers and fathers, they identified the double bind that their mothers are in. However, their fathers and mothers protect their daughters and at the same time give them more freedom. I found that the girls in my study wanted to protect their mothers as well as they felt protected by their mothers. Here, Hang described the differential treatment of women and her feelings of wanting to protect her mother: *My mother is my role model. I admire her. I love her dearly. She has only a grade 5 education. She is the sweetest woman on this earth. I feel sorry for my mother and love her more because she is not being treated well by my father's family. Here she can't speak English and is Vietnamese. My dad's family does not accept her because she came from a poor family and now we are still poor. My parents didn't send money to them so they rejected my mother before and forever. When we visited them they didn't talk to us nor my mother, because my grandmother didn't want my father to marry my mother. So she was mad at my father and didn't talk to mother (cries). My aunts and uncles didn't talk to us either, because my father didn't send lots of money to them. It was the first time I met my grandmother and aunts and uncles but they didn't talk to us, never acknowledged if we even existed. My aunts and uncles ignored us because my parents didn't send money home. So I got mad and told them that they were mean. I fought back and criticized them. They scolded me. But I didn't care, they were rude. I asked them why they treated us like that. They said that because my father was afraid of my mother and they accused*

my mother of controlling him. But I told them that it's my mother's money, she worked for it. My father didn't work so she had the right to spend her money. She has to look after us, she doesn't have to look after you. I asked them why they only want money. Don't they care for their own grandchildren and nieces and nephews. We stayed at my father's family only three days then we stayed at my mother's family. Her family is very poor but is full of love so we had great fun. I miss them and the village.

The girls and the boys in the study spoke with passion about the importance of their parents. Khanh: *I admire my parents. They are in a new country. How it is difficult for them, yet they still support and sacrifice for us. My parents would be happier if they were in Vietnam where they feel they belong since they can speak the language. Here they are very lonely. I feel sorry for them. I could see their sadness and nostalgia for family and Vietnam, but they never show us. The only thing to make them happy is we are good citizens, and study hard to have higher education. My dad talked about someday we have to leave home. I'm sad about it. I want to get a Ph.D. like you.*

Ngi's mother: *My children do volunteer work too when they have free time. They don't go out to party or shopping. The training is very rough but they never get sick. They eat lots. Their Caucasians friends were very surprised because they eat a lot but they are still very tiny. My fridge is always full of food yet they empty it quickly. I'm very happy. Their friends are also good kids and high achievers. I'm very pleased. My husband was very strict. He taught them math and punished them if they didn't try to do well. My son now is very good in math, he appreciates his father for teaching him and being strict. My children all appreciate their father. They are very athletic. We always tell them to be in their best manner with honesty and dignity. I'm very pleased because*

they are good kids. I don't care if I am poor. I don't care if I don't have nice furniture. I have everything: my children and their goodness as human beings. Most important to us is that their education is their top priority.

The girls spoke with passion about their mothers. To the girls their mothers are their role models, their mentors. They are their mothers' protectors from the world of discrimination and ignorance. Hang: *I love my house, my room, as you see, my room has only the necessities, nothing extravagant but I love it. When I come home late my mother looks out the living room window waiting for me. Every day, when I get home from school I love to hang out in the kitchen helping my mother cook because she always tells us stories. Her voice is so sweet, she is so pretty, so gentle and naïve. She is a good storyteller. She recalls her childhood, her village and Vietnamese folklore, the history against the Chinese, the famous story of the two women who fought the Chinese and brought independence to Vietnam.* Their parents constructed for their children a sanctuary from the sometimes brutal world of oppression and racism.

Both the boys and girls, except Vuong, who was raised by his lone father, spoke about their mothers, not only as women who were nurturing and supportive, and caring, but also as women who showed them that they could thrive in the world. Their mothers gave them the strength and courage, as they watched their mothers sacrifice and suffer. While some of the adolescents spoke about the significance of both parents, they believed that their relationships with their mothers were most important. Their stories of the influence of their mothers in their lives were delicately layered. Their reasons and conceptions of their mothers' importance varied

On Separation/Connection

The young males whom I interviewed have the concept of self that, contrary to Gilligan's predictions about males, seems to be more communal and relational than that of American youths. Long: *When I was in high school I didn't talk much to my parents. I talked more to my father because he is more open; I am closer to my father. When I want to go out I ask my father because my mother wouldn't let me. Even in the summer, my mother wouldn't want me to go out either; she wants me to study and come home early. She worries a lot. I talk to Father just about everything like a friend, he jokes around a lot. They listen to me. But they maintain their old ways, although I try to get them to be more open. Just like being at home, they expect us to be respectful to the elders. When we go my grandparents' house, we have to be very respectful. I have ten aunts and uncles, grandparents. Tuen said: Definitely, I'll look after my mother. I owe her everything.* Carol Gilligan claims that the experience of inequality and subordination, which circumscribe the lives of women, also gives rise to a moral self grounded in human connections and characterized by concerns with relationship (Gilligan, et al. 1988). Emphasizing the differences between men and women and boys and girls, Gilligan and her intellectual predecessors (Chodorow, 1978; Miller, 1976) and contemporaries (Noddings, 1984) celebrate that which they see as essential "feminine" self and the feminine values associated with what they characterize as "the feminine voice." The "feminine voice emerges with great clarity, defining the self and proclaiming its worth on the basis of the ability to care for and protect others (Gilligan, 1982, p. 79)." In contrast is the masculine voice. "Instead of attachment, individual achievement rivals the male imagination and great ideas or distinctive activity defines the standard of self-assessment and success." But this is not the case of the Vietnamese young men in my study, for

example, Long: *Five years from now, hopefully, I will still be in Vancouver because my family is here. Even with a computer science degree I could get a job anywhere I want but I want to stay here. My brother wants to come back here too.*

Gilligan's work, describing the ethic of care, has made a contribution to moral development theory. She argues that the masculine voice is concerned with abstract rules of justice. Long: *My brother, my sister and my parents are most important to me, my other relatives too. I visit my relatives when they have time. I visit them in the summer. They gossip a lot. My brother calls my relatives regularly. He calls me and my sister a few times a week. My sister talks to my brother more often than she talks to me. My parents are Buddhist. My grandparents go to Buddhist temple regularly. I went with them when I was little.* According to Gilligan, the male's 'I' is defined in separation. She asserts that women and girls are more relational and thus more likely to invoke a care ethic than men and boys. Gilligan raised the possibility of a different moral self. However, cross-cultural researchers suggest that the self is better described as collective or communal rather than individualistic.

From Van Oanh, I heard both the critique and the hope: *I don't feel much like a Canadian. I try to keep good Vietnamese traditions, and adapt their good traditions. I'm very proud as a Vietnamese girl, despite the negative stereotypes Canadians hold about us. I feel that Vietnamese girls are more responsible. I have lots more responsibility with my younger siblings and my parents and my relatives. I'm not just myself, unlike Western girls of my age; they have only themselves to worry about. I treasure these responsibilities. As my parents always taught us that we should be caring and responsible for each other, not just for the self. We can't live alone in this earth, we need*

each other so we should support each other. If you don't have a family, care for your community and your country and the people around you. My parents don't tell me to do household chores, but I do it because I'm the only daughter. I feel obligated. So as a Vietnamese daughter I want to keep this tradition. My mother makes dinner. After dinner I then wash the dishes. I'm not feeling well lately. I have worked extremely hard since I was 14 years old. Whenever I could I worked to earn money for my parents. After school I went right to work.

Vuong's father brought Vuong to Canada when he was one and half year old. Vuong lived alone with his father for most of his childhood and adolescence. To Vuong his father is also his mother. Only 10 years later he was reunited with his mother and his two sisters. But the family then split apart. Vuong stayed with his father. He felt strongly about his father and the care and support his father offered him. In each of the interviews, Vuong continually referred to his father and the important role he plays in his life. He attributed his success almost exclusively to his father. Of all the relationships about friends, Vuong said his relationship with his father was the most important: *I would give up my girlfriend or wife if I had to choose between my father and my wife or girlfriend.* He wanted to get a Ph.D. in computer science but he said that for now he just wanted to complete his bachelor's in computer science and get a job so that he could support his father. He wanted his father to retire and to buy a house for his father. He said that he knew his father wanted to visit his homeland, village, family, and friends, but he would provide Vuong's needs first before his needs. Vuong burst into tears when he talked about his father. Vuong's most important goal is to look after his father *I owe him so much.* But he did not tell his father *everything*, unlike the girls. Hang, for example,

said: *When I am unsure of anything I'll just ask my mother and she'll give me advice. She is always right. I value her wisdom, her perception and observation.* Vuong's feelings toward his father did not include sharing his personal experiences, because he did not want to burden or cause his father concern. Rather he expressed a mutual commitment and a willingness to work together at home. This type of closeness was more common among the boys than among the girls. For most of the girls, being close to their mothers involved telling her "everything" to "most things." For the boys, the basis of their close relationships with mothers had more to do with respect.

Hang criticized other children who do not listen to their parents: *I don't like it because parents don't have power over their children. That's no good. Children here have too much freedom. Kids should listen to their parents. The laws here give children too many rights. Kids need more discipline. That's why there are so many troubled kids. Teachers always report that parents abuse their children. I think that's wrong because children need discipline. Some children lied that they were abused at home and teachers reported the parents so the parents' rights were taken away and the children got lost and got into trouble. Authorities should not take away the parents' right in educating and disciplining their children. So the children have no respect for the parents because their parents can't speak English. So they disobeyed their parents, and looked down upon their parents. I saw many kids got caught in that cycle. They should listen and respect their parents even though their parents have no education and limited English.*

Vuong valued his relationship with his father. His sense of closeness seemed to be based on his appreciation of his support rather than on being able to disclose personal experiences with him. In the future, Vuong planned to take care of his father and

anticipated that his father would live with him and his wife because he wanted to make sure that his father is cared for. *I admire my father even though he does not have a high status job. He can't speak English well but I admire him the most. He sacrificed everything for me. My father is the one I admire and worship. I put him first, he is the most important person in my life. I pledge that I must have a good job so that my father will have a good life. He does everything for me. I owe him for every thing I have. So education is extremely important to me because I owe it to my father. My father wants me to study as high as I can. In fact he wants me to get Ph.D. He says the higher, the better. But I think I will get my computer degree and work for a big company so that I can provide my father a better life. I want to buy a house for my father, let him travel, enjoy himself. And then I will pursue graduate work. I'm anxious to help my father even though my father would be happy to support me as long as I want to study. He sacrifices all of his life for me. When I get married or have a girlfriend, I still put my father first. I can let my wife go if she does not approve of my father, but I can never let my father be alone. No one is more important to me than my father. My father does not worry about me anymore because I always do what he wants.*

The boys and girls viewed their family as the most important people in their lives, motivated by their parents' hard work and little material accomplishments. Hang: *Most of my friends' houses are rich and nice but they like my house because it's warm and full of love. Their parents work most of the time so my friends feel neglected. They feel lonely, and here I am always happy, so they envy me. Even if we live in public housing, I have lots of love from my parents. My parents are always there for us, always support us in any way.*

Along with other youths in the study, Tuen, Van Oanh, Hang, Ngi, and Mary Hong were motivated by watching their mothers endure and took their mothers' experience as proof that they, too, must survive and excel. In recent interviews with the youths, while they occasionally spoke about feeling independent from their parents, they described growing closer to and feeling more dependent on their parents as they grow older. Khanh: *My parents don't want me to lack money. When I need money Dad deposits thousands of dollars in my bank account. They pay for my brother's tuition too. I am worried about my father; he works so hard to make money. I feel guilty about asking him, but he told me he is happy to help me. We all remind him to look after himself. I am worried that he may get sick. My family and relatives are in BC so I don't want to go anywhere. I want to stay here to be close to them.*

I asked Ngi during the first interview, when she had just completed her high school, if there is any particular adult that she looked up to. Without hesitance she responded: *My mother, she went through a lot.* To explain why her mother is the most important person in her life, Ngi said: *She left everything behind, risked her life to escape so that we would have a better future, to a new country, different language and culture, and to live in poverty. I know she misses her family, but she never showed it to us, but I could see the sadness in her eyes when she talked about her family. She keeps on taking care of us, sacrificing everything for us and our father, giving us a happy life.* Watching their parents experience arduous times had a profound effect on these youths. As Khanh and others pointed out they too could be resilient. Seeing their parents, as Khanh said, *struggle but stay happy and optimistic* through difficult times provided them with a model to which they could aspire.

The youths challenge mainstream developmental beliefs about adolescents. Long: *My brother is more attentive to my sister. He takes her shopping, to the movies. I play basketball with her.* They are aware of societal expectations concerning the need for adolescents to separate from their parents, but unapologetically explained that as they grow older, they are becoming closer to their parents.

Mary Hong: *My family is most important to me. We are very close. School is very important too. But my family is more important to me. I love everyone dearly. I would never miss our family's dinner. I have to see my grandparents at least once a week. I have to see my parents every night before I go to bed. Even now in university when I get home late I still have to see my parents to kiss them good night.* They spoke about their parents, they commonly told stories of being cared for and supported, of being inspired by them, and of being increasingly dependent on and growing closer to them over time. They saw their parents as the source of strength and of motivation, their role models, and as the most important relationship in their lives. They idealized their parents but also learned practical survival skills from them. Interestingly, while the youths spoke about the importance of their parents, fathers and mothers, for the boys they said that they did not feel comfortable talking their mothers and for the girls they said that they did not feel comfortable telling their fathers about, for example as Vuong said, *personal thoughts and feelings.* May Hoang: *I talk to my father, but I don't talk about private issues. My sister is more open. I'm more private. I talk to my mom more about women's issues.* They maintain certain boundaries in these relationships.

Like the boys, the girls also felt that their fathers played significant roles during their childhood. Van Oanh: *When we were in Vietnam, my father was manager of a big*

company. My father took me to conferences, meetings, and important places. So I learned lots from my father as well as my mother. I am close to my mother too. My mother wants me to maintain the Vietnamese traditions. I keep the good traditions and adapt good Canadian's values.

Conclusion

Mothers in this study were portrayed by Tuen, who lived with his mother, the girls and boys who lived with both parents, as deeply caring, supportive, and inspirational. Tuen and the girls credited their mothers with much of their own success and spoke of admiration for their mothers' competence, strength and independence. They were uninhibited and proud to let their mothers be part of their worlds, and they actively resisted separating from them. The relationships between mothers and daughters were like "sisters" as they grew older, or friends and confidant, and allowed the girls to assume roles as support providers as well as receivers of support. Overtime they felt an increased sense of closeness with their mothers. Perhaps growing up under oppressive circumstances may lead these young people to greater empathy and understanding of their mothers' struggles than a more privileged background might afford. Poverty and racism may result in highly visible coping strategies, and mothers who experience such oppression, may work hard to let their children know of difficulties and their coping strategies so that their children are better prepared for the future. The boys felt close to their mothers and took great care to emphasize the relationship. This challenges the widely held notion that their male children require male role models. The boys believed, articulated, and demonstrated, through their worlds and their achievements, that their mothers and fathers had raised them to be mature, sensitive, and caring people.

Another plausible reason for these youths' strong feeling toward their mothers, fathers, and siblings is that they do not need close intimate relationships with peers, as do most western adolescents, because they have a trusting and loyal relationship at home with which to compare their friendships. They did not feel pressured to conform to the dominant norm of separation. As a result of lack of intimate and trusting friendships, their mothers, fathers, and siblings and extended relatives may be the only ones whom they can really trust or who will "be there" for them.

The valuing of mothers may also stem from the youths' socioeconomic circumstances. As part of a social class where living a comfortable and healthy life is not taken for granted, the person who makes such a life possible will clearly be important. For the youths, their mothers have not just simply raised them, they have made it possible for them to live and to thrive.

It is important to recognize that these youths were academically successful, and socially integrated. They were actively involved in extracurricular activities, and volunteered in their communities. Their close relationships with their mothers, fathers, and siblings may be a critical factor in their resilience. Although both culture and gender have shaped their coping styles and world views, Van Oanh and Ngi felt that culture took precedence over gender in many ways.

Approaching May's life with a focus on strengths and resiliency and her determination to remain connected to others in her community offers one road toward understanding how people located in the margins of society struggle with, resist, and surmount oppression.

Reaching back and forward, here, I present the images of connections between the young and the objects, images, articulations, and other people with which they have enmeshed in and the shaping influence of context. In this context, they are wrapped up in a history of suffering and triumph, in legacies of pain, in segregated worlds, and in the darkness of shadows. They have somehow spun a web of relations for resiliency and liberation through their dance of life, part of the capacity unleashed in them when they join in and for us to watch the dance. They decided to break from the anchorage, the boundaries of their confinement and inserted themselves into the world with a particular kind of identity and responsibility.

COMPLETING THE TAPESTRY: CONCLUSION

In this study I examined academic resiliency as socially, historically, politically, and culturally embedded. Resiliency was viewed as distributed between people, rooted not only in individual skills and abilities, but also externally in real world communities and cultural practices. This study was guided by a sociocultural perspective which argues that development is shaped by social, political, and cultural interactions (Freire, 1973). My research explored refugees' interpretations and understandings of reality and has allowed me to challenge traditional psychological views of resiliency by shifting the unit of analysis from individual resilience to patterns of family and community participation that provide support for individual development. In the areas of vulnerability and resiliency, Western research has historically explored individual variations and outcomes in vulnerability and resiliency (Rutter, 1987; Werner and Smith, 1982). By situating this investigation and discussion of resiliency within family and community practices, using a narrative research approach and framing my discussion within socio-historical, and political perspectives, I undertook a cultural and historical analysis of individual texts of stories, and placed them in their larger discursive and sociopolitical contexts in order to address philosophical and political issues related to the cultural construction and representation of the students and their families' experiences. Within traditional psychological literature social and cultural processes are sometimes examined as independent variables, however, individual resiliency is always the dependent measure of

interest. This study went beyond an individual by examining notion of resiliency as to meet family, community cultural historical expectations.

The refugees' story is a story of resiliency. It is a story shared in various ways by many oppressed people in our society. From their standpoint we can see that what constitutes resiliency is framed within the context of the refugees' practical, material, personal, and psychological resources. These stories showed us that the marginalized's resiliency is along a continuum in which the personal and the socio-political are inextricably woven. The ways in which personal and socio-political resiliency are interwoven, and how these can effect significant social movements are also reflected in the stories of the refugees. There is a collective strategy which becomes visible when individual stories are put together.

Whatever their circumstances, the refugees in Vancouver (and thousands more like them) shared an estimate of their potential survival. They internalized racism, lived with retribution, rejection, and with loneliness. They maintained their lives, invisible, and silenced. They lived a precarious existence, and many paid a terrible price. But these refugees survived. They live, love, and work.

The artistic images of this tapestry are often collages and constructions, and sometimes an interior space where the artistic vision evolved, so fabric became increasingly central to this work. Fabric, especially patterns and textures have been with me ever since I became a refugee and since the interviews began. Weaving the tapestry moved into an exploration of the refugees' own family heritage, then to the representation of the private interior space of the tapestry. This was a search for expression, away from images of the dominant culture, to affirm the importance of the refugees' personal

relationships formed with family and community in their everyday lives, while at the same time evoking a spiritual connection to the previous generations' images. The interior vision of this tapestry is intensely personal speaking to the meaning the refugees give to their everyday lives and activities, and to the bonds of survival refugees form with one another. It is a still life and a sanctuary where the refugees are caressed with memory.

The interview sessions with the parents were always disciplined and focused. As we talked, we realized that we covered the trauma, the pain, the vulnerability so many times before. It is part of our Vietnamese legacy of wars, part of our litany. It must be remembered and retold, but it needs not consume us. We live with both the pain and the beauty, the rage and the hope. For us, these facts are inextricably joined. In each of these safe settings, it was important that the sessions had a consistent rhythm and ritual. I was always careful to stay within the time frame we had established. While we often crossed public-private boundaries, we kept the purpose of our meetings in mind. There were also shifts of roles and perspectives, in weaving together of recollection, interpretation, and catharsis. In the weeping and the laughter the stories gained authenticity. In all of the narratives, we witnessed the way that human encounters shaped the telling of life stories. In each conversation the relationship was the medium through which the story was told. Each relationship expressed a particular chemistry; each involved growing, changing, and improvising.

As these stories took shape I was both participant and mirror. I was constantly thrust back upon my own personal experiences. Painful issues hit the raw nerve in me or a raucous family tale touched my funny bone. We laughed and wept together. In

underscoring and interpreting their ideas, reflecting back their feelings, I saw my image in their eyes. But the reflections mirrored more than particular events. I resonated with many of the larger cultural and developmental themes played out in their stories. As I explored these narrators' lives, I used my own responses, not only to mirror their experiences, but also to help me identify and pursue the differences between us. As inquirer, I did not mask the differences in gender, class, family and political background, or temperament. I emphasized the contrasts and pursued the misunderstandings. I had to overcome my hostility and resentment of some of my participants, as I was from the south and some of them were from North Vietnam. They were conquerors, I am in exile. I, too, have resisted the traditional canons in my work and have felt a growing strength and maturity of voice in my writing. I, too, want to revisit the source, to journey home and to move forward for my children.

For the Vietnamese, resiliency means different things to different generations. For the children resiliency means academic scholarship. The refugee parents' endurance provides their children with a story of collective resiliency, of cultural heritage and traditions that are the collaborative threads that weave child, family and intergenerational identity. As a collective identity it is an instrument for holding individuals, families and community together. After all, these struggles are for the benefit of the next generation. Resiliency for the parents is the sacrifice and the struggle of the previous generations for the survival and the future of their children. The parents' endurance accumulated within their collective spirits over generations, becomes a story of collective resiliency that formed their individual children's responsibility for their dance of life to their academic achievement. As the parents use their limited resources, courage, and available skills,

they weave the web of resiliency, and gain a crucial understanding of the Vietnamese refugee parents' labours as a force for social change. The will to nurture, and its attendant labours of their children's acculturation, education, ethnic, race, and historical pride, become a form of resiliency. Here we see the ways in which the children, their parents, generational spirits, and extended family and community have to remain connected as part of their web of life. The "dance of life" to their children's academic resiliency, to support the complex interweaving of person and situation, of individual, and collective spirits of generations, family, community, and of instrumental action and circumstances. The children, their parents, generational spirits, and extended family and community remain connected by necessity and by choice. These stories are interwoven with purpose.

All ten students have developed enough self-confidence and responsibility to be willing to acknowledge pain and to release rage; developed enough ego to celebrate growth and accomplishments; and developed enough humility to recognize how much more needs to be accomplished. Seeing themselves as storytellers, they believed that others might benefit from hearing about their dance of life, not as tales of heroism or stardom, but as complicated stories of loss and gain, trauma and survival, sorrow and joy, rage and creativity. They weave a web of resistance, of academic resiliency through their dance of life to the pursuit of freedom and critical understanding and a transformation of lived worlds. As I listened, I heard both extraordinary experiences and universal human themes.

The Dance of Resiliency: Defiant Dance

From these stories we have learned that the popular story of inner-city poor minority youths, the story of high-risk behavior or vulnerability, the story of hopelessness, high school dropouts, is not always accurate. They spoke about being hopeful; they discussed their present and future plans. Their stories were everyday and also courageous.

On Education

I heard the same themes which were woven through the tapestry of all the students in the study: that they studied hard so that they could pay back their families. The major force to achieve in school was to return to their parents the love, the sacrifices, and the kindness received from them. At times students were witnesses as their own parents risked their lives so that their children would have a future. The strong feeling of belonging to their families and the acceptance of a deep commitment to repay the sacrifices that their academic careers had cost them are linked together with the obligation to love and honour their families through academic success. All of the parents were grateful to their host country for giving their children opportunities for higher education, despite the brutality of racism. Gratitude to the ancestors and obligations to their children are felt by each one of the parents, no matter how modest their resources.

The Vietnamese students' beliefs in individual efforts, motivation, and positive attitudes were repeated in their discussions of their school performances, and in their experiences of discrimination by the society at large and in schools. It was in response to the unfair treatment from high school teachers and then university professors and instructors that they stated that through their own effort and the "right attitude" they could reach their goals in school and break down the barriers of discrimination. They staunchly asserted that effort, hard work, and accomplishment, and failure and individual

responsibility are intrinsically connected. Believing in individual effort and determination, which will allow them to achieve their dreams even when they are surrounded by lives that prove otherwise, is essential for survival. Believing otherwise is too risky. To lose their faith in the power of individual effort and hard work may lead to hopelessness and frustration.

On Relationships

The self as narrated by these Vietnamese students orchestrated a dance between and among themselves within a family, a community, and across generations. The themes, including the war, the escape, racism, food, spirit, birth, and refugee camps, provide the informative threads for a collaborative weaving. In other words, the Vietnamese students assumed their individual responsibility for their academic successes within collective spirits of the previous and current generations. They actively made meaning in their lives given the dance context in which they find themselves. These meanings change overtime. Their identities are shaped through relations to others, family, community, nation, history, culture and traditions. Similarly, their acting, their dance of life or life space, on the world does not occur in isolation: virtually all accomplishments occur through the efforts and spirits of many. Each day there are vivid reminders of the generational contrasts that shape the ways that these narrators construct their lives. Their lives may not have required the same kind of courage and forbearance as their ancestors who fought and survived the wars, but lethal forms of discrimination, racism, and oppression exist for these students to navigate. Their work is shaped by a resourcefulness and a resistance.

Different students play different roles in their families depending on their particular place among siblings. Most students expressed in vivid terms their love for family members. The values that play a key role in students' lives are respect for the family, commitment to honour the family and community, respect for learning and for teachers, elders, mentors, and scholars; a strong sense of belonging to a family, a community, and a nation. The sacrifices of parents to support their children's education is a burden that brought tears to many students as they spoke about their families. To help one's own parents is an obligation for all children.

The two most widely accepted Western theories of adolescent development, that of independence and autonomy for boys and about relationships and voice for adolescent girls (Erikson, 1963; Gilligan, 1982), are not universal stories. Both the boys and girls told stories of growing closer and more emotionally dependent on their parents over time, particularly to their mothers. The students in this study struggled more with how to have and maintain satisfying peer relationships without becoming autonomous and independent from their parents. They commonly sought intimate friendships with same-sex peers. The girls were no more likely than the boys to desire intimate friendships, even though they were more likely to have them. However, there appeared to be no gender differences in the desire for close, intimate friendships with same-sex peers. The girls seemed more outspoken than the boys. In their teen-age years, it appeared that they did not seek out friends. Same-sex siblings were typically their closest friends, with whom they could confide their secrets. They sought guidance and mentoring from their older siblings, and acted as mentors for their younger siblings. For many of the girls, their relationship with their mothers seemed to provide the trusting companionship for

which they yearned. They had had relationships with their mothers resembling those with close female friends. The youths in this study indicated that their primary struggles involved maintaining satisfying relationships and intimate peer relationships rather than in gaining autonomy from their families. When the boys talk about their relationships with their parents, no one seemed preoccupied with or focused on issues of separation. Their struggles, concerns, and questions were about connection and how to maintain connections. These concerns only grew stronger overtime. In the circle of trust they created among their families, the students experienced the connections between resistance and growth, resistance and creativity.

The girls in this study did not want to "depend on a man" for financial material needs. They often spoke of being warned by their mothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, and fathers. Mary Hong said: *Needed to provide for themselves and not to wait for a man*, as Ngi said. Some of the girls talked about wanting to be independent because of watching their mothers and grandmother. Van Oanh: *My grandmother is in Vancouver. My grandfather is dead. My uncle sponsored her. She has been here for five years now. My grandmother knits sweaters for a living. Although she is 77, she can't get a pension because my uncle sponsored her, so he is responsible for her, not the government. But she makes money from knitting sweaters. She is comfortable. She makes enough money for herself. She is happy because she is independent. She is very proud.* Others wished that their mothers were more independent. They expressed the view that gaining autonomy was not a major concern when survival depended primarily on relationships. The inner-city poor and minority boys may learn quickly that relationships can provide effective means for coping with the world. The boys and girls in this study were more

concerned with maintaining connections than with gaining independence because of, I believe, their social status.

The students' narratives exhibit some the characteristics that are consistent with other studies of resilient children. The protective factors reported in these studies have included intellectual ability, aspects of temperament, ego-control, social skills, interpersonal awareness and empathy, social expressiveness, internal locus of control, task-related self-efficacy, self-worth and self-esteem, autonomy, good problem-solving skills, education and skills training, religious faith, absence of organic deficits, good familial relationships, parent availability and competence, sensitive and responsive caregivers, family harmony and cohesion, future planning, presence of a significant and/or supportive other, identification with a resilient role model, and good parental coping skills (Cicchetti, Rogosch, Lynch, and Holt, 1993; Egeland, et al., 1993; Fonagy et al., 1994; Masten, Garmezy, Tellegren, Pelligrini, Larkin, & Larsen, 1988; Murphy & Moriarity, 1976; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1986; Werner, 1992). In addition, Werner (1984) found that resilient children were notably more able to find acceptable meaning in their lives after traumatic events as compared with non-resilient children.

On Aspirations

The girls' hopes and plans, spoken with optimism, often contradict society's general assumptions about "at risk" minority youths. May, resisting stereotypes and envisioning unconventional possibilities for herself, is supported in her resistance. Three years after her high school graduation, which I attended, May continues to challenge convention and is pursuing a science degree, majoring in biochemistry and mathematics at university.

All the girls spoke about wanting power, a desire that women in general are not encouraged to voice and one that poor or working-class and minority girls are not expected to achieve. Van Oanh, for example, wants to be a criminal lawyer or forensic psychologist. She is now studying psychology and criminology: *I want to be very successful. I want to make lots of money and do what I love to do. I want to look after my parents.* Hang wants to be president of a company. *I want to have a highest rank, be the president of a company, be successful.* She anticipates her enjoyment of feelings of power and success, of winning when she describes how her future as an attorney. Like Hang, Ngi's wish is also for work that brings her pleasure and satisfaction by helping and saving other's lives. *I want to be a family physician.* Yes, three years later she is now preparing for medical school.

These girls have translated their hopes for success into acquiring the education and training to pursue potentially fulfilling careers. Mary Hong: *I want to get a Ph.D. I don't want to have less education. I want to be the manager or supervisor where I work.* The girls' high aspirations and resistance to stereotypes must be rooted in reality as their lack of social, economic, and educational support. These obstacles, paradoxically, serve as their motivator, and as their incentive to resist and to succeed.

The girls did not succumb to racism and stereotypes; they strove on. Personal resiliency may be uniquely important to the facilitation of intellectual growth for adolescent girls simply because it counters the pervasive cultural messages about the importance of physical appearance. Having fathers who make it clear that you are appreciated for qualities that go beyond the superficial and physical may be particularly salutary for adolescence girls' academic development. The fathers of Ngi, Hang, Mary

Hong, and Van Oanh must be commended for passing this vital message on to their daughters. May's father not only ignored his daughter's talent and predilections that would have been obvious to other parents, he disparaged them. May's one minority teacher in high school was the only person who attempted to help by letting May stay with her, away from the abusive father and stepmother. With the companionship of her younger sister, May seemed to have made her own way. Except for May, the girls in this study reported empowering relationships with their fathers. The fathers encouraged their daughters in a variety of venues. Further, the daughters were allowed to see and experience many facets of their fathers' lives. The fathers seemed to encourage their daughters and to demystify particular career paths which society assigned for women. Perhaps the father's effect is more diffuse and should be seen as providing an opportunity for self-growth. Being encouraged by their fathers may help daughters define themselves and their abilities accurately. Such empowerment may also help daughters pursue both "typical" and "atypical" professions. These influences could operate in a woman's life to mediate and explain a father's influence. Certainly, May had no nurturing, no encouragement, no empowerment, and no sense that her intellect was valuable. She experienced little mothering. Her grandparents helped by offering her refuge, but only for a short time. As I understand May's life story, this turned out to be critical to May's academic achievement. May's normal life and adjustment during early adulthood conceal a difficult route and reveal her strength. Other less fortunate children and adolescents, subjected to similar traumatic events may respond differently or resort to other strategies to cope with trauma. Although only a single individual's story, May's story as presented is a tribute to human strength and resiliency.

Van Oanh's story and responses to the multiple challenges of the effects of the escape, life in the refugee camp, and of racism powerfully demonstrate the long-term effects of trauma and injustice. Yet, Van Oanh's life also teaches us about resiliency and strength in the face of adversity. She strove to excel academically in a social climate that destroyed many refugee Vietnamese children. Much of her coping reflected internalized strengths fostered by her Vietnamese cultural and historical heritage. She said that *it is the value of the Vietnamese culture of female warriors*. It is when she sees her father who perceives her as *a woman among women* that the seductive power of the warrior is stripped of illusion. It is then that the values of Vietnamese culture re-assert itself in her, providing the grounding for her survival and ability to escape stereotypes. Even with this grounding *established within my own lifetime*, she said, Van Oanh must struggle to retain some semblance of her identity and integrity. In surviving the nightmares of ESL classes, Van Oanh was able to imagine herself as something other than a poor refugee. Wrapping herself in the fragments of the Vietnamese culture which she can still summon, she is sustained by the knowledge of another reality. This is a story about colonialism and racism, about struggle and survival. But Van Oanh is not an object of pity and charity. She is the subject of her own life experience, and her ancestor's wisdom is passed on to her from the heritage of the elders. To protect these shards of knowledge, to make of them patterns for everyday use, to elaborate their detail, is to engage in an archaeology of the present

On History and Culture

A central theme within Vietnamese spiritual and cultural practices is the idea of harmony and balance within the individual and between the individual and the systems

within which the individual exists. As Van Oanh told her story, she described major challenges that occurred in her life. Her description of these challenges and her strategic use of resources from both Vietnamese and Anglo cultures as she responded to them illuminated intentional, motivated action as an aspect of cultural re-creation and transformation

For the female students, academic success is not only a means to help the family and honour parents, it is also a feminist victory for Vietnamese women in Vietnam, a country where women have traditionally held a very low status. Traditional Vietnamese women were not allowed to have higher education. Hang: *Boys and girls should have equal education. We are all equal. There are subjects boys do better in than girls, but there are subjects where girls do better in than boys. So if we combine boys' talents and girls' talent we will have a whole, otherwise we will be missing the other half. Everybody should have as high of an education as they can. I feel sorry for women in Vietnam because women are not allowed to have higher education, just enough to marry or to serve their husbands. They don't have a wide knowledge. They learned to obey and followed the traditions. They have not yet developed critical thinking. I researched about Vietnamese women in Vietnamese society. I feel sorry for them.*

The use of their home languages and, in the Vietnamese case, history and culture as a means to maximize their motivation to achieve and to embrace the English language and Canadian values, I believe, is still the best alternative and the most effective path to quality education. Educational outreach activities should include ethnic minority and low-income communities, to offer educational alternatives, to assist immigrant and refugee families in their adjustment to this country, to reward excellence wherever it is

found, even among the poorest, and to use rich multicultural resources in fostering excellence and academic achievement for all children.

Research has shown that socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of families, father's education and occupation, and family incomes are some of the most important determinants of scholastic achievement in children (Coleman, 1987). Furthermore, students' achievement was affected most by the social environment of schools: and family economic backgrounds of fellow students. Of course, the economic standing of the family affects school performance: higher-income families, usually whites, can afford desirable neighborhoods that provide access to better schools and a more academically oriented environment. More importantly, their children receive additional support, resources and even encouragement both inside and outside schools. Lower-income families, usually racial minorities, are likely to reside in neighborhoods with poor schools, limited resources, and inadequate support facilities. The vulnerability that at-risk and low-income children from ethnic and racial underclass groups face does not happen by accident. Poverty, racism, unfair distribution of resources and conspicuous abuse and neglect of children and their needs are the result of a socio-economic system in accord with a power structure. Power structures are embedded in culturally-constructed institutions with values and traditions that permit certain members of society, those of dominant groups, to retain control of all the social mechanisms related to the production and allocation of resources, particularly access to knowledge capital and human networks. The judges or gatekeepers of appropriate competition, adequate performance and merit, must be members of the dominant group. As we have heard some of the students' stories, schools have become the most effective instrument of isolation and

social neglect and teachers are the carriers of the instruments leading many of the Vietnamese refugee children to a death chamber. We cannot ignore the crude realities of poverty, neglect, racism and differential power, all of which are integral to socio-cultural contexts of education. All children can learn if they receive adequate support and assistance

The results of interviews, taking a look at their learning environments, and analyzing their narratives lead to the realization that education is seen by parents as an effective instrument of empowerment and liberation for the entire family, and the hope for the future. Values of friendship and connection, of relationship and context, of cycle and growth, of cultures and beauty, of ritual and respect for the new land, of learning and achievement, so common in the youths' ways of knowing, are central to the Vietnamese culture. It is not the details of the Vietnamese culture alone that are important to us here, but the notion that out of the youths' experiences and consciousness, values and knowledge, a viable ordering of the world is possible.

On Emancipation

According to Friere, in order for the oppressed to materialize their self-activity as a revolutionary force, they must construct a collective consciousness of their own constitution as well as an ethos of solidarity and interdependence. Hence, I argue, we must begin with recognition of academic resilience as a pervasive individual and collective experience, rooted in the distortions of social relations and the disruptions of community life that are the product of an oppressive society. In this context, academic resiliency, like Friere's pedagogy of critical literacy, becomes the primary vehicle for the development of 'critical consciousness' among the poor, leading to a process of

exploration and creative effort that conjoins deep personal meaning and common purpose. Thus, academic achievement becomes that common "process" of participation open to all individuals. The problem of "critical consciousness" cannot be posed in abstraction from the significant historical context in which knowledge is produced, engaged, and appropriated. Moreover, to focus on academic resilience is to focus on the students' and their families' resistance as it exists within the parameters of their daily lives in schools and in homes. It is not to celebrate the confinement or to romanticize the enormity of the damage inflicted. It is to acknowledge the meaning these refugee families invest in their daily lives, to acknowledge their academic achievement as its own resistance. The need for pride and dignity, the need for development of a collective self-identity freed from constraints and prescriptions of the normative, dominant culture, the need for academic resiliency unfettered by the boundaries of the dominant world, and the need to redirect energy positively into the community rather than out, against the oppressor, have informed these youths' achievements.

Implications of the Study

Although I do not intend to prescribe answers for teacher education as a result of this research, the findings demonstrated that teachers have an important role in students' lives. By being more sensitive to the force of the family bond for students such as those I studied, the teachers can make a difference in their own classroom, their school and their community. Teachers must raise questions about the social order and the status of teachers and minorities in the current educational systems, and it must also advocate compliance with equity and democratic participation in social institutions by all persons, and calls for a commitment to the type of society in which racial prejudice and abuse of

power are unacceptable. As I will be teaching student teachers, I would encourage my students in the teacher education program to rethink their views, by sharing with them the stories and experiences, the role of parents and siblings that I found in my research. I would teach these teacher students 'teaching story-telling' through which they learn and examine their underlying assumptions, presuppositions and interpretive frames as they confront minority classrooms. Regarding this research methodology, I am aware that it is important to expand the range of data gathered in creating a more systematic picture of resiliency among refugee students. It is not enough to interview students of the same ethnic group, either individually or collectively and to visit their community and to assess their credibility and local recognition in order to gauge their possible impact as educational reformers. Future research for me will be focused on issues of diversity and equality as I seek to explore the need for structural reforms in educational systems while asking the following questions: Are schools preparing children to meet the demands of life, industry business, professional careers, and positions of responsibility? Are they reaching most students? Do minority and low-income students have a chance to get an education? Are schools, as learning centers, the prerogative of the middle and upper classes? If so, what are the consequences for our democracy, social order and correctional system?

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APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Parents

PART A

Demographic Material

1. Age
2. Education
3. Occupation
4. Marital status
5. Number of children
6. Family members in household
7. Family income: \$10,000; \$20,000; \$25,000; \$30,000; \$35,000; \$40,000; and more.

PART B

Background

1. What part of Vietnam did you come from?
2. What made you leave?
3. Thinking of your experience of leaving Vietnam and coming to Canada, what stands out for you? What stays with you?

PART C

Home

1. Could you describe a typical day in your home?
2. Where were your children born? How would you describe your relationship with your children?
3. What do you see as your responsibility toward your children?
4. From your point of view, what are your children's responsibilities toward you, your husband/wife, and her/his sibling(s).
5. Are there any changes in your relationship with your children since you came to Canada? What are they? why do you think they happened? has your view of being a parent (mother/ father) changed since you came here? How? and Why?
6. What do you do with your children?
7. What are your expectations for your daughter and son?
If there are differences in your expectations between daughter/son, why are there differences?
8. What are your aspirations (wish for future success) for your daughter and son?
If there are differences in your aspirations between daughter and son, why are there differences?
9. Do your or your spouse's parents live with you ? (If yes) How would you describe children relationship with the grandparents?

PART D

School

1. In what grade is your daughter/son?
2. What grade did your daughter/son complete in Vietnam?
3. Do you attend parent/teacher meetings? How would you describe your relationship with your daughter/son's school and teachers?
4. What do you expect your daughter/son accomplish from the school?
5. With whom does your daughter/son socialize?
6. How do you feel about her/his friends?
7. What are the things your children do at school that you don't like?

Students

1. How old are you?
2. Have you got sisters and brothers? What are their ages?
3. In what country were you born? Were you born in a large city? Small city? ... Village or farm?
4. How long have you lived in Canada?
5. Have you lived in other countries besides Canada?
6. Have you lived in any other provinces in Canada?
7. How long have you lived in the Vancouver?
8. What other languages besides Vietnamese does your family speak? What language is most often spoken at home.
9. What is your father occupation? can you describe his job?
10. What is your mother occupation? Can you describe her job?

PART B

PARENTAL INTERACTION AND FAMILY CLIMATE

1. Can you tell me about your relationship with your parents? i.e., What is your life at home like?
2. Do other family members live at home besides your parents and your siblings?
3. Can you tell me about your relationship with them?
4. How often do you go out with your parents? Mother?.Father?
5. Do you talk with your parents freely? i.e., Do you approach them about things you want to know?.Mother?.Father?...
6. How often does this occur?
7. Do your parents listen to your opinions?
8. Do your parents expect you to do around the house? What kind of chores do you help with?
9. Do your siblings also help around the house?
10. Does your mother also work outside the home?

PART C

RELATIONSHIP WITH SIBLINGS AND FAMILY RULES

1. What is the relationship with your sisters and brothers like? Do you have fun together?
2. Do you get allowance? Do you earn money by having a part-time job?
3. How does your allowance compare with your brothers or sisters get?
4. How does your allowance compare with your Canadian friends get?

5. Are there many rules in your family? Are they difficult to keep?
6. Are there more rules for your brothers or sisters?
7. How do your brothers or sisters feel about keeping these rules?
8. Do you like the fashions boys or girls are wearing these days?
9. Are you allowed to buy your own clothes? Choose the styles?
10. Do many of friends wear make up? Smoke?.Go to parties? How do you feel about these activities?

PART D

PARENTAL CONTROL AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS

1. Do you have many friends? Girls..Boys?
2. Are you allowed to talk to them on the phone during the week night?
3. Do your parents allow you to sleepover at your friend's house?
4. Do you visit your friends in their home, as well as invite them to your home?
5. Do your parents give advice about which friends you can choose?
6. When you bring friends home who decides how long they can stay?
7. How do you spend your free time?...Holidays?...What do you most like to do?
8. Are you allowed to go out during the week nights?
9. How do your Canadian friends spend their free time?
10. When you go out with friends, how late are you allowed to stay out?
11. Do you go out on dates?...What about your Canadian friends?
12. Do other teenagers treat you well?...Vietnamese?...Canadian?...Others?

PART E

PARENTAL INPUT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION

1. What do you think of school?
2. Do you discuss school with your parents?...Mother?...Father?...
3. Are you able to do what the teachers expect at home?
4. Do you find the classes competitive?
5. Do your parents insist that you get good grades?.Do they expect this of your brothers and sisters also?
6. Do you think that you should discuss school with your parents?
7. Do you think girls should have a different education than boys?
8. Do your parents advise you about your future career?...Mother?...Father?
9. Should parents choose the career of their children?
10. What activities/projects/subjects do you like/dislike at school?
11. Do you take part in extra-curricular activities?. Sport?.School dances?
.Volunteer work?

PART F

PERSONAL CONCERNS, DECISION MAKING, AND PLANS

1. What are some of the things that are really important to you?
2. What are some of the things you worry about?
3. Do you discuss these concerns with your parents? Or anyone?
4. Are you religious?..What is your family religion?
5. What would you like to be doing five years from now?
6. Do you plan on going to university?
7. Do you think women with children should work outside the home?
8. What are your feelings about day care for young children?

9. What do you think is the ideal family size?
10. Do you think men should share housework with women?

PART G

ATTITUDES TOWARDS, AND INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAMESE VERSUS CANADIAN ACTIVITIES AND IDENTITY

1. What are some of things you like/dislike about Canada?
2. Do you like Canadian food?...How often do you eat Vietnamese food?
3. Do you know other teenagers from Vietnam?...Do they like Canada also?
4. Are there any activities in the Vietnamese community?
5. Do your parents know many Canadian families?...How often do your parents visit them?...How often do they visit your parents?
6. Do your parents belong to any Vietnamese associations or clubs?
7. Does your family celebrate any Vietnamese holidays?
8. Does your family celebrate any Canadian holidays?
9. Is Canada very different from Vietnam?...In what ways?
10. Do you feel very much like a Canadian?...How do you think you differ from