Spatial Production and Nomadic Subjectivities in a Buddhist Learning Space

Chau Bao Le

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SPATIAL PRODUCTION AND NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITIES
IN A BUDDHIST LEARNING SPACE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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in

The School of Education

by

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B.A., Vietnam National University, 2011
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Bao năm đếm sách miệt mò
Giấc mình mình giấc, còn mơ quá dài.
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ABSTRACT

Space and place are an integral part in the geographies of education, therefore, knowledge about culturally complex and ethnically diverse transnational communities could inform curricular innovations that meet the needs of individual students. This year-long ethnographic study challenged the prevailing realities that U.S. schools continue to devalue the experiences and cultural backgrounds of immigrant youth, which caused students from ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic, and religious minority groups to feel structurally excluded and marginalized. Through examining the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities enacted over time in a transnational, diasporic space of a Buddhist temple in a U.S. southern state, the study provided a detailed and multidimensional account of community life as well as the dynamic process of shaping and being shaped by what happened there. Within the theoretical framework of spatial theories and nomadic thoughts, as well as the methodology of place-sensitive and interactional ethnographic practices, the study sought insights into the community through the lives of ten informants, with data collected from fieldnotes, audio recordings, interviews, participants’ self-reported surveys, and artifacts.

Findings showed the various values fostered in the temple as an out-of-school learning space. First, the temple presented a wealth of cultural knowledge resources available in the community. Second, the temple strengthened its community’s collective memory, sense of belonging, and democratic values through daily place-making practices. Third, the multiple subjectivities and relationships created on the temple’s grounds transposed differences in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, and political systems and recognized experiences of different mobilities moving through the temple’s space. Lastly, the spatialized learnings from the Buddhist space of the temple challenged the isolation of schooling and educational discourses and practices from the living and breathing world of the community.
The study concluded with implications for democratic education and curriculum theory, specifically through re-imagining the possibilities for nomadic pedagogy, place-conscious pedagogy and a pedagogy of the *Sangha*. Within these discussions, it continued to reiterate the values of community in constructing people’s subjectivities and conditioning meaningful learning experiences.
CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

The spatial turn initiated by Lefebvre (1974/1991) and adopted as well as further developed by Massey (1992, 1994, 2005) and Soja (1996) was an attempt to think about space not as a static or inert background for actions but as a dynamic, relational, and agentive arena that shapes ideas, beliefs, and identity. The intricate connections between people, space, and place have been discussed in various fields of philosophy (Deluze & Guatarri, 1987/2016; Foucault, 1977), anthropology (Knott, 2010; Roberts, 2012), geography (Finnegan, 2008; Wheatley & Gillings, 2013), history (Withers, 2009), sociology (Ingen, 2003; May & Thrift, 2003; Soja, 1996), and education (Usher, 2002; Gulson, 2006; Hernandez & Goodson, 2004) and resulted in the establishment of such concepts as place identity (Proshansky et al., 1983), the nomadic subject (Braidotti, 1994), spatial identity (Fried, 1963), and topophilia (Tuan, 1974).

Regarding the field of education, space and place are an integral part in the geographies of culture, learning, teaching, community and social justice. Consequently, knowledge about “a broader diversity of social-cultural contexts” of education (Holloway et al., 2010, p. 586), as well as conversations powered by spatial theories that steer toward what counts as educational or learning space could inform curricular innovations that meet the needs of individual students.

Space and Place in Educational Theory, Pedagogy and Curriculum Development

The spatial turn in educational studies, according to Allendyke, Bright and Manchester (2013), “is bound up with contextual and theoretical movements that foreground the situatedness of learning, materiality, and social justice” (p. 749). At the theoretical level, several research teams (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Holloway, Hubbard, & Jons, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010; Mills & Krafifl, 2016; Taylor, 2009) attempted to map out the geographies of education. Gulson and Symes (2007) described how educational researchers had treated space as “a catalyst, providing possibilities for disruption” and as “a demonstration of the potential directions for critical
educational studies”, while Taylor (2010) utilized the concept of “scale” in exemplifying the geographical approaches to education research, detailing “some of the most important examples of geographical research” (p. 657) at each of the micro, meso and macro level.

In response to Thiem’s (2009) affirmation that restructuring the geographies of formal schooling and higher education in an outward-looking direction was pivotal to discussions of globalization, neo-liberalization, and knowledge economy formation, Holloway and colleagues (2010) challenged the Northern centricity in this view, arguing that foregrounding young people as the subject rather than objects of education shifts the focus on education from specific sites of schools and institution to the webs of connections between spatial networks where children, youth and families shape and are shaped by various sociospatial practices (Holloway, Hubbard, Jons, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010). Taking a similar approach to broaden what counts as educational spaces but with a closer look at the cultural geographies of education, Mills and Kraftl (2016) illustrated “how exclusion, dispossession and the marking of difference occur through cultural practices, spaces and policies” (p. 21) and promoted a blurring of boundaries between “the formal and informal, the educator and the educated, the mainstream and the alternative” (p. 25) as an effort to interrogate, expose and challenge the diverse forms of cultural geographies of education.

The concepts of and related to space and place have also been drawn on in work around pedagogy and curriculum. Callejo-Perez, Fain, and Slater (2004) generated discussions about identity and place between various scholars, who looked at place as a philosophical tool (Breault, 2004; Fain, 2004; Slater, 2004), investigated the aesthetics and environment of place (Craig, 2004; Latta, 2004; Uhrmacher, 2004), or reflected on the forces that shape the public space and influence the individuals’ understanding of place (Apple, 2004; Callejo-Perez, 2004, Lesseig,
Centering their argument on the concept of “cartographical imaginations” (p. 3), or the spatial orderings of learning, Edwards and Ushers (2003) pointed out a taken-for-granted knowledge that not all learning spaces are valued equally, and curriculum spaces are “places that are the outcome of, and give expression to, the distribution and exercise of power” (p. 8). These authors then initiated discussions for studies on various places of learning, including adult education, undergraduate curriculum, virtual learning and the hidden territoriality, spatiality, power and differences in and outside of schools.

Expanding on the idea that places are pedagogical and learning takes place outside of school settings, scholars advocated for a place-conscious education (Brooke, 2003; Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; 2014; Theobald, 2018), place-based education (Deringer, 2017; Elfer, 2011; Smith, 2002, 2013; Sobel, 2004; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000), and a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2008; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). Denouncing the structural characteristic of school as enforcing the isolation of children and youth from culture and ecosystem, Gruenewald (2003) argued for the inclusion of ecological thinking in critical social analysis to see beyond the constraints of accountability and standardization and make a place for “the cultural, political, economic, and ecological dynamics of places whenever we talk about the purpose and practice of learning” (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 320).

**Transnational Communities as Learning Spaces**

The values of space and place for transnational immigrant communities range from enriching their culture and shaping their identity (Main & Sandoval, 2015; Spring, 2016; Zipperstein, 2013), strengthening their community’s collective memory and sense of belonging (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013; Rishbeth & Powell, 2013), to claiming their rights to social justice in schools (Núñez, 2014; Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-
Transnational space and place have continually taught children about their forefathers’ past struggles (Kaufman, 2009; Lowe, 1996; Moore, 1998), their beliefs and values (Dorais, 2010; Warner & Wittner, 1998), and their daily struggles (Raffaeta & Duff, 2013). Rummens and Dei (2013), however, gave a detailed account of realities where youths from immigrant or transnational backgrounds were marginalized, their spaces of belonging forgotten in the formal school setting, before emphasizing the need “to combine school, community, and local cultural knowledge resources in the search for educational spaces that respond more immediately and directly to youth marginality and exclusion in the school system” (p. 130).

Statement of the Problem and Its Significance

Scholars in different countries across the world have raised concerns about the deculturalization (Spring, 2016; Valenzuela, 2010; Yosso, 2013) and detachment, or disconnection (Cropley, 2017; Hao & Pong, 2008; Kim, 2011) between schools and the local communities where immigrant children come from. Kerr, Dyson and Raffo (2014) described a reality in the United Kingdom where schools are treated as “decontextualized institutions” (p. 38), who are held accountable by the states for achieving nationally determined standards, adopting certain internal practices, and communicating certain knowledge to students. Regarding the United States, Spring (2016) displayed a history of school policies imposed on dominated groups to strip away family languages and cultures and replace them with those of the dominant group. At the same time, Orellana (2016) lamented on the borders, physical and mental, that society constructs and reinforces to separate people, ideas, and cultures from each other: “[c]hildren are dichotomized from adults, schools from homes, researchers from teachers, theory from practice, our minds from our bodies” (p. 2).

As the result of the enforced isolation of children and youth from the community outside
of school, the cultural heritage of transnational students has been washed away by waves of standardization, uniformity, and surveillance that too often dominate formal schooling (Deschene, Cuban, & Tyack, 2013; Sleeter & Carmona, 2016). Explaining how high standards, or level of quality and excellence, is different from standardization, Sleeter and Carmona (2016) problematized the narrow, utilitarian approach to curriculum: “Efforts to offer all children an intellectually rich curriculum have become conflated with standardizing what everyone should know, thereby reducing the diverse funds of knowledge offered to next generations” (Sleeter & Carmona, 2016, p. 3).

Among the studies on space and place in education and curriculum development, few empirical findings exist on the educational values of place and space in transnational communities. Scholars either discussed place-based or place-conscious education (Greenwood, 2013; Jackson, 2017; Szabo & Golden, 2016; Theobald, 2018) as an approach in and of itself, or investigated the place-making practices of members in transnational, or immigrant, communities (Adams, 2013; Nguyen, 2010; Raffaeta & Duff, 2013; Sheringham, 2010) as an enclosed sub-group detached from the dominant host society.

Researchers in the place-making literature have engaged with immigrant populations who have established themselves for a longer period of time in the U.S. such as the Hispanic, Latino, and Caribbean communities (Furuseth, Smith, & Mcdaniel, 2015; Garcia, 2009; Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad, 2008; Smith & Winders, 2008). Asian populations, especially those newly arriving on the U.S. land from Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Laos, H’mong or Vietnam, have seldom been addressed. Studies on these populations explored the racial, ethnic, cultural or social identities of the newly assimilated members into the U.S. culture, mostly the self-conflicts, struggles and feelings of nonbelonging on the new land (Huang, Calzada, Cheng,
Barajas-Gonzalez, & Brotman, 2017; Murphy & Cherney, 2017; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Spring, 2016). In these studies, however, the communities were most often described as a fixed locality and entity of homogenous individuals with the same histories and backgrounds. The non-Western concepts and ways of being in these communities were also left out in any conversation, if any, about their theoretical contributions to education.

Given these realities, the current study examined the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities produced over time in a transnational, diasporic space of a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple in a U.S. southern state. To be specific, an ethnographic research project was conducted to explore the representation of space, space of representation and spatial practices in the temple, as well as the nomadic subjectivities being constructed, shifted and connected in webs of human and nonhuman relations during that process of spatial production. The research questions that guided this study were:

**Question 1:** How is space produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple?

**Question 2:** How are nomadic subjectivities co-created within the space of the temple?

Addressing these questions is important for many reasons. First, in contrast with the idea of students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge (Freire, 1974), current sociocultural theories of learning have argued that “learning is always ... taking place somewhere, both in relation to history (time) and context (place/space),” mutually, “practice is understood in its situated complexity,” and “meaning [is] made in context and bound up with questions of identity and identity formation” (Bright, Manchester, & Allendyke, 2013, p. 749). Learning cannot be detached from identity, and vice versa, a person’s identity, or to be more accurate, his or her subjectivity, is shaped by what he or she has learned over time and across spaces.

Second, if the idea of space and identity as fluid and interchanging sounds revolutionary
at all, it is important to recognize and include the experiences of different mobilities of “nomadic learners” moving through “the eventful space of their life-wide learning journey” (Bright et al., 2013, p. 752) into the fabric of schooling and curriculum. Positioning the subject as “becoming-minority” or “becoming nomad” (Braidotti, 2011, p.29) decolonizes the dualistic modes of thinking and deconstructs the phallogocentric identities constitutive of the Western thought. Consequently, it is equally important to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of knowledge, which is never neutral but always produced from the intricated networks of power dynamics between people in their interactions and interrelations with one another.

Third, given the “underrepresentation of black female teachers and minority teachers” in American schools (Allen-Handy & Farinde-Wu, 2017, p. 3), white teachers – the major racial force of teachers of the nation, are left with teaching students with different backgrounds from theirs, and unknowingly fall into the situation of “we can’t teach what we don’t know” (Howard, 2006, p. 6). With limited knowledge of culturally complex spaces and their role in students’ learning and development, educators stand the risk of an uprooted, de-historicized, de-localized education. By understanding spaces that nourish learning, however, there would be a more culturally adaptive workforce of teachers who know how to treat students as well as their community more empathetically and respectfully. When educators take students’ place relations seriously and create learning environments that allow children to incorporate, adapt and associate the schemas developed through sense of place, claimed Adams (2013), educators will be able to foster within students a foundational capacity for care, which becomes an essential foundation to teach about social justice and democratic engagement.

Lastly, in terms of theoretical significance, this study challenged the isolation of schooling and educational discourses and practices from the living and breathing world outside
of school by proposing curricular possibilities for democratic education, nomadic pedagogy, place-conscious pedagogy, and a pedagogy of the Sangha.

**Mode of Inquiry**

Informed by various thoughts and concepts from spatial theories and nomadic thoughts, I framed this study under the perspective that space is socially produced, and social relationships are always embodied in space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Massey, 1993, 2005; Soja, 1996); at the same time, humans’ subjectivities always endure a process of constant formation in a distributive, dispersed, and multiple manner (Braidotti, 1994, 2011; Deleuze, 1987/2016).

To examine the spatial production and complex nomadic subjectivities in a particular social and historical context, I employed place-sensitive ethnographic practices, which “mirror the process that create places” (Adams, 2013, p. 50). This method was compatible to the purpose of the study because it required that the researcher “goes physically to the spaces and places where the data are to be collected, and spends time there” (Delamont, 2014, p. 27), with primary focus on how places and spaces “are an important part of the informants’ identity, sense of self and their social world” (p. 30), and how they are birthing grounds for both formal instruction and informal enculturation with regards to teaching and learning.

Meanwhile, to explore nomadic subjectivities, I adopted the particular approach of interactional ethnography, which invites a series of ethnographic questions: “how is identity [in this study, subjectivity] (re)formulated in a group; for, with and by whom; when and where; in what ways; for what purposes; under what condition; and with what outcomes or consequences in particular events or chain of events” (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 173). Through the material and discursive actions and interactions of the informants and other individuals within the space, I located patterns of events, rich points (Agar, 2006), and a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) to identify
the different subjectivities constructed by members of the community.

Thanh Tinh Meditation Center (pseudonym) was a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple located in a historically mixed neighborhood of a midsized, central southern capital city hereby called Evergreen (pseudonym). Founded 20 years ago, the temple currently served a growing population, which could be identified as four interchangeable groups, including Vietnamese refugees, Vietnamese American immigrants, Vietnamese American children, and Non-Vietnamese Americans. These groups observed a shared schedule for various activities at the temple. In any average week, Sunday was for the Vietnamese-speaking sangha, where the primary language used was Vietnamese but there was an English interpreter that provided instant translation of the Dharma talk. Monday was when the Alcoholics Anonymous group, referred to as AA group, met on the temple ground and carried out their own group activities. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday were for people to join the sitting meditation and chanting, most of the time without a Dharma talk. There was no meeting on Wednesday night; this is spared as a day for monastic members to do their self-study or take personal breaks. Friday was for the English-speaking sangha, where the primary language used was English, and members came expecting to speak, hear and operate in this language for the meditation, chanting and group discussion.

Between January 2019 and November 2019, I made 67 visits to the temple, participated and observed the various events, all of which took place on the temple’s grounds except for two, an outdoor picnic and the Annual Fundraiser held at a local ceremony hall. Friday and Sunday were the two most consistent days, although the one week between July 15th and July 21st, I came for seven days straight, to experience the rhythm of life in the temple. I also invited 10 informants, or participants, who showed a willingness to conduct two interviews and maintain regular contact through emails, text messages and face-to-face conversations to share their
insights about the experience of living and/or participating at the temple.

The data I collected included fieldnotes, audio recordings of Dharma talks and special events, audio recordings of informant interviews, informants’ questionnaire, and artifacts from the temple such as flyers, handouts, magazine, and the temple’s social media accounts. In order to achieve validity and reliability throughout my analysis, I employed the method of triangulation, meaning the use of multiple methods, multiple settings, and multiple theoretical frameworks, to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question. However, as an interactional ethnographer and a subscriber to spatial and nomadic theories, I also believed that knowledge is socially and interpersonally constructed, therefore, objective knowledge is impossible. The task with which I entrusted myself as a researcher was not to represent the data faithfully, but to shift my writing from “to tell” to “to know while being” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 130), which means to part with what I think I know and confront my privilege and authority in listening and telling by always checking my interpretations against a rigorous theoretical ground in a recurring “thought experiment” (Barad, 2007, p. 100), or a performative act of “thinking with theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

**Key Terminology**

Thay: male teacher

Su Thay: spiritual male teacher, ordained monk

Thay Tru Tri: abbot monk

Su Co: spiritual female teacher, ordained nun

Co: female novice

Chu: male novice
Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter One provided the context on which to understand the role of non-school place and space in educational literature, before introducing the rationale for an ethnographic study of a transnational Buddhist space where dynamic phenomena of spatial production and nomadic subjectivities were at work. In so doing, I explained the context of the study and its significance. This chapter also laid out an overview of the theoretical orientation as well as methodological practices employed throughout the study.
In Chapter Two, I established a literature and theoretical foundation upon which this study was conducted. The review was organized into three major sections: (1) space, educational and transnational diasporic communities, (2) nomadic theory, subjectivity, and education, and (3) ethnographic studies on immigrant communities.

In Chapter Three, I detailed the methodology implemented in the study. I first situated my mode of inquiry within contemporary research, as well as my epistemology and positionality as a researcher. After that, I provided an overview of the methodological approach for the study, which included place-sensitive and interactional ethnographical practices. Lastly, I provided the contextualization of the research site.

In Chapter Four, I presented findings for the first research question: “How is space produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple?” by analyzing the spaces of representation, spatial practices and representations of space. In Chapter Five, I answered the second research question: “How are nomadic subjectivities co-created within the space of the temple?” by mapping the diasporic subjectivities in a transnational space, analyzing the multiplicity constructed through potential subjectivities, theorizing the transposed differences through nomadic and Buddhist thoughts, and finally, exploring belonging and political subjectivity in nomadic citizenship.

In Chapter Six, I discussed the findings of the two research questions to reach several implications for education research and curriculum theory. I illustrated how findings from the study informed democratic education beyond school boundaries, and presented three rhizomatic curriculum becomings, namely nomadic pedagogy, place-conscious pedagogy, and a pedagogy of the Sangha. I concluded with an appraisal of the contributions to the field as a result of the empirical and theoretical findings from this study.
CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This study explored how space was socially produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple and how different subjectivities were constructed, shifted and interconnected during that process of spatial production. In this chapter, I invited scholarly studies, both seminal and contemporary, into an open-ended conversation that provided me with both theoretical and empirical insights into the aspects of space and subjectivity, in entanglement with community and learning.

Starting from my interest in space, I reviewed the literature that discussed the role of space and place in education both inside and outside of school settings. Moving to the second focus of the study, I explored the complex dynamics of identity and subjectivity while building on relevant theories a framework for making sense of nomadic subjectivities in my own research. Since this inquiry employed ethnographic practices to answer its research questions, I also consulted with previous ethnographic work on education and transnational communities. Lastly, I discussed the contributions of previous studies on space and subjectivity to education and curriculum theory.

Space, Education and Transnational Diasporic Communities

The spatial turn initiated by Lefebre (1974/1991) and adopted as well as further developed by Massey (1992, 1994, 2005) and Soja (1996) as an attempt to think about space not as a static or inert background for actions but as a dynamic, relational, and agentive arena that shapes ideas, beliefs, and identity, has gained importance in the social sciences and humanities (Gregory, 1994; Hubbard et al., 2004) in discussions about human beings, their communities, and cultures. In this section, I explained the theory of spatial production and reviewed a variety of studies that built on this theory to examine the complex issues of education, school, teaching
and learning. Lastly, I studied the concepts of transnational and diasporic community, before looking at the studies that employed spatial theory to explore said communities.

**Theory of Spatial Production**

Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) theory of spatial production pivots around the idea that space is socially produced, and that social relationships are always embodied in space: “(Social) space is a (social) product” (p. 26). To produce space, however, is different from producing other objects in the economy:

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their relationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. [...] Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. Among these actions, some serve production, others consumption. Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 73)

Space, as theorized by Lefebvre, shapes and is shaped by a series of interactions and operations between subjects “both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act” (p. 33). Social space is a product in a sense that it results from past actions, while at the same time it also has the producing power in materializing the intricate webs of connections between social beings in specific circumstances, from which knowledge is constructed, regulated, and sustained. There is no knowledge outside of social space, although each individual has his or her own system of formulating knowledge based on his or her spatiality as a result of being spatialized, located, or experienced in or as space. From the point of view of knowing, then, “social space works as a tool for the analysis of society” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 34).

Lefebvre also noted the relationship between language and space: “It is true that parts of space, like parts of discourse, are articulated in terms of reciprocal inclusions and exclusions”
A social space contains certain meanings and messages about power structures and the politics of belonging, likewise, understandings of a language, a discourse system, or verbal and non-verbal signs in communication between members in a space would give important insights into what that space means.

In the attempt to find out how exactly people contrive to produce and are produced by their space, Lefebvre distinguished three ways of understanding space by proposing the triad of spatiality, including “spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33), which could be understood alternatively as “the perceived, the conceived, the lived” (p. 39), or “social space, mental space and physical space” (p. 27). The first component in the triad, spatial practice,

[…] which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society’s relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33)

Spatial practice takes space “as physical form, real space, space that is generated and used” (Elden, 2004, p. 190). Through specific social practices at particular spaces, human beings achieve certain spatial competence and conduct certain spatial performances accordingly over time, which results in what Lefebvre meant by continuity and cohesion. For example, through behaving differently within different perceived spaces such as schools, churches, parks or restaurants, children accrue a fund of spatial practices that will follow them everywhere and increase each time they socialize through interactions with adults and other children from the society. The spatial practice of a society, claimed Lefebvre, “secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Spatial practice is the perceived space, in other words, it highlights people’s perceptions of the world.

The second component, representations of space, “are tied to the relations of production
and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Space in this sense is seen as a mental construct imagined and conceptualized by “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, [...] a certain type of artist with a scientific bent” – who have the knowledge to identify “what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (p. 38). According to Lefebvre, representations of space are intellectually worked out systems of verbal signs and are “the most dominant space in any society” (p. 39). Human beings’ conceptualizations and abstractions about the world influence the ways they negotiate living and order their individual worlds.

The last component, representational spaces, or spaces of representation, “embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Contrary to representations of space which have an abstract notion, space of representation is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of inhabitants and users” (p. 39); it is the space which “the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (p. 39) and therefore tends toward systems of non-verbal symbols and signs. Space here is seen “as produced and modified over time,” “invested with symbolism and meaning,” “as real-and-imagined” (Elden, 2004, p. 190). Lefebvre called this lived space the “absolute space,” which “assumes meanings addressed not to the intellect but to the body” (p. 235).

Although Lefebvre provided a helpful encapsulation of space as fluidly relational and constantly changing through networks of power, his arguments for the spatiality triad have shown certain constraints of his time, including confusions in his writing style, the separation of space and time, and the ambiguous connection between the production of space and ideas about
place (Unwin, 2000). Later Lefebvrian inspired scholars took up the challenge and continued to incorporate his arguments into their own works. Harvey (1990, 1999, 2008) formulated a Marxist, materialist perspective that both time and space are socially created through society’s conceptions and daily practices in social life. The concept of place in relation to space has been re-conceived by Massey (1994) as theoretically intertwined, in that place should be identified as “an articulated moment in spatial relations” (p. 115). To be more specific, place is “the embodiment of a purposefully created space that is a creation and enactment of the cultural and social conditions of participants” (Callejo-Pérez, Fail, & Slater, 2004, p. 1).

**Space and Place in Educational Theory, Pedagogy and Curriculum Theory**

The spatial turn in educational studies, according to Allendyke, Bright, and Manchester (2013), “is bound up with contextual and theoretical movements that foreground the situatedness of learning, materiality, and social justice” (p. 749). At the theoretical level, several research teams (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Holloway, Hubbard, & Jons, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010; Mills & Kraftl, 2016; Taylor, 2010) attempted to map out the geographies of education. Gulson and Symes (2007) asked a rudimentary question: “To what extent education is education any longer when spatial dimensions are added to its fields of concern?” (p. 98) and described how educational researchers had treated space as “a catalyst, providing possibilities for disruption” and as “a demonstration of the potential directions for critical educational studies,” while Taylor (2010) utilized the concept of “scale” in exemplifying the geographical approaches to education research, detailing “some of the most important examples of geographical research” (p. 657) at each of the micro, meso and macro level.

In response to Thiem’s (2009) affirmation that restructuring the geographies of formal schooling and higher education in an outward-looking direction was pivotal to discussions of
globalization, neoliberalization, and knowledge economy formation, Holloway and colleagues (2010) challenged the Northern centricity in this view, arguing that “engaging with research on children, youth and families reshapes understanding of what has been, and might be, achieved through geographies of education” (Holloway, Hubbard, Jons, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010, p. 594), and that foregrounding young people as the subject rather than objects of education shifts the focus on education from specific sites of schools and institution to the webs of connections between spatial networks where children, youth and families shape and are shaped by various sociospatial practices. Taking a similar approach to broaden what counts as educational spaces but with a closer look at the cultural geographies of education, Mills and Kraftl (2016) illustrated “how exclusion, dispossession and the marking of difference occur through cultural practices, spaces and policies” (p. 21) and promoted a blurring of boundaries between “the formal and informal, the educator and the educated, the mainstream and the alternative” (p. 25) as an effort to interrogate, expose and challenge the diverse forms of cultural geographies of education. Related to cultural geographies, a strand of research on emotional and affective geographies has also been established by educational researchers (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011), with closer attention to the unbound emotions of teachers (Watkins, 2006, 2011), students (Brown, 2011; Hörschelmann, 2018; Zembylas, 2011) and community members (Gagen, 2013; Nairn & Higgins, 2011) as they travel across a multitude of interconnected spaces in everyday life and throughout their life courses.

The concepts of and related to space and place have also been drawn on in work around pedagogy and curriculum. Callejo-Pérez, Fain, and Slater (2004) started off their edited book with the understanding that the nature of the space, be it physical, temporal, emotional, or psychological, in which teaching and learning occur, is “an important factor in shaping the
educational experience” (p. 1) to engage discussions about identity and place between various scholars, who looked at place as a philosophical tool (Fain, 2004; Slater, 2004; Breault, 2004), investigated the aesthetics and environment of place (Latta, 2004; Uhrmacher, 2004; Craig, 2004), or reflected on the forces that shape the public space and influence the individuals’ understanding of place (Apple, 2004; Callejo-Pérez, 2004, Lesseig, 2004). Centering their argument on the concept of “cartographical imaginations” (p. 3), or the spatial orderings of learning, Edwards and Ushers (2002) pointed out a taken-for-granted knowledge that not all learning spaces are valued equally, and curriculum spaces are “places that are the outcome of, and give expression to, the distribution and exercise of power” (p. 8). These authors then opened up the discussion for studies on various places of learning, including adult education, undergraduate curriculum, virtual learning and the hidden territoriality, spatiality, power and differences in and outside of schools.

Expanding on the idea that places are pedagogical and learning takes place outside of school settings, scholars advocated for a place-conscious education (Brooke, 2003; Greenwood, 2012; Gruenewald, 2003; 2014; Theobald, 2018), place-based education (Deringer, 2016; Elfer, 2011; Smith, 2002, 2012; Sobel, 2004; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000), and a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2008; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). Denouncing the structural characteristic of school as enforcing the isolation of children and youth from culture and ecosystem, Gruenewald (2003) laid out five dimensions of place, namely the perceptual, the sociological, the ideological, the political, and the ecological, that can shape the development of a place-conscious education, which “aims to work against the isolation of schooling’s discourses and practices from the living world outside the increasingly placeless institution of schooling” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 620). This same author later on argued for the inclusion of ecological
thinking in critical social analysis to serve two objectives, decolonization and reinhabitation, to see beyond the constraints of accountability and standardization and make a place for “the cultural, political, economic, and ecological dynamics of places whenever we talk about the purpose and practice of learning” (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 320). Place-based education, similarly, rests on the belief that “the community should not stop at the walls of the schoolhouse,” and “pedagogy should be rooted in the experience of solving local problems” (Deringer, 2016, p. 335). Recognizing the overlap between place-based education and mindfulness, Deringer (2016) proposed the use of mindful place-based education to deepen teacher and student experiences of place instead of privileging experiences over the places in which the experiences occur, and encourage students to critically examine power structures within their local communities as part of their learning experience in a rapidly globalized world.

**Transnational and Diasporic Communities**

Given that space and place are an integral part in the geographies of education, knowledge about “a broader diversity of social-cultural contexts” (Holloway et al., 2010, p. 586), in particular, of the learning experiences in transnational and diasporic communities could inform educational and curricular innovations that meet the needs of individual students.

Transnationalism emerged in the 1990s as a concept to describe and analyze exchanges “involving regular and repeated movements across national boundaries, in which individuals maintain continuous contact with events and other individuals in more than one place” (Portes, 2001, p. 182). Likewise, transnational migration is a constant process of migrants reworking their “simultaneous embeddedness” within “fluid social spaces” and across “multilayered and multi-sited arenas” (Levitt, 2009). One of the most useful ways in which transnationalism had been theorized, according to Sheringham (2010), was related to space or place, which is “the
actual locations in which these transnational or integrative practices and processes occur, and those that they connect” (p. 63). In this context, transnational communities characterize “situations in which international movers and stayers are connected by dense and strong social and symbolic ties over time and across space to patterns of networks and circuits in two countries” (Kivisto, 2003, p. 12). Space and place were used by scholars of transnational communities almost interchangeably because of the dialectical relationship in which these two concepts operate, where a community arising at a “bilocal level” as a “place-specific community” being nested within “community defined in terms of space” at a broader level of “border-crossing social spaces” (Kivisto, 2003, p. 12).

Closely related to transnational, diaspora is also proliferating in studies concerning immigrant communities, with much nuanced meaning and application (e.g. Bruneau, 2010; Reis, 2004; Warner & Wittner, 1998; Zunzer, 2004). Werbner (2002) defined diaspora as “a transnational network of dispersed political subjects” (p. 121), while Bruneau (2010) gave a more detailed observation of diasporas as “socio-spatial networks necessarily undergoing territorial expansion because they aggregate both places of memory and places of presence” (p. 36). Bruneau further identified six essential criteria by which to determine if one community is a diaspora, which include “dispersion under pressure, choice of destination, identity awareness, networked space, duration of transnational ties and relative autonomy from host and origin societies” (Bruneau, 2010, p. 36). Concerning the use and misuse of this term, Brah (2005) reiterated the need to distinguish between “diaspora as a theoretical concept, diasporic ‘discourses,’ and distinct historical ‘experiences’ of diaspora” (p. 176).

Scholars from different fields tried to trace the subtle differences between the two concepts of transnational and diaspora, with a focus on space and place. Bruneau (2010), Kivisto
(2013) and Stokes (2010) emphasized the connection to nation-state and citizenship
demonstrated in members in transnational communities, in that they “seek to acquire citizenship
of their host country, while retaining that of their original country of origin” (Bruenau, 2010, p.
44). Meanwhile, a diaspora has a more symbolic meaning which transcends the geospatial
boundaries of place and space and allows its members to overcome obstacle of distance
separating its communities and maintain, from afar, relations with other communities through a
common set of values. Brah (2005) coined the term “diaspora space” to indicate “the
intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic,
political, cultural and psychic processes”; most importantly; she argued that diaspora space is
“inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who
are constructed and represented as indigenous” (p. 178). This was a crucial argument on which
my theoretical foundation was rested in the context of this study.

The values of space and place for transnational immigrant communities range from
enriching their culture and shaping their identity (Main & Sandoval, 2015; Spring, 2016;
Zipperstein, 2013), strengthening their community’s collective memory and sense of belonging
(Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013; Rishbeth & Powell, 2013), to claiming
their rights to social justice in schools (Núñez, 2014; Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-
Orozco, 2015). In a study conducted to explore the relationship between the transnational
practices and local attachments of Brazilian migrants in a city in Ireland, Sheringham (2010)
found that transnational practices and local attachment to a specific place were complementary in
representing how migrants negotiated different scales of belonging to both the nation-state and
their original homeland. Working with Caribbean-identified youth from a local high school,
Adam (2013) purported that children’s sense of place in a transnational context is influenced by
what their parents valued about the place, their own sense of identity and connections to places, and the lived places that were meaningful to them and their families.

Transnational space and place have continually taught children about their forefathers’ past struggles (Kaufman, 2009; Lowe, 1996; Moore, 1998), their beliefs and values (Dorais, 2010; Warner & Wittner, 1998), and their daily struggles (Raffaeta & Duff, 2013). However, Rummens and Dei (2013) gave a detailed account of realities where youths from immigrant or transnational backgrounds were marginalized, their spaces of belonging forgotten in the formal school setting: “Youth marginalization happens through the discursive positioning of bodies, their physical and social placement within institutional settings, and dominant perceptions of the value and relevance of their ideas, knowledge, and experiences” (p. 120). These authors exemplified acts of marginalization through visual representation, physical representation, and especially knowledge representation, when “there is no active learning of the multiple and diverse cultures, histories, experiences, and knowledge systems from which affected youth come both in their own and their collective schooling” (Rummens & Dei, 2013, p. 121), before emphasizing the need “to combine school, community, and local cultural knowledge resources in the search for educational spaces that respond more immediately and directly to youth marginality and exclusion in the school system” (p. 130).

Concerning the role of space and place in diasporic placemaking, Nguyen (2010) employed Harvey’s concept of uneven geographic development along with Lefebvre’s three dimensions of spatial production to explore ways a diasporic community of Vietnamese teachers, students, and parents negotiate heritage language and culture within an urban public elementary school. Through Lefebvre’s theory, the author illustrated how spatial production worked on individuals in ways “that produce both docile and self-determining bodies negotiating tensions
between unity and difference” (p. 179), arguing against confining understanding of the spatial to static backdrops and suggesting to see space as geographies of desires and third spaces of political opportunity.

Nomadic Theory, Subjectivity, and Education

This section explored a nexus of concepts related to spaces and transnational communities, including identity politics (Giroux, 2007; Keith & Pile, 2014; Lipsitz, 2006), hybridity (Acheraïou, 2011; Kraniauskas, 2000; Puri, 2004; Werbner, 2001), diaspora (Brah, 2005; Cash & Kinnvall, 2017; Clifford, 1994; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996; Van der Veer, 1995), in-betweenness (Bhabha, 1994; Dirlik, 2018; Diversi & Moreira, 2016), politics of belonging (Castles & Davidson, 2000; Geddes & Favell, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2007); and Other(ing)/Otherness (Davies, 2006, 2011; Jensen, 2011; Van-Dyk, 2016; Volf, 2019). In conjunction with all these concepts, nomadic theory provided the most flexible lens to view identity not within some fixed, predetermined, and homogenizing categories but as nomadic subjectivities, which are constantly shifting, fluid and hybrid. Moreover, this theory provided the pragmatic theoretical tools to analyze the politics of belonging and complex issues surrounding citizenship in the context of globalization.

Relevant Concepts in Nomadic Theory

Nomadic theory belongs to the branch of poststructuralist philosophy that is less influenced by the “linguistic turn” of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction than by a school of political theory, science, and epistemology studies that approaches the process of subject formation in a distributive, dispersed, and multiple manner. The terms “nomadology” and “nomadicism” were first explicitly theorized in depth by Deleuze and Guattari as a “war machine” in opposition to “the State apparatus” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2016, p. 315), which
rejected the idea that “a principle, or a power or tendency to think, should be limited by some notion of common sense and sound distribution” and therefore argues “if something can be thought, then no law outside thinking, no containment of thought within the mind of man should limit thinking’s power” (Colebrook, 2005, p. 181). These concepts were adopted by recent feminist theorists in their experiments with the subject as multiplicity, process, movement, deterritorialization, and becoming (Braidotti, 1991, 1994, 2011; St Pierre, 1997; Buchanan & Colebrook, 2000).

Braidotti (1994) rejected essentialism with a feminist emphasis on the embodiment of the subject, claiming that “one speaks as a woman in order to empower women, to activate sociosymbolic changes in their condition,” although woman needs to be understood as “a site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences defined by overlapping variables” rather than a fixed term defined with essence (p. 4). She later continued to theorize on nomadic ethics with woman, as well as other minorities, as the dynamic of change:

Nomadic theory expresses a process ontology that privileges change and motion over stability. This is also rendered in terms of a general becoming-minority, or becoming-nomad, or becoming-molecular/woman/animal, and so on. The minority is the dynamic or intensive principle of change in nomadic theory, whereas the heart of the (phallogocentric) Majority is static, self-replicating and sterile. (Braidotti, 2013, p. 344). By claiming so, she implied that the subjects of power, who she called “the various empirical minorities,” are the privileged starting point for “active and empowering processes of transformative becoming” because “the center is void, all the action is on the margins” (p. 345).

In Braidotti’s (1994) philosophy, the nomad is her own figuration of a “situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject in general and of the feminist subject in particular” (p. 4), and “nomadic becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness” (p. 5). From this view, identity is essentially different from subjectivity in that “whereas identity is a bounded, ego-indexed habit
of fixing and capitalizing on one’s selfhood, subjectivity is a socially mediated process of
relations and negotiations with multiple others and with multilayered social structures”
(Braidotti, 2011, p. 4). Since nomadic consciousness “consists in not taking any kind of identity
as permanent” (Tamboukou & Ball, 2002, p. 267), researchers engaged in nomadic methodology
are not interested in representing Being in its classical modes, on the contrary, empowered by
creative alternatives, they are thrilled to participate in “a shift of paradigm toward a positive
appraisal of differences, multiplicity, and complexity not as an end in themselves but as steps in
a process of recomposition of the coordinates of subjectivity” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 232).

For nomadic theories, to think is to experiment in a smooth space of connections between
conceptual multiplicities. As Colebrook (2005) explained, nomadic space is smooth “not because
it is undifferentiated, but because its differences are not those of a chessboard; the differences
create positions and lines through movement” (p. 182). What follows is thinking with nomadism
does not mean trying to follow a prescribed framework or structure through faithful
representations; instead, the expected outcome of this thought process is “the production of
pragmatic and localized tools of analysis” for the power relations at work in society (Braidotti,
1994, p. 6). The central tenet of nomadic thoughts, therefore, is “to reassert the dynamic nature
of thinking and the need to reinstat e movement at the heart of thought by actualizing a
nonunitary vision of the thinking subject” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 7). Rather than maintaining
dominant epistemological traditions of inquiry, nomadic theories express “a process ontology
that privileges change and motion over stability” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 29).

Nomadic politics challenges the structures and boundaries of the self with a nonunitary
vision of the subject. Social subjects always emerge from a collective enterprise external to the
self, which also mobilizes its in-depth structures. Nomadic theorists maintained, concurring with
Foucault, that power is not an object or an essence, but a situation or a process of differing or flows of in-between power relations within the collective of social subjects, therefore it could be both productive and restrictive, resulting in both empowerment and entrapment (Braidotti, 2011). This perspective proposed a crucial challenge for social constructivist and cultural critiques to account for embodied and embedded locations; “locations that are not conceived as self-appointed subject positions, but rather a collectively shared and constructed, jointly occupied spatiotemporal territory” (Clark/Keefe, 2014, p. 114) as a political act for recognizing the power relations at work and destabilize hegemonic and dogmatic exclusionary power structures in the contemporary global world.

Nomadic thoughts also induced the concept of transposition, and along with it, a way of reworking the interrelation between axes of difference. Transposition signifies “an intertextual, cross-boundary or transversal transfer” not simply in quantity as the “weaving together of different strands,” but rather in “the qualitative sense of complex multiplicities” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 5). As a thinking tool, transposition is opposed to the view of difference as inferiority:

In the contemporary political context, difference functions as a negative term indexed on a hierarchy of values governed by binary oppositions: it conveys power relations and structural patterns of exclusion at the national, regional, provincial, or even more local level. […] The concept of difference has been poisoned and has become the equivalent of inferiority: to be different from means to be worth less than. (Braidotti, 2011, p. 17).

Nomadic transpositions constitute a way of “reworking the interrelation between axes of difference: sexualization, racialization, naturalization” in a passionate commitment to “dislodge difference from its hegemonic position as an instrument of world-historical systems of domination, exclusion, and disqualification” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 225).

The Subject as Multiplicity, Process, and Becoming

As justified by the discussion of nomadic theory, the nomadic subject allowed me as a researcher “to think through and move across established categories and levels of experience,” to
blur the boundaries without burning the bridges (Braidotti, 1994, p. 4). I argue that this conceptualization of the subject was a useful tool for my own study to explore the multifaceted ways in which members at the temple navigated the space and negotiated different subject positions according to the power relations they were engaging with. In what follows, I reviewed the potential subjectivities relevant to the context of my study.

**Diasporic subjectivity.** Diasporic subjectivity, in the words of Brah (2005), is comprised of multiple “situated identities” that are marked by “diasporic inscription” (p. 1). Diasporic subjectivity commonly emerges out of Third Space, a concept developed by Bhabha (1994) to indicate the space between cultures and the non-coincidence of a single culture with itself. He wrote:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54).

This means that Third Space and the disruptive temporality of enunciation challenges the dominant narrative of the West as homogeneous, original, and pure, as opposed to all the cultures deviant from it.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach to understand the complex heterogeneity of the South Asian diaspora, Munos and Pandurang (2014) recounted how literary and cultural narratives captured the “nuances of individual and collective mobility” (p. 1) to offer alternative ways of studying the “complex terrain of the diasporic and transnational,” remarking that it is not merely the journey of the individual, but that of “a collective movement of a people from the homeland to the host-land that leads to the formation of a diasporic or third space, a space which goes beyond geo-territorial terms of referencing” (p. 2).
Sense of belonging. The concept of belonging is “both vaguely defined and ill-theorized” in various social disciplines, where scholars tend to either take it for granted because of its self-explanatory nature, or equate it with identity and citizenship (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644). Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguished between belonging and the politics of belonging. She theorized belonging in three aspects, first, as “a feeling or emotional attachment, which pertains to feeling ‘at home,’ comfortable, and safe;” second, as “an act of self-identification or identification by others;” and third, as “always a dynamic process” (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp. 197-199). Meanwhile, the politics of belonging is concerned with the maintenance and production of “the boundaries of the political community of belonging” through “hegemonic political powers” as well as “their contestation and challenge by other political agents” (p. 205).

Yuval-Davis (2006) proposed a framework for three analytical levels of discussion on belonging, namely social locations, identifications and emotional attachments, and ethical and political values. Social location refers to the particular gender, race, class, nation, profession or generation that people belong to, however, even in their most stable format, these positionalities are “virtually never constructed along one power axis of difference” as reflected by official statistics (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 200). Emotional attachment is another crucial part in constructions of belonging: “Individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fueled by yearning rather than positing of identity as a stable state” (Probyn, 1996, p. 19). Lastly, ethical and political values are the attitudes and ideologies concerning what role specific social locations and specific narratives play in the determination of what counts as being a member of a community.

Political subjectivity. Exploring citizenship on the premise of methodological nationalism which accepts such nation-state binaries as origin/destination, rights/obligations, and
immigrant/citizen is undesirable given the complexity surrounding diasporic subjectivity presented so far in this study. Meanwhile, notions of citizenship that reach beyond nation/state to other forms of inclusion, such as cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1994); flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999); alternative citizenship (Levitt, 2007), to name a few, remain intrinsically problematic because “it remains unclear whether extended citizenship discourses carry any meaning for people who lack citizenship – and therefore rights – by legal definition” (Krausea & Schrammb, 2011, p. 125). To solve this issue, Isin (2009) approached citizenship as political subjectivity, which “shifts our attention from fixed categories by which we have come to understand or inherit citizenship to the struggles through which these categories themselves have become stakes” (p. 383). Thinking citizenship through political subjectivity shifted the focus from answering the question “who is the citizen?” and describing individuals as the rights – bearing subjects, to addressing the question “what makes the citizen?” and describing “the process by which people and groups negotiate their positions vis-à-vis authorities” (Krausea & Schrammb, 2011, p. 126).

**Nomadic citizenship and democracy.** The anti-racist and feminist political theorists’ conceptualizations of citizenship that encompass difference promoted ways in which differences can be recognized and responded to, rather than disregarded, among citizens. Yuval-Davis and Werbner (1999) proposed that in order to understand citizenship in all its complexity, it must be perceived as a relationship “inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging” (p. 4). Additionally, Braidotti (2011) provided possible models of nomadic citizenship, which are based on “delinking the three basic components of the liberal view of citizenship: ethnic origin, national identity, and political agency” and recompose them “in new packages of rights and entitlements that require flexibility and hence multiple ecologies of belonging” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 19).
This concept of nomadic citizenship accompanies democracy understood from an expansive view as “a way of life and type of decision making whereby the people within and without a nation-state can exert effective control and influence over the political landscape” (Oleinikova & Bayeh, 2019, p. 17). Biesta (2007) provided a political conception of democratic education by problematizing the prevalent views of “education for democracy” and “education through democracy” (p. 4), because they both focus on “how best to prepare children and young people for their future participation in democracy” (p. 5), which poses democracy as a problem for education and education as “the producer and the safeguard of democracy” (p. 5). For it to work, democratic education should depart from the conventional assumption that “political subjectivities and identities can be and have to be fully formed before democracy can take off” (Biesta, 2011, p. 151). Rather, democratic education should engage with the concepts of a “democratic person” (Biesta, 2007) or an “ignorant citizen” (Biesta, 2011), who “is not a predefined identity that can simply be taught and learned, but emerges again and again in new ways from engagement with the experiment of democratic politics” (Biesta, 2011, p. 152). In other words, learning democracy can happen not at a cognitive level but only at an affective level, through doing democracy, with “a desire for a particular mode of human togetherness” (Biesta, 2011, p. 152).

Nomadic Theory in Educational Research

Since nomadic theory is relatively new, few studies have been conducted using this theory in the field of educational research. In an empirical study on young black women in Britain, Tamboukou and Ball (2002) employed nomadic theory to trace how the women negotiated subject positions, made choices and resisted fixity at a transitional point of their lives, when they were making decisions about their post-compulsory education. Their findings showed
that space was important in the imaginary discourses of the young women about future college, dreams and possibilities, while also uncovering how the participants invented “an ‘at home’ of a very different kind, no longer given in the opposition of ‘lived space’ to ‘abstract space’ and requiring a different idea of what territories and borders are” (Tamboukou & Ball, 2002, p. 281). These authors then suggested that nomadism would be more useful in rejecting permanency rather than rejecting identity in “cartographing the variety of ways young black women use to construct themselves” (p. 283). Also framing her research within nomadic theory of the subject in the context of higher education, Clark/Keefe (2012) conducted an ethnographic study to explore the ways undergraduate university art students negotiated expectations and categorizations in their daily life. She engaged her data through an alternative analytic of arts-informed assemblage and reinstated her feminist commitment to do theory as both critique and creativity and argued for a revision of identity development grounded in a nomadic theory of the subject.

In the field of K-12 education, scholars engaged in complex processes of becoming in and outside of school. Within the context of early childhood education, Vandenbroeck and colleagues (2009) analyzed the narratives of three recently arrived mothers with young children, making use of childcare. Their findings illustrated issues of diversity, democracy and citizenship that were shaped by micro-events of daily practice in an asymmetrical relationship between the mothers and the care staff. Remarkably, the study showed that “the mothers do not perform their agency, alternating sameness and difference and performing hybrid, nomadic identities in a vacuum” (Vandenbroeck, Roets & Snoeck, 2009, p. 213).

Regarding studies in education philosophy and curriculum theory, several scholars engaged with nomadic theory in exploring alternative approaches to the static nature of Western-
centric education. In a theoretical study, Gough (2013) engaged with nomadic thought through two concepts of figuration and rhizome to explore how becoming nomadic might liberate science educators from the sedentary judgmental positions in the Western academic science education. In the context of online education, Voithofer (2003) reviewed nomadic epistemologies and performative pedagogies to build a framework for online educators to produce curricula and pedagogies that are more “supportive of making sense of the multiple subjectivities and complex discourses that lifelong learners confront in a postmodern, postcolonial, and media-dense era” (p. 479). By integrating cultural hybridity in the framework, the author advocated for online education to promote conductive reasoning and creative thinking that yields “flexible, transferable knowledge” which is less bound to “inequitable social hierarchies that seek to minimize difference” (Voithofer, 2003, p. 494). Likewise, Bright and colleagues theorized a nomadic pedagogy, which “frames learning as a process which occurs when subjects enter into unfamiliar territory,” and the learner, as a nomadic subject, is “involved in becoming-other, engaging in a relationship with his or her surrounding in a process of deterritorialization” (Bright, Manchester, & Allendyke, 2013, p. 752).

In a recent meta-study research project in curriculum studies, Simmonds and Le Grange (2019) explored what curriculum discourses had been researched by South African scholars in the field. Among four major findings, these researchers found that only 5% of research in the field of curriculum studies in South Africa chose was conducted in society, or non-education context, compared to 27% of research in the context of primary or secondary schooling, and 47% in higher education. Reflecting on the research findings, the authors expanded the concept of curriculum as complicated conversations between various research communities, which was first
proposed by Pinar (2004), and shared some preliminary considerations of nomadic thought as an intellectual activity and practice for advancing the field. They contended:

For research in curriculum studies to advance the field, mere participation in its complicated conversations is not enough. As advocated by nomadic thought, the terms of the conversation (or the field) need to be acknowledged, challenged and reimagined through engaging multiple vectors of connection, as embedded and embodied, so as to advance the field from within. (Simmonds & Le Grange, 2019, p. 8).

As demonstrated in this section, not many empirical and theoretical research studies have been conducted in the field of education in general or in curriculum theory in particular using nomadic theory. However, they did steer the current study into a winding path full of excitement, explorations, and contemplation.

**Ethnographic Studies on Immigrant Communities**

Ethnography is traditionally described as “an empirical and theoretical approach inherited from anthropology which seeks a detailed holistic description and analysis of cultures based on intensive fieldwork” (Barker, 2012, p. 32). Beyond this definition of a methodology, some scholars see ethnography as a “philosophy of inquiry” (Baker, Green, & Skukauskaite, 2008, p. 81) or a “philosophy of research rather than a specific method” (Anderson-Levitt, 2006, p. 279). Ethnographers focus on “local knowledge” (Geertz, 1983/2000) and recognize that “the broad extent of encompassing culture, norms, values, understandings, social reality, definitions of the situation, typification, ideology, beliefs, world view, perspective and stereotypes” all contribute to “the meanings attached to those being observed and researched” (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 150).

Taking issues with conventional and classical ethnographies in their approach to field settings and how fieldwork was conducted, Jones (2010) maintained that in the contemporary world, there are many settings which “require the ethnographer to live apart from the field” or “could not be lived in by the researcher for practical reasons” (p. 7), such as a prison. She then
argued for a shared sensibility common to all ethnographers, which is built on a set of core values that “identifies them as ethnographers rather than just qualitative researchers or indeed social scientists” (Jones, 2010, p. 7). Among such core values as participation; immersion; reflection, reflexivity and representation; ‘thick’ description; an active, participative ethics; empowerment; and understanding, ethics stood out the most to myself as a researcher. According to Jones (2010), “ethnographers view ethics as participative, which can involve allowing field subjects to view field notes or letting them feed back into finished ethnographies” (p. 9). This was an integral part of my study, rather than something I had sorted out prior to fieldwork.

In what comes next, I reviewed certain theoretical and methodological aspects most pertinent to my own research, while also learning from ethnographic studies conducted on immigrant communities at their broadest sense to include all non-migrant populations, some with implications for education.

**Place-sensitive Ethnography**

Place-sensitive, or place-responsive research, which stemmed from a concern for the importance of space, place and mobilities in the social sciences, was conducted by researchers to approach outdoor learning and education (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). The common methods observed in studies with a place-sensitive approach included walking and movements in the process of data collection, most particularly walking interview (Anderson, 2004; Evans & Jones, 2011; Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs, & Hein, 2008; & Kinney, 2017). This method was argued to generate “more place-specific data than sedentary interviews” (Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 856) and “provide the researcher with opportunities to observe the participant in interactions with others in their community (Kinney, 2017, p. 2). Other methods explored the creative aspects of data representation, such as imagining, writing, sensing, and performing (Elliott & Culhane, 2016), or
experimented with “representational praxis in ways that challenged its traditional semiotic function” such as paper folding, visual mark making, and mapping (Perold-Bull & Costandius, 2019).

**Interactional Ethnography**

Interactional ethnography as a philosophy of inquiry draws on theories from different fields such as anthropology, sociology, linguistics and education “to explore discursive and social constructions of everyday life and make visible local theories and situated knowledge(s) that members construct in social groups” with an underlying assumption of social groups as “inscribing local and situated ways of knowing, being and doing through face-to-face interactions within and across events” (Baker, Green, & Skukauskaite, 2008, p. 84). This approach studies identity and knowledge formation by asking a series of ethnographic questions: “how is identity (re)formulated in a group; for, with and by whom; when and where; in what ways; for what purposes; under what condition; and with what outcomes or consequences in particular events or chain of events” (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 173).

Interactional ethnography was employed in various studies on classroom interactions. For example, a group of researchers (Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon & Green, 2001) investigated the processes through which a set of literate practices were constructed and reconstructed by the teacher and students across five classes in a vocationally oriented school in Australia. Their findings showed that what counts as text, as literate practices, and as literacy in any group is visible through the action members take, as well as their goals, expectations, roles and relations. In another study, Castanheira, Green, Dixon and Yeager (2007) examined the ways in which identities within a classroom were formulated in and through the developing discourses, practices and ways of structuring interactional spaces for collective and individual activity.
Tracking three types of discourses in the classroom, namely instrumental, community-orienting and academic, the researchers found that the teacher “positioned the collective as a communitive that was forming, that had two languages, and that was inventing ways of doing, thinking and being together” (Castanheira, Green, Dixon & Yeager, 2007, p. 186). Although these studies focused on the context of the classroom, they also proved that interactions ethnography was an appropriate approach to study any group interactions, especially for the purpose of learning the *what counts as* in a social group.

**Cautions of Representation**

Ethnography has traditionally been associated with the (dis)placement of the self in a social or cultural context (Coffey, 1999). As a result, questions of authenticity, or the authentic voice, such as “who speaks and on behalf of whom”, or “who represents whose life, and how” (Reed-Danahay, 1999, p. 3) have been introduced and addressed by various scholars of the genre. Since data, no matter how powerful, do not speak for themselves, researchers have to “face decision after decision about how to represent their data,” and together with their readers, researchers “must always settle for limited representations of what was experienced and found” (Eisenhart, 2006, p. 567).

The issue with representation in social sciences and particularly ethnography, which heavily relies on textual evidence following a realist epistemology, has challenged the ways positivists and interpretivists used representations to make knowledge claims, and called for a more reflexive and dialogical approach to ethnography (Clough, 1992; Richardson, 1990, & Salzman, 2001). According to Eisenhart (2006), postmodernist epistemology posited that all representations are positioned, or “crafted by a researcher/author inevitably shaped by rhetorical, political, institutional and disciplinary conventions of his or her own time and social position” (p.
Explaining how this epistemology influenced ethnographers’ approach, Schwandt (2001) explained that the postmodern ethnographer seeks to “decenter his or her own authority,” to “render more visible the ways in which the text produces a particular inscription of reality,” and to “share the authoritativeness of a textual account by featuring more dialogic and polyvocal textual forms” (p. 12).

On the same note, Barker (2012) suggested that rather than reject representation altogether, it would be more methodologically rigorous to reject accurate, or adequate representation of the “word-world correspondence” without abandoning “word-word translation” (p. 34). With a conscious attempt to consult with the research participants as well as elaborating on their own assumptions and positions, he argued, ethnographers can achieve “good enough reporting of the speech or action of others without making claims to universal truth,” and ethnography now “becomes about dialogue and the attempt to reach pragmatic agreements about meaning between participants in a research process” (Barker, 2012, p. 35).

**Ethnographic Studies on Immigrant Communities**

Several ethnographic studies have been conducted to study immigrant communities in the U.S. with implications for education. In her ethnography of Asian American girls, Tokunaga (2018) adopted “ethnographic reflexivity” to explore how nine Asian American girls constructed sites of belonging and becoming as they navigate their lives in-between, with an attempt to provide “an agentic portrayal of Asian American girls as cultural meditators, creative learners, and diasporic agents who negotiate displacement and attachment in the borderlands” (p. 1). The author then provided educational recommendations for creating “educative spaces where minority youth, especially immigrants, can thrive” and argued that “it is extremely important to acknowledge these young people as resources who have valuable assets, abilities, and
knowledge, and explore the ways to enhance, support, and build on their strengths” (Tokunaga, 2018, p. 134).

In a similar regard for migrant youth, DeJaeghere and McCleary (2010) examined how Mexican youth’s civic identities were being made in school and community settings in relation to discourses and practices of immigration. Analyzing data from 14 months of participant-observation with Mexican youth in two communities and schools in Minnesota, the researchers illuminated “how discourses and practices of immigration are materialized in schools and the conditions in which these young people make their civic identities through their lived experiences and imaginaries”, while calling for educators and researchers to “better understand how schools create discourses and practices of belonging related to transnational migration, often in exclusionary and essentialized ways” (DeJaeghere & McCleary, 2010, p. 242)

In the context of urban education, Adams (2013) used hermeneutic phenology which included the examination of her own experience as an ethnic-identified Caribbean person to study how children in a transnational community developed a sense of place. This approach was ethnographic in that it involved place as a social artifact and the researcher “living in the same community and thus experiencing the same places and events” with her research participants. As the findings of this study was discussed above in the review of space and education, I now emphasized its contribution in terms of the additional data sources such as photographs, films, and radio shows, most particularly when “students were given disposable cameras and were asked to take pictures of places they considered Caribbean,” in addition to the researcher taking photographs herself. These photos became resources for discussion and revealed “elements of re/created places and identities” (Adams, 2013, p. 49).
In the same context and the same interest in place-making practices with Adams (2013), Nguyen (2010) centered her arguments on educational policy and social justice. Over the course of 2 academic years and taking up a multisided ethnographic approach, she “traced geopolitical dynamics around those working in and around” an afterschool program which served more than 200 Vietnamese students in a public school and applied a “critical sociospatial analytic” to explore the ways “uneven geographical development” conditioned and was conditioned by local placemaking practices (Nguyen, 2010, p. 165). The findings showed how “those living trans/national experiences must make sense of the communities they choose and are called to be a part of – ethno-racial communities, school communities, communities of trans/national citizenship” (Nguyen, 2010, p. 180) and demonstrated that “a sociospatial approach may encourage new ways of understanding and new perspectives that reveal how education and school policies are multiply lived and appropriated along and across various scales” (Nguyen, 2010, p. 182).

Without explicitly claiming an ethnographic approach, Wood (1997) conducted a thorough geographical review in what he called a “naturalistic field research” (p. 58) of the place-making practices among Vietnamese Americans in Northern Virginia by tracing the material and symbolic ways in which these people reconfigured the geography of the suburban places they inherited, including former and high-order central-place nodes. The author gave a detailed description of Vietnamese American residences, churches, cemetery plots, and other ethnic markers to conclude, among other points, that “despite its similar form, borrowed name, and imported ornamentation, Eden Center is not a Vietnamese transplant but a reflection of what Vietnamese Americans have done with the American suburban landscape” (Wood, 1997, p. 70). Lastly, he argued that “Vietnamese Americans have become important actors in the
suburbanization process, reinventing themselves as Americans and reconfiguring the spaces and places they have inherited” (Wood, 1997, p. 70). Despite his detailed description and analysis, I would caution against the seclusion of this population from the rest of the American society in an overly ethnocentric manner because it deters us from seeing the bigger picture where there is not only diversity between cultures but diversity within one culture itself, if such oneness ever existed.

**Gaps in the Literature**

This review has made visible the gaps in the literature which initiated my study. First, there was little research employing nomadic theory as a conceptual or theoretical framework, which leaves a gap in the literature on subjectivity and multiplicity. Second, ethnographic studies conducted on (im)migrant, transnational or diasporic communities tended to treat their populations as ethnically close entities without interactions with or influences from other racial and ethnic flows in the society, which I would argue to be an unrealistic setting in the contemporary social fields. Moreover, very few of these studies (DeJaeghere & McCleary, 2010; Nguyen, 2010) paid attention to how the values from placemaking practices and identity formation in these communities could have implications for education, which arguably perpetuated the marginalized and dominated position of such communities in the U.S. social fabric. Lastly, non-Western thoughts and ways of being or living were not included in studies of transnational communities when it came to discussions about schools, learning and curriculum although non-Western communities and their cultural knowledge are an integral part of the social texture in the U.S. In a way, this silencing of non-Western thoughts sustained what Peters (2015) termed the “humanist bias in Western philosophy and education” (p. 1128). In particular, he
observed that efforts at achieving a kind of diversity that reflects the contemporary world with its different philosophical traditions had been a “tremendous failure” for two reasons:

[...] first, non-Western philosophy is typically represented in philosophy curricula in a merely token way and is not approached on its own terms; second, non-Western philosophy, when it does appear in curricula, is treated in a methodologically and philosophically unsound way in part because it is crudely supposed to be wholly indigenous to the cultures that produce it. (Peters, 2015, p. 1128).

In agreement with his remark, I would argue that the Western-centric views ubiquitous in social sciences and humanities are both unrealistic and disabling to almost every stakeholder in a global contemporary world, where in a hegemonic mode, “European identity has managed historically to perfect the trick that consists in passing itself off as the norm, the desirable center, confining all ‘others’ to position of periphery” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 10). Addressing these gaps could provide emancipatory insights into educational research and curriculum theory.

**Summary of Chapter Two**

In this chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature in the areas of spatial production and nomadic subjectivity with a focus on out-of-school context, particularly transnational and diasporic communities. A large body of research painted broad strokes of various places of learning, including adult education, undergraduate curriculum, virtual learning and the hidden territoriality, spatiality, power and differences in and outside of schools. It was further discovered that space and place had significant values in transnational, immigrant and diasporic communities; however, such values were seldom featured in formal school setting. This reality perpetuated the marginalization of minority groups within institutional settings in the whole society.

The review also paid attention to studies that approached the subject as multiplicity, process, and becoming. Educational research in this area covered such contexts as elementary and secondary education, higher education, and adult education, with a focus on how the
participants navigated different power relations and performed hybrid, nomadic subjectivities in a process of deterritorialization. Lastly, this chapter examined studies that employed ethnographic practices to explore complexities in immigrant communities.

In the next chapter, I reported the methodological practices employed for the implementation of the data collection and data analysis process.
CHAPTER THREE. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I situated my mode of inquiry within contemporary research, as well as my epistemology and positionality as a researcher. After that, I provided an overview of the methodological approach for the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities of members in a Buddhist temple over time, for which I adopted place-sensitive and interactional ethnographical practices. I discussed the methods of data collection and data analysis as well as the ethical considerations that I took during the process of the study. Lastly, I provided the contextualization of the research site with specifics about the research population, the informants, and the daily structure of the place.

Situating the Mode of Inquiry

Noting that human beings constantly view and interpret the world around them from various perspectives, I concur with the widely accepted argument among social research theorists that the choice of research paradigm determines the researcher’s stance vis-à-vis participants’ points of view, which makes it even more important than the choice of research methods (Blaikie & Priest, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Punch, 2014).

As a novice researcher, I was first introduced to Interpretivism as a research paradigm distinct from Neo-Positivism and Critical Realism, which starts from an idealist ontological assumption that “social reality is made up of shared interpretations that social actors produce and reproduce as they go about their everyday lives” (Blaikie & Priest, 2017, p. 103) and the social-constructivist epistemology that knowledge is the outcome of social interactions between social actors through the mediation of language.

Later, as my horizons expanded with more practice, conversations, and eye-opening learnings in the academia, I came to experience with post-qualitative inquiry, which is “a turn to
ontology and how it might take us to some place of the ‘always-already’ that is neither too late nor too soon” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 629). Post-qualitative theorists cautioned against the desire to produce order and clarity through research reports, which only works to (re)produce normalizing privileged identities and privileged form of authoritative knowledge, and resultantly removes any difference that inherently exists (St. Pierre, 2000). To avoid “walking a familiar path repetitively” and “listen to what is no longer there” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 205), some theorists offered research conventions for antimethodology, which “cannot be replicated or transferred” from one study to another but “each iteration materializes from the forces at work in a research context” (Nordstrom, 2018, p. 223); while others established a framework for materialist social inquiry methodology, which builds on the concept of the research-assemblage that treats different stages in the research process such as data collection or analysis, or sampling data, as “a machine that works because of its affect” (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 403). In short, post-qualitative inquiry works to constantly reshape the data and un-make the conventional human subject as portrayed in conventional knowledge with a heavy reliance on theoretical perspectives and creative thought experiments.

Informed by post-qualitative theorists, I as the researcher and ethnographer, felt my way through data by constantly observing my own ontological and epistemological perspectives, while also building on an assemblage of approaches that worked for the data acquired. To even start on that journey, at first, I anchored my perspectives on O’Reilly’s (2005) critical minimum definition of ethnography, which stated:

Minimally, ethnography is

- Iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on
- A family of methods,
- Involving direct and sustained contact with human [and I would argue, non-human] agents
• within the context of their daily lives (and cultures);
• watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and
• producing a richly written account
• that respects the irreducibility of human experience,
• that acknowledges the role of theory
• as well as the researcher’s own role,
• and that views humans as part object/ part subject.
(O’Reilly, 2005, p. 3).

With this minimal definition of ethnography, I relied on the place-sensitive and interactional ethnographic practices to collect, analyze, and de-territorialize (post)qualitative research data and phenomena.

Interactional ethnography as a philosophy of inquiry draws on theories from different fields such as anthropology, sociology, linguistics and education “to explore discursive and social constructions of everyday life and make visible local theories and situated knowledge(s) that members construct in social groups” with an underlying assumption of social groups as “inscribing local and situated ways of knowing, being and doing through face-to-face interactions within and across events” (Baker, Green, & Skukauskaite, 2008, p. 84). This approach studies identity and knowledge formation by asking a series of ethnographic questions: “how is identity (re)formulated in a group; for, with and by whom; when and where; in what ways; for what purposes; under what condition; and with what outcomes or consequences in particular events or chain of events” (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 173).

**Researcher’s Epistemology and Positionality**

As Sultana (2007) cautioned: “It is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research” (p. 380), I found it important to acknowledge that my own subjectivity as a researcher helped me gain the power of interpretation and shaped the stories I told. When I first came to the research site, I experienced what Villenas (1996) documented as a
dilemma of being a colonizer and also colonized at the same time, when she studied a Latino community as a highly educated Chicana ethnographer. I found myself noticing my own multiple identities – a Vietnamese citizen who was born and raised in Vietnam on a lower middle class background until undergraduate, an Asian woman newly migrated to the United States, a non-native English speaker, a doctoral student at a research university, and above all, a newcomer to a Buddhist temple of the Vietnamese American community comprising mostly of refugees from the Vietnam War and their next generations, who had no connection with Vietnam as the country I knew. The one thing I shared with them, the Vietnamese language, also bore a Northern dialect that could remind older members of the enemies’ voice back in the time of the civil war. These hats that I was wearing somehow other-ed myself from people and other-ed them from me. I had to take layers of precaution and almost the first two years to familiarize myself with the community, and even after the study, I tried to maintain being sensitive and mindful of my own positionality in building relationships with people.

I also navigated the insider/outsider position, or what researchers (Herndon, 1993; Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999; Pike, 1954; Young, 2005) called the “emic/etic” position in my relationships with non-Vietnamese members at the temple, who were born and raised in the United States, spoke English as their native language, and frequented the temple with or without interactions with the Vietnamese American members. Emic refers to the insider perspective, that is “having personal experience of a culture/society,” while etic refers to outsider perspective, which means the perspective of “a person who has not had a personal or lived experience of a particular culture/society” (Young, 2005, p. 154). However, I shifted between the insider and outsider positions, depending on who I interact with. To non-Vietnamese American people, I looked and acted very much like a Vietnamese girl, however, some of them knew their
places around the temple and made themselves much more at home than I could. Similarly, speaking the mother tongue language gained me little advantage when some Vietnamese American asked me questions about where I came from, at which point I felt like a foreigner, an Other, in their eyes, because my historical and social background was seemingly provocative to those who experienced a painful past of a home they already lost. Navigating this emic/etic position is like walking on shifting terrains, which required me to always stay alert, reflexive, and mindful, of my language and actions, like what Vo (2000) elaborated:

Being Vietnamese can provide one with entrée, yet it does not give one instant rapport with other Vietnamese. The Vietnamese in the United States, like all Asian ethnic groups, are not a homogeneous group but are marked by religious, linguistic, cultural, political, economic, sexual, regional, gender, and emigration differences, especially as these populations in the Asian rubric become more diverse in the post-1965 period. Thus, researching one’s own community can bring myriad unexpected complications. [...] Like other refugee populations or other displaced groups, one’s status in the home country is still important, and introductions with compatriots often involve questions to ascertain one’s former class and political status. [...] The answers provide co-ethnics with a frame of reference that can result in positive or negative reactions. [...] Being born in South Vietnam was seen favorably by anti-Communist expatriates. (Vo, 2000, p. 29)

For this study I chose to observe the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities of members in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple. As a proponent of place-based education and non-school learning, I may have biases about the educational values offered by the site. In order to limit these biases and assumptions, I employed two strategies, keeping a reflexive journal, and conducting multiple observations to gain as much context as possible.

Using a post-qualitative approach to my research design, I followed Springgay and Truman’s (2018) advice to move methods beyond proceduralism to commit myself as a researcher to the “response-ability in research” (p. 203). Rather than a refusal of methods, they proposed that “particular (in)tensions need to be immanent to whatever method is used” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204), reasoning:
If the intent of inquiry is to create a different world, to ask what kinds of futures are imaginable, then (in)tensions attend to the immersion, tension, anxiety, strain, and quivering unease of doing research differently. (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204)

To do research differently, the authors argued, means that “we need to shift from thinking about methods as processes of gathering data towards methods as a becoming entangled in relations” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204). In the coming discussion, I explained how I embraced this advice while employing various research conventions in the post/qualitative traditions of inquiry to motion my thinking in movements.

**Methodological Approach**

In agreement with Adams’ (2013) assertion that “[s]tudying place and sense of place requires the use of methodologies that mirror the processes that create places” (p. 50), I conducted a “place-sensitive ethnographic study” (Mannion & Adey, 2011, p. 41) on how the material (such as the physical place, objects, bodies, sounds) and the discursive (such as ways of using bodies and using space, or circulating discourses in talks and documents) occurred through the spatial production of members in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple. This method was compatible to the purpose of the study because it required that the researcher “goes physically to the spaces and places where the data are to be collected, and spends time there” (Delamont, 2014, p. 27), with primary focus on “the way(s) in which places and spaces are an important aspect of the research, because they are part and, usually an important part, of the informants’ identity, sense of self and their social world” (p. 30). At the same time, this method allowed the researcher to “record salient features of the places and spaces where learning and teaching take place, both formal instruction and informal enculturation, and then write about them so that readers can see them in their mind’s eyes” (Delamont, 2014, p. 27).
To observe the nomadic subjectivities being constructed, I adopted interactional ethnography, which invited a series of ethnographic questions: “how is identity [in this study, subjectivity] (re)formulated in a group; for, with and by whom; when and where; in what ways; for what purposes; under what condition; and with what outcomes or consequences in particular events or chain of events” (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 173). Additionally, at some points during the process of data analysis, I placed the ethnographic data to work in the context of organizational discourse analysis (Oberhuber & Krzyzanowski, 2008). Organizational discourse refers to “material practices of texts and talk set in currents of political economy and socio-history” (Boje et al., 2004, p. 571).

While taking these two approaches, I was also attentive to the post-qualitative ontology in terms of research design, which should “attend not to individual bodies, subjects, experiences or sensations, but to assemblages of human and non-human, […], and the affective flows between these assemblages” (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 406). Moreover, I was constantly reminded to explore “the movements of territorialization and de-territorialization” as well as “the consequent affect economies and micropolitics these movements reveal” (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 406).

Setting is an important factor in shaping research problems in ethnography, where sometimes the setting comes first with an interesting situation to study, and some other times researchers have to change sites once the questions they first asked no longer appear at the chosen site (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). However, “the ethnographer is rarely in a position to specify the precise nature of the setting required” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 28). My selection of the site, then, was partly relevant to the problems I wanted to investigate, which were spatial production and nomadic subjectivities in an out-of-school space.
The selection of the Vietnamese American Buddhist temple as an immigrant community to investigate was based on the increasing population of this ethnicity in the city where I conducted this study. According to the 2010 US Census count, Southern State (pseudonym) had the 10th largest Vietnamese population of the US States, with upwards of 28,000, of whom approximately 58% were foreign born and 42% born in the US. Of those foreign born, 79% entered the US prior to 2000. This growing population posed potential questions about the education of their younger generation in ways that recognize their cultural heritage.

The fact that the site I selected was a Buddhist temple, which brought certain religious notions to the study, was not a criterion for inclusion or exclusion. I treated this site as a semipublic place where people of an American community created their space through spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation. The Buddhist aspect of the site, or lack thereof, was embedded in my observations and analysis of the site.

The participants were selected after I started visiting the site and through rapport with members in the temple. I did not have a limit set of criteria for selecting the participants because whoever came to join the research made their decision from the interactions I made with them. Moreover, I did not predetermine whether participants have to belong within any age group, either adults or children or youth, because I responded to the call in human geography and sociology of childhood to “stop fetishizing particular age groups and look at age as a relational construct produced in interaction,” because “people’s identities are produced through interactions with different age groups” (Mannion & Adey, 2011, p. 36).

**Data Collection Methods**

Data collection for this study included fieldnotes, informant interviews, informants’ questionnaires, audio recordings, and material artifacts. All these methods were employed to
accrue data that addressed my research questions, which were 1) How is space produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple? and 2) How are nomadic subjectivities co-created within the space of the temple?

To collect data, I made 67 visits to the temple between January 2019 and November 2019, participated in and observed the various events, all of which took place on the temple’s ground except for two, an outdoor picnic and the Annual Fundraiser held at a local ceremony hall. Friday and Sunday were the two most consistent days, although the one week between July 15th and July 21st, I came for seven days straight, to experience the rhythm of life in the temple. Each of these times, I took notes of what I observed or questions that I had in my journal, typed full fieldnotes from the jotted notes in the journal, audio-recorded the Dharma talks on Friday and Sunday as well as the special events such as Lunar New Year, the Night for Vietnam, Buddha’s Birthday, Parents’ Day, and guest speakers’ talks at the Youth Retreat and the Retreat for Mental Health Professionals.

I asked the participants, or informants, to fill a questionnaire before setting up interviews with them. I also encouraged them to draw a sitting arrangement of the Meditation Hall from their own angle. I conducted two one-hour interviews with each of the informants in English or Vietnamese, besides an estimated twenty informal exchanges per person through text messages, emails or face-to-face conversations, throughout the course of ten months.

**Participant Observations and Fieldnotes**

In ethnographic research, participant observation is a terminology used to cover a mixture of observation and interviewing (Delamont, 2004), and is the main data collection tool in any ethnographic study (Jorgensen, 2015; Musante, & DeWalt, 2010; Spradley, 2016; Tedlock, 1991). Diverging from the definition provided by Bernard (1988) that participant observation
involves “removing yourself every day from cultural immersion so you can intellectualize what you have learned” (p. 148), Campbell and Lassiter (2014) proposed the idea of observant participation as “building on but reformulating participant observation” by putting experience at the center of ethnographic documentation: “this process very explicitly foregrounds how one’s own experience shapes one’s interpretation of others; build on the processes of subjectivity and intersubjectivity; and focuses attention on those points where ‘co-understanding’ between and among people surface (p. 64). I found this point more relevant to my belief, because distancing myself from others in social interactions, no matter for what purpose, was an impossible and ineffective way of learning about others, myself, and the world. Spradley (2016) drew a connection between observation and ethnographic interview: “participant observers formulate specific ethnographic questions and then ask themselves these questions,” which will be answered through fieldnotes, new observations, or the memory of the observer, then “in a real sense, you are treating yourself as an informant for a particular cultural scene” (p. 123). Spradley then introduced a funnel of observations: descriptive, focused, and selective, all of which I adopted based on each circumstance on the field.

I resonated with Emerson and colleagues’ interpretive-interactionist conceptualizing of fieldnotes as “the inscription of participatory experience” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 15), and deeply appreciated their reasoning for the importance of maintaining fieldnotes despite the uneasy feelings about them as “a kind of backstage scribbling”, “too revealingly personal, too messy and unfinished to be shown to any audience” (p. xv):

1. what is observed and ultimately treated as ‘data’ or ‘findings’ is inseparable from the observational processes;
2. in writing fieldnotes, the field researcher should give special attention to the indigenous meanings and concerns of the people studied;
3. contemporaneously written fieldnotes are an essential grounding and resource for writing broader, more coherent accounts of others’ lives and concerns;
(4) such fieldnotes should detail the social and interactional processes that make up people’s everyday lives and activities. 
(Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 15)

Figure 3.1. A Page of My Jottings

I kept fieldnotes of each of my visits to the site or my interactions with people inside and outside the temple. I combined a sequence of participating, observing and jotting down as advised by experienced fieldworkers (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Sanjek, 1990; Wolfinger, 2002). I jotted down key phrases for events or impressions on the site and try to resist the need to capture snippets of brief interactions while forgetting about more complex, key scenes through
techniques of “sequencing interactions, creating characters, reporting dialogue, and contextualizing an action or incident with vivid, sensory details” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, p. 47). I balanced between observing, remembering, and writing fieldnotes, following the suggested equation of one-hour observation for one-hour writing fieldnotes.

At each visit to the temple, I tried to attend to ongoing scenes, events and interactions while also taking “mental note” of “certain details and impressions” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw; 2011, p. 24) until I could sit down to record some “jottings” – a “brief written record of events and impressions captured in key words and phrases” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw; 2011, p. 29), sometimes with drawings and illustrations if necessary. When I left the field, on the same day, I typed up the notes into more detailed fieldnotes and stored them in chronological order in my laptop for easy retrieval. Each entry in my fieldnotes covered interactions in the space with attention to “when, where, and according to whom,” while also focused descriptions on how events occurred instead of why they occurred (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw; 2011, p. 27). I also left a space in the full fieldnotes for my own impressions, questions and comments regarding the event being inscribed. I recorded 115 pages of jottings from my journals. The typed fieldnotes comprised 241 pages. I did not follow a strict format for fieldnotes, but I made sure to distinguish between what I observed and what impressions I had of such observations, in other words, the description and the reflection of what happened on the field.

Over time, my notes went from descriptive to more focused, and toward the later days in the field, more selective, because reviewing the notes and interview transcripts gave me more information and direction on which events or interactions to write down. On the journal that I kept handwritten notes in parallel with the electronic full fieldnotes, I flagged pages where I recognized patterns or rich points on a certain day, so that I could go back and conduct forward
and backward mapping during the data analysis process. Figure 3.1 shows a page of my jottings on journal, and Table 3.1 showed an excerpt of my fieldnotes.

Table 3.1. An Excerpt of My Fieldnotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happened, how?</th>
<th>Thoughts?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2019-02-10 Sunday</strong> 10:00 a.m. <strong>New Year festival</strong></td>
<td>- Where did Americans get their Aodai made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parking lots all pack, many cars on new grass land</td>
<td>- More Americans on right bench. Near translator? Closer view to stage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1 man photographing the sign: stone, handwritten calligraphy of the temple’s name, both English and Vietnamese in name</td>
<td>- Who’s the Viet Comm Refugees Org? What do they do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 11:00 Lion dance, fire crackers: long red strips of crackers tied from tree branches down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Smell: smoke, burned crackers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clouds of light blue, greyish smoke soon dissolving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lions dancing around people, open mouth, show red tongue, hold red envelops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- American people in Aodai, 1 lady in a shirt with dragon embroidered on back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People: families, groups of friends, couples take pictures for and with each other near the peach/apricot handmade trees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Medtt. Hall: ~170 people sitting next to each other, full on right hand bench. People sit more on right bench than left bench.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2 ladies in front of Women restroom: 1 just recovered from stroke, 1 other taught her some prayers: - Say “Nam Mo A Di Da Phat” many times – I’ve been always saying Nam Mo Quan The Am Bo Tat – This one helps recover from sickness. You have to keep saying NMQTABT, help me make it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A man raised hand signal (Mr. T): Please join the Viet Community Refugee Organization next Sunday at 3:00 for the flag ceremony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lunch buffet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Audio Recordings**

With authorization from the *Head of Sangha*, I audio-recorded the events at the temple with a focus on the Dharma talks on Friday and Sunday, as well as the special events such as Lunar New Year, the Night for Vietnam, Buddha’s Birthday, Parents’ Day, and guest speakers’ talks at the Youth Retreat and the Retreat for Mental Health Professionals to document the setting, participants, the discourses being exchanged, and the local knowledge being transmitted in the space. I typically arrived about five to ten minutes early to the event and started recording,
in order to capture the preparation step. I also let the recording continue for five minutes after the main event, in case a change of event took place. Along with the participant observation fieldnotes, the data from these recordings were another major source for my analysis. I also referred between the recordings and the fieldnotes to triangulate the data. Due to privacy concerns, I did not include video-recording as one of the collection tools, however, the focus on audial source helped me notice a pattern of sounds and silence, which was one of the major findings in my research. I also audio-recorded the interviews with the informants. For this purpose, I used two different devices so that one could back up another.

**Informant Questionnaire**

Once the participants agreed to participate in my study, I asked them to fill a questionnaire with demographic questions about themselves. As taken for granted as they may seem, demographic questions could pose ethical and professional cautions, in addition to research integrity issues for certain populations. Hughes, Camden and Yangchen (2016) claimed that it was important for researchers to accurately describe a sample with demographic information, however, they also found that “many of the demographic questions used in survey research can be considered sensitive questions because the way they are written often ignores the complexity of identity” (p. 138). Informed by this study just when I was struggling to describe my research population and the informants, I designed a questionnaire with typical demographic questions with no pre-given categories and informants were expected to write out the answers by themselves. This self-reported demographic questionnaire was a helpful entry point for me before conducting interviews with these informants.

**Interviews and Interview Transcripts**

Ethnographic interview is considered unstructured (Fontana & Frey, 2003), as opposed to
structured interviews, which are designed beforehand and are given to participants in their entirety with minimal interference from the interviewer. Spradley (1979) highlighted a resemblance between an ethnographic interview and a friendly conversation, emphasizing the need to always shift back to a friendly conversation throughout the interview by demonstrating the three most important ethnographic elements, namely “explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations, and ethnographic questions” (p. 59). Explicit purpose means that the interviewer must make clear the purpose of the interview without being authoritarian. Ethnographic explanations include explanations about the project itself, the statements about how recording works, the interpretation into native language, and explanations about the interview procedures or the questions. Spradley further identified over thirty types of research questions, including descriptive, structural, and contrast.

Fontana and Frey (2003) provided a useful sequence of actions to take during an interview to lessen the “persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 62) feeling between the interviewer and interviewee:

- Accessing the setting
- Understanding the language and culture of the respondents
- Deciding on how to present oneself
- Locating an informant
- Gaining trust
- Establishing rapport
- Collecting empirical materials

(Fontana & Frey, 2003, pp. 76-78).

Given the place-sensitive aspect of this ethnographic study, I incorporated walking as a probing technique, which involves “visiting a location that has meaning to an informant and discussing the place and the built environment that the informant associates with the locale”, among those commonly used such as “the silent probe, the echo probe, the uh-huh probe, the tell-me-more probe, and the long question probe” (De Leon & Cohen, 2005, p. 200) when I
conducted unstructured interviews with the informants. With the ease of traversing in bodies through space, I was able to maintain the interview like a friendly conversation as advised by Spradley.

I conducted two one-hour interviews with each informant, with the second interview being a follow-up from the first. In the initial interview, I asked questions about the informants’ life and their general opinions about the temple. In the follow-up interview, I used information gather from the first to come up with a list of questions relevant to each informant, but generally concerning their place-making practices, roles, expectations and sense of belonging at the temple. Table 3.2. and Table 3.3. present the list of questions used in each interview.

**Table 3.2. Questions for Interview 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me about yourself – where you are from and what do you do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please describe your cultural background – what is the culture that you could best relate to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Describe your role at this place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How long have you been to/ living in this place? How did it start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you know anything about the history of this place? Which event do you think is/was very important to the history of the place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Which corners in this place do you spend lots of time at? Which ones do you feel most comfortable in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What do you normally do when you are in this place? Who do you meet or interact with? Describe how a day goes here for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tell me some special memories you have about this place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is there anything you like about this place? What is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Why did you decide to come here?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3. Questions for Interview 2

1. Can you describe the whole Thanh Tinh community in one big picture? Who come here?
2. Do you feel belonged to this place? Is there any moment when you don’t feel so? Why do you choose this place over the others? If you could have a choice, would you stay here?
3. How does the experience at this place relate to your cultural background?
4. Out of the many events happening at this place over the year, which one was remarkable to you?
5. Can you tell me about some rules and regulations here that you must follow? What are you allowed to do? How do you feel about those rules?
6. What is home to you? Where is your home?
7. How do you feel as a citizen in this country?
8. What does democracy mean to you? Do you think this is a democratic place? How is it democratic or not?
9. What is one good thing from this place that you wish other places could learn from?
10. What is something you would like to see improved in this place?

Artifacts

Documentary sources and material artifacts are the easily overlooked sources of data in ethnographic research due to the overemphasis on face-to-face interactions, however, ethnographers need to take account of documents “as part of the social setting under investigation” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 121) because they can provide information about the settings or key figures of the organization, which is not always available from other sources, or challenge information received from informants or observations, besides stimulating
analytic ideas. Artefacts, equally, including material goods, objects and traces, also need to be analyzed in their broad ethnographic contexts, since it is the job of ethnographers to understand the “thing-ness” of things in their material and social contexts” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 134). Calling attention to the existence of cyber communities that expand and recreate the boundaries and meanings of the local, these authors illustrated just how human beings’ acts of negotiation, interaction and identity-formation on the virtual world are equally real in the social world.

I collected flyers, handouts, posters, flyers, internally distributed lottery tickets, magazine and newsletters about from the temple, for a richer contextualization of the site.

**Personal Communication with Informants**

Besides the above-mentioned tools, I further employed an informal mode of data collection, which was personal communication through emails, text messages or direct contact. In cases when I was not sure about what the informants said in the interview, I checked with them via a text messages or email for clarification. I held an average of 20 text or email conversations with each informant, with an exception of country monk (pseudonym). Since he was also the *Head of Sangha*, I had some more questions for him regarding the operation of the temple and some inquiries for help with Buddhist terminology. For this reason, I conversed with him on a more regular basis.

**Data Analysis**

According to Campbell and Lassiter’s (2014), “when ethnography’s fundamental processes – like fieldwork, conversations, and writing – are humanistically posed and collaboratively enacted, its central emphasis shifts from discovering points of view to constructing understandings and actions” (p. 117). Following this, instead of reporting he said
she said, I aimed my study’s focus on making sense of the messy reality I found from all means of observation, connecting the relevant discourses from different sources of information, and trying to trace out the differences underlying presumably similar discourses.

Crang and Cook (2007) suggested in analyzing materials to look at the process of refining “raw” data through:

- Focusing and refocusing of research aims and questions
- Formal phasing of your research to address specific issues with specific people
- Methods used and the kinds of data they help you to construct,
- Individuals and groups you chose to try to involve in your research,
- Issues you jotted down on your interview checklists,
- Ways your participants and others took photos, wrote accounts, and told stories and
- Ways you tried to make sense of research experiences in your research diary notes (Crang & Cook, 2007, pp. 132-133).

I also learned from the coding methods discussed by these researchers, which was basically to comb through different sources for emergent themes and discourses (Crang & Cook 2007). Of particular interest to me was their reminder that “the researcher needs to be sensitive to how much prior categories may be said to be ‘found’ in the material” (p. 139). It was important to maintain sensitive to and conscious of possible emic and etic categories, and admittedly sometimes I could not distinguish between these two, because as Agar (1995) agreed, “it is difficult to imagine any ethnographic statement that is not a blend of these” (cited in Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 139).

While Crang and Cook (2007) insisted that “the successful analysis of ethnographic materials is very far from a mystical process of intuition that only the chosen few are able to perform” (p. 145), Campbell and Lassiter suggested otherwise:

At some point in that process, intuitions will begin to emerge. Those intuitions – or, more accurately, inklings – will lead to fresh questions, which will lead back into new conversations, on to further questions, and eventually into deeper texts and new understandings. (Campbell & Lassiter, 2014, p. 118)
I resonated more or less with Campbell and Lassiter on this matter. Not to deny the rigor and validity of coding, I felt that this process of making sense of data also required certain human feelings and intuitions, the very factors that pushed me as the researcher to pursue the research questions at the beginning.

Data analysis was conducted after each data collection activity. The process of coding and collecting data simultaneously allowed coding to shape future data collection (Blaikie, 2017; Crang & Cook, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, O'Reilly, 2005). Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I engaged in memo-writing, the process of keeping track of thoughts and data as they emerge. In the beginning, data collection memos discussed possible emergent themes and track informal analysis. Memo-writing provided a way to keep track of data and begin informal analysis as I was simultaneously collecting data. From the data gathered with the research questions in mind, I underwent four major levels of data analysis.

**First Level of Data Analysis**

In the first level of data analysis, I transcribed the recorded interviews and recorded major events at the temple. I made the decision to present the transcript in the form of clean prose, with little focus on phonological details, however, I did pay attention to record non-English speakers use of the language by keeping their expressions (for example, “We lacked of food, clothes in winter time,” or “But I was unsuccessfully convince him”) so that readers could have more details and impressions about the speaker. The interview transcripts were formatted in a standard document and each line was numbered from the beginning to the end of the recording.

My interview transcriptions represented a natural flow of speech when each interlocutor took turn to talk. I spelled out the contextualization cues such as pause, hesitation, raise voice, or stays silent and put them in square brackets.
At this same level, for 2 participants who chose to speak Vietnamese during the interview, I transcribed the Vietnamese version of the interview and translated it into English afterwards. I numbered the lines the same way I did for all other 8 sets of transcripts.

Second Level of Data Analysis

Employing Spradley’s (2016) methods of domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis, I went through the interview and event transcripts to look for identifications of the main theoretical concepts related to spatial production and nomadic subjectivities. As Spradley (2016) explained, the goal of domain analysis was to “identify cultural categories” and “to gain an overview of the cultural scenes you are studying” (p. 97). For example, in answering Question 1, I read, re-read and underlined words in the transcripts that indicated space of representation, representations of space, and spatial practices. I identified 45 cultural scenes, from which I created taxonomic analysis and componential analysis to ultimately uncover the cultural themes, which is “any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning” (Spradley, 2016, p. 141).

Third Level of Data Analysis

At the next level of analysis, I looked at the cultural themes laid out at level two and referred to fieldnotes, recording transcripts as well as my journal to identify patterns as well as the “rich points” (Agar, 1996). While patterns comprised of recurrent events that occurred over time, rich point refers to monumental events that took place out of the regular patterns and contributed new learnings about the site.

Fourth Level of Data Analysis

At this level, I looked through the identified patterns and cultural themes to find telling
cases and contrastive analysis of events. Telling case, as theorized by Mitchell (1984), is a case where “the particular circumstances surrounding the case serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent” (p. 239). Instead of looking at a typical case for analytical exposition, I searched across data for a telling case, which is not defined by size but by “a series of decisions and actions that lay a foundation for developing theoretical inferences from detailed ethnographic analyses” (Green & Bridges, 2018, p. 478). For example, to answer Question 2, I located the data set including fieldnotes, interview transcripts and event transcripts, to contextualize a telling case for the socially constructed nature of potential subjectivities at the temple.

**Ethical Considerations**

Regarding ethical considerations of the study, I complied with the regulations and requirements of the Institutional Research Board (IRB) to attain their approval before the commencement of the research project. Besides the codes of conduct detailed by the IRB, I also committed myself to the axiological concerns as informed by (post)qualitative theorists.

**Triangulation**

In order to achieve validity and reliability throughout my study, I employed the method of triangulation, or using multiple methods, multiple settings, and multiple theoretical frameworks, to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question. Building on Denzin’s conceptualization in 1989, Flick (2009) gave a comprehensive account of different types of triangulation. All in all, Flick (2009) insisted on the appropriate use of triangulation to advance knowledge in the world:

As far as possible, these perspectives should be treated and applied on an equal footing and in an equally consequent way. At the same time, triangulation (of different methods or data sorts) should allow a principal surplus of knowledge. For example, triangulation
should produce knowledge on different levels, which means they go beyond the knowledge made possible by one approach and thus contribute to promoting quality in research. (Flick, 2009, p. 445)

I was attentive to practice triangulation through various sources of data, various methods of data collection, various theoretical foundations at various points of time during the process of the study.

**Member Checking**

Throughout the study and after I finished writing up the report of findings, I sent my manuscript to all the informants for them to do member checking on my reporting. I specifically indicated the page numbers of the sections most directly involving each informant, while also encouraging them to read both finding chapters in entirety. At the same time, it should be noted that I maintained regular contact with the informants through casual conversations, emails and text messages, which allowed me to check for clarify or preferences as I went. I received all the informants’ feedback and incorporated it into my earliest revision.

**Contextualization of the Research Site**

**Historical and Structural Formation of the Temple**

This ethnographic study took place in Thanh Tinh Meditation Center (pseudonym), a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple located in a historically mixed neighborhood of a midsized, central southern capital city hereby called Evergreen (pseudonym). Early in the year 1987, a household in an old downtown neighborhood was employed to be a space for Buddhist worshippers. A group of Vietnamese refugees at that time gathered once every week, chanted the Buddhist bible together and discussed what was current to the community (Lê Khánh Hoàng, Interview). This kept going for about over ten years, when more people started joining the group and the need to find a larger place grew in congruence with the number.
In the year 2000, this group of practitioners finally purchased a piece of land and claimed it to be their temple from then on. At this same time, some U.S.-born and English-speaking members lead by a professor in Psychology at the local university, hereby called GSU (Guff State University) had been meeting as a group to study Buddhism. By the time the new building had been purchased and remodeled for the purpose of worshipping, this group were invited by one Vietnamese American practitioner to move in with the Vietnamese laymen and laywomen to share the space. One year later, the group successfully invited one monk to become their Abbot monk, also known as Thay from now on. Thay then took over the leadership and lead both the English and Vietnamese sangha. When I invited him to join my study, he chose to call himself “country monk” without capital letters. It is important to know that in the Vietnamese language, “thay” means a male teacher, or spiritual teacher and “co” means a female teacher or spiritual teacher. Any male ordained monk can be called “Thay,” whereas the Abbott is called “Thay Tru Tri”, however, out of respect for the Abbot, at Thanh Tinh temple this word is almost reserved to address country monk. Other ordained monks are addressed with the word “Thay”, followed by their Dharma names, for example, Thay Thong Tue, or Thay Tri Thuong (all pseudonyms).

Nineteen years later, the temple expanded though still on the same location, but serving a growing population of Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese Americans locals, roughly 700 of whom identified as Vietnamese American, born or migrated to the United States between the 1970s and present; and the rest of whom were non-Vietnamese Americans, identifying as Black, White, Chinese, Filipino, or international visitors. The temple now has 15 resident monks and nuns, including the Abbott and 2 novices. The temple was a transnational space in the sense that it contained individuals living their lives across borders, both real and imaginary, between one nation-state and another.
I had frequented the temple 2 to 3 days a week for several months before finally getting approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research on the site. The very next day after hearing from IRB, I asked to meet with country monk to gain his approval and blessings for conducting research on the temple ground. Although I had been to Thanh Tinh so many times before, that was the first day I saw it from an etic perspective and with mixed feelings of excitement, connectivity, and curiosity. The following is a description from my fieldnotes.

As I made a right turn from the traffic lights at a busy boulevard crossed with a smaller street, I kept driving a few more feet before making a U turn and passed by the temple’s main entrance. There are two huge, crimson fifteen-feet tall gates arching down to two smaller side gates in between four yellowish-brown mixed with dark grey brick pillars. To the right of the entrance is a seven-feet tall rectangle granite yard sign matching color with the brick pillars, on it a calligraphy-style handwritten phrase in black ink that reads “Thanh Tinh Meditation Center.” Turning right through the side entrance now wide open, I could hear the tires crunching on a blue gravel path. A self-standing LED sign on the left-hand side of the path was running its quote for the day: “PEACE IN EVERY STEP.” I parked my car, stepped through a narrow sidewalk floating on the pebble ground with pieces of stones scatted one foot from each other along a waving path that leads to the community kitchen. It was lunch time. A few nuns and laywomen were either chopping vegetables or washing large pots and trays, while some monks and laymen were pressure-washing the central ground and mowing the lawn, their voices all muted by machines whirring. The Lunar New Year was coming in literally a couple of days. After asking Thay to read and sign my documents, I excused myself knowing that he was not feeling well, his voice hoarse from a cold. I lingered in the kitchen, and it was not long before a lady offered me a cup of orange juice: “Hey take some juice with you, I’m making it fresh for lunch. Aren’t you staying for lunch?” (Fieldnotes, 01/31/2019).

Between January 2019 and November 2019, I made 67 visits to the temple, participated and observed the various events, all of which taking place on the temple’s ground except for two, an outdoor picnic and the Annual Fundraiser held at a local ceremony hall. Friday and Sunday were the two most consistent days, although the one week between July 15th and July 21st, I came for seven days straight, to experience the rhythm of life in the temple. Each time I came, I met someone, saw and felt something new, or discovered something old, but every time I was welcome with smiles, laughter, stories, or food.
Figure 3.2. Structural Map of Thanh Tinh Temple

From my data including fieldnotes, audio recording, artifacts and participant interviews, I constructed a structural map of the temple across time and over space. This map functioned as a foreground that facilitated the analysis following in the coming sections.
The Site’s Population

There are many opinions among my research participants about different groups of people going to the temple, based on different criteria of distinction, namely racial or ethnic characteristics, age, or purpose of coming. Overall, however, four interchangeable demographic groups of participants emerged at the temple.

1. Vietnamese refugees: those who fled the country of Vietnam in two waves, one in 1975 and the other in the early nineties. These people were born in Vietnam, they came to the US when they were older and have limited English. Most of them are above sixty years old. This group accounted for about 10% of the total population.

2. Vietnamese American immigrants: those who were born or migrated to the US in their early twenties. These people are the major part of the workforce at the temple. They are around thirty to fifty years old. This group accounted for the largest part, about 40% of the population.

3. Vietnamese American children: those who were born in the US by the first generation. They speak mostly English and limited Vietnamese. They go to school in the US and accounted for about 25% of the temple’s population.

4. Non-Vietnamese Americans. This group included people who mostly were born in the U.S., identified as White or Black, spoke English as the first language, came as guests to the temple on Friday nights, and altogether occupied about 20% of the population. The other portion of this group were people of Chinese, Filipino, Indian or other ethnicities who arrived in the US for work or life purposes. They spoke their mother tongue and English interchangeably, and some older members could speak Vietnamese as a third language. Altogether, they constituted about 5% of the population.
These four groups interact with each other in what is termed “sangha,” commonly assumed as a community of Buddhist practitioners. Thanh Tinh Temple’s sangha, at the broadest glance as exemplified by a local collage magazine, “is diverse, mixing those of Asian and non-Asian descent as well as religious backgrounds” (The Way of the Thay, 2012, p. 40).

**Schedule and Timeline for the Use of Space**

Thanh Tinh’s sangha operated on a shared schedule as posted on their website (Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3.** Schedule for the Use of Space at Thanh Tinh Temple

This schedule was consistently observed in most regular weeks, and in times of special events or occasions, minimal changes were made to ensure the schedule was not affected. In any average week, Sunday was for the Vietnamese-speaking sangha, where the primary language used was Vietnamese but there was an English interpreter that provided instant translation of the dharma talk. After the rituals, a community lunch was hosted in buffet style, where everyone is welcome to join for free and enjoy the vegetarian food prepared by nuns, monks and laypeople. Monday was when the Alcoholics Anonymous group, referred to as AA group by members at the
temple, meet on the temple ground and carry out their own group activities. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday were for people to join the sitting meditation and chanting, most of the time without a Dharma talk. Although the published schedule on the website showed Dharma talks on those days, my days in the field showed that it was seldom the case. There was no meeting on Wednesday night; this is spared as a day for monastic members to do their self-study or take personal breaks. Friday was for the English-speaking sangha, where the primary language used was English, and members came expecting to speak, hear and operate in this language for the meditation, chanting and group discussion. There was no interpreter on Friday, although there was some informal translation during the session by Thay, or any discussant, to clarify certain concepts or questions between two languages, Vietnamese and English.

Overtime during fieldwork at the temple, I mapped out a timeline of special events and their purpose into Figure 3 which follows. Though according to the ethnographer’s definition, an event as a dimension of social situation is “a series of related activities linked together into larger patterns” (Spradley, 2016, p. 41), I included only the events that were acknowledge by the community as special or out of the regular scheduled events. I also marked each event as religious (R), non-religious (N), or both, based on the major activities taking place in it.

**Table 3.4. Special Events at Thanh Tinh Temple**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/04/2019</td>
<td>Lunar New Year (Tet) Eve N &amp; R</td>
<td>9:30 p.m. – 1:30 a.m. (02/05/2019)</td>
<td>- Buddhist Youth Association (GDPT) performances - Fireworks - Crackers - Lion dance - New Year prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/10/2019</td>
<td>Tet ceremony R &amp; N</td>
<td>11:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>- Crackers - Lion dance - Vietnamese sangha ritual service - Tet games: Trivia, Performances, Lottery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table cont'd.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03/17/2019</td>
<td>Vegetarian Food Sale</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Selling and buying foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consuming food &amp; drink before service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/07/2019</td>
<td>Outdoor picnic</td>
<td>12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Lunch buffet at a local park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Team-bonding games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/13/2019</td>
<td>Mental Health Professional Training Workshop</td>
<td>7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Workshops for mental health professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lunch buffet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/14/2019</td>
<td>Vegetarian Food Sale</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Selling and buying foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consuming food &amp; drink on premises, before service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/27/2019</td>
<td>Night for Vietnam</td>
<td>8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Flag ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Bi-lingual speeches about Vietnam’s history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Song performances by adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/12/2019</td>
<td>Vegetarian Food Sale</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Selling and buying foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consuming food &amp; drink on premises, before service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/18/2019</td>
<td>Buddha’s Birthday (Phat Dan) Celebration</td>
<td>7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.</td>
<td>- Flag ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Vietnamese ritual service with English translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Song performances by adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/30/2019</td>
<td>Vegetarian Food Sale</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Selling and buying foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consuming food &amp; drink on premises, before service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/26-28/2019</td>
<td>Youth Retreat</td>
<td>7:00 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.</td>
<td>- Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Group greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Guest speaker’s talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Youth counseling sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Youth performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/11/2019</td>
<td>Vegetarian Food Sale</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Selling and buying foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consuming food &amp; drink on premises, before service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/17/2019</td>
<td>Parents’ Day (Vu Lan) Celebration</td>
<td>7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.</td>
<td>- Flag ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Vietnamese ritual service with English translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Song performances by adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/21/2019</td>
<td>Tea meditation</td>
<td>7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>- Sitting meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tea meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sangha conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table cont'd.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/12/2019</td>
<td>Fundraiser</td>
<td>6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Famous singer performances - Fundraising speech - Banquet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2019</td>
<td>Vegetarian Food Sale</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Selling and buying foods - Consuming food &amp; drink on premises, before service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The range of scheduled and special events altogether demonstrated the dynamic and the always-already becoming nature of social production at the temple. Overtime, certain events and activities were continually present, some were intermittent, and some were experimental as being newly created out of the needs of the members. This illustrated who had ownership of the temple, how entrances to the space was made available to people, and ultimately what counted as membership to people in the same space.

**Meeting the Participants Halfway**

The four demographic groups identified earlier in this chapter were interchangeable, so instead of forcefully picking participants from each group, I waited for the participants to meet me halfway in showing their interests in the research. Although I had talked to many people, only 10 of them showed a willingness to participate in interviews, filled out the questionnaire and maintain regular contact through emails, text messages and face-to-face conversations to share their insights about the experience of living or participating at the temple. For this reason, they were crucial participants as well as informants in my research and over time, these participants became my companions and teachers about a way of life in a space not easily labelled with any available name tags. Through communicating with them, I gained a more sophisticated understanding of the norms and expectations, rights and obligations, roles and relationships in spatial production at the temple. As this study will further unfold, the participants
left a deep impression in me with the way they chose a place for interview and the way they moved around in space.

The table below condenses the self-reported demographic information of the participants. They each received a form with questions of demographic nature, which they could choose to answer or not and with the words or to the extent they would like to go.

**Table 3.5. Participant Self-Reported Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Parents’ birth-place</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Years at temple</th>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Role at temple</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vidya</td>
<td>65-70</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Workforce development specialist</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country monk</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Vietnamese American</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Monk &amp; Adjunct professor</td>
<td>Abbot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveler</td>
<td>70-75</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Take out garbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lala</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Certified Public Accountant</td>
<td>Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Nguyen</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Vietnamese American</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Active participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo Tran</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Asian/Chinese</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Attends Sunday services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Pot</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Hot-Pot</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lay Minister</td>
<td>Lay Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lê Khánh Hoàng</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hà Buôn</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Nun</td>
<td>Resident nun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The more I interacted with the participants, the more apparent it felt that the whole complexity of representation was not easily transferable onto paper. One non-participant, who I could not involve in the study, emailed me after we had had one non-interview and I had sent him the transcript of that non-interview as well as a list of follow-up questions for the second
tentative interview. He decided to “respectfully decline doing any further interviews” while encouraging me to use what he shared from the first interview for my study, because he thought the questions I had proposed for the second interview were “too personal” and he would not “feel comfortable answering them” (Mike Stanton, pseudonym, personal communication). His stories and opinions were therefore invisible but at the same time haunting spaces in intricated instances of power dynamics at the temple. For this reason, I presented his pseudonym “under erasure,” following a Derridian concept, which means I first wrote the words and then crossed them out, leaving both the words and their crossed-out versions. As Spivak explains: “Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible” (1976, p. xiv).

Similarly, there are voices, images and shadows of many other people and beings who were not cited directly or portrayed closely in this study, but whose lines of flight made cuts through others to illuminate, complicate, and constitute an assemblage of multiplicities at work within and beyond the temple. At the same time, the 10 people with whom I spent the most time and thought provided the contrast necessary to highlight the spatial production at this specific place we know as Thanh Tinh temple.

There are a hundred ways I could introduce the participants and the challenge of writing in one way without erasing the others almost made it an impossible possibility. The participants traversed throughout the study as nomads in dependently co-arising narratives, so I first provided a short account for each of the participants with a focus on snippets of the space they wandered with me during our interviews to assist the reading of the temple’s cartography.

**Monastic members.** Three monastic members joined my study, namely country monk, Hot Pot, and Hạ Buồn. country monk was the first to talk to me, on a breezy April morning inside the Ancestor Hall, behind Meditation Hall.
Thay sat with his back to the windows, facing me across a long, chestnut-shaded wooden table. From where I was sitting, I could see two clay pots of white orchids on each side of a panoramic six-paneled clear glass window overlooking a row of pink flowering trees and pieces of floating clouds further up. Birds were chirping right outside. Nothing was on the table except for my recorder and my note. Thay was in his usual brown robe, hands folded under the chin, a recurring thin smile at each question I posed. He thanked me for interviewing, complimented “good question” at those that made him think longer, and answered slowly yet clearly with a light Vietnamese accent. The whole hour went by before I knew it, in a pleasant quietness of thoughts in formation (Field note, 04/10/2019)

When inquired, country monk explained to me that he intentionally did not capitalize his pseudonym in the self-reported survey, because he wanted to minimize his ego in the stories (country monk, personal conversation, 04/10/2019). He had earned a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology shortly before this interview. Seeing himself as an atypical Abbot, Thay travelled once every two or three weeks to other states and cities to provide religious, counseling, or any mental help to anyone asking for his presence. Amid such busy schedule, he could also be seen working in the garden with other monks and nuns because “deep down, I’m a country boy, a farmer, I know not much more than planting trees and hoeing weeds” (personal conversation, 04/10/2019).

Hot Pot greeted me cheerfully on a Wednesday evening in Harmony Hall. Sitting among one of the long dining tables and benches where people would gather during Sunday community lunch time, his sonorous voice punctuated with exuberant laughter, he made me forget the whole day preceding our talk. Coming to the U.S. from Vietnam as an international student and being in his early 30s, well around my age, he appeared relatable and empathic with my schoolwork in offering to answer any question via texts or emails whenever I needed. “Stuck” around my questions about identity, the Vietnamese-ness, American-ness and in-between-ness in him, he jokingly yet consistently chose the name Hot Pot after I had asked him twice. The act of naming himself after a popular Vietnamese dish which involves a large variety of vegetables and meat or meat substitutes that are cooked by diners at the dining table by dipping all ingredients in boiling
broth throughout the meal was indicative of a mixed texture of what he had always, already become.

Hà Buôn was the only nun I conversed with in depth. Meaning “Sad Summer,” her chosen pseudonym reminded me of a song I heard as a child. She had been to the U.S. for eight years but stayed in another temple before coming to Thanh Tinh 2.5 years ago. When I came a late November morning, she was at the kitchen tables preparing lunch for the monastic members arriving soon from a vacation trip, an open notebook lying in between bunches of vegetables.

“Cô đang ôn thi ạ? (Are you studying for finals?)” – “Ừ, môn cuối – Sử Mỹ mà khó hơn thi quốc tịch nờa! (Yes, last one – U.S. History but much more difficult than the citizenship test!)” She made use of the seven minutes before our appointment, swiftly moving between the tables and water faucets, a white apron over the blueish grey robe, sleeves rolled up above the elbows and a brown beanie covering her ears. We later sat down on the stone benches curving inward to a round stone table underneath the oak trees. Streaks of sunlight slowly erased traces of rain from the previous night, Hà Buôn took a deep breath in: “Trời hôm nay quá là đẹp luôn! (Such wonderful weather today!)”. Her Vietnamese bore a hint of the central region accent, soft and intonational, the very same voice which could become resonant and melodious in the chanting rituals she sometimes conducted inside Meditation Hall.

**Vietnamese American immigrants.** Lê Khánh Hoàng considered himself as belonging to the largest group at the temple, Vietnamese Americans in their 30s to 50s, who came to the U.S. from Vietnam and built their families as well as earned a living here for the bigger half of their lives. When I talked to him on a Sunday, we had been having the vegetarian lunch with his wife and daughter, washed our dishes, and come back to a stone table near the Laughing Buddha statue he had chosen beforehand. Later in the interview, he claimed this to be his favorite corner
of all places, because “much like the Laughing Buddha in many ancient paintings of children, this statue is located near the children’s playground and reminds me of my childhood,” and therefore, “whenever I look at him laughing, I feel content” (Lê Khánh Hoàng, Interview 1, lines 286-296, translated).

**U.S.-born second generations.** Adam, Leo and Ella were somewhat seen as the younger generation of members to the temple. Leo was in his last year at a magnet middle school, while Adam and Ella happened to attend the same magnet high school in the local area. Both Adam and Leo chose the temple’s outdoor spaces for interviews, most particularly the cement court near the lunch tables underneath the oak trees, where teenagers would be running around a basketball stand or simply gathering in random clusters every Sunday. At the same time, Ella preferred to communicate through emails and text messages, so we talked about questions related to the study on virtual space, although sometimes we sat with each other for Sunday lunch and exchanged casual conversations.

Adam were born into a Vietnamese American family. He had been to the temple since as early as his memory could go furthest back and now belonged to the Buddhist Youth Association, casually called GDPT under a Vietnamese acronym. Adam was finishing his senior year in high school at the time of the interview. He had a busy schedule with a weekend part time job at a dry-cleaner, extracurricular activities in school, a martial arts club in town, and of course, the workload from his academic program. He added to the list that he had been doing research studies on different topics other than just applying for colleges in his free time, and he had currently been working on “the effects of gender on arts preference at a museum context” (Adam, Interview 1, line 14), which he took time to elaborate on some key ideas. Despite this packed list of activities, he signed up for the Huynh Truong (Boy Scouts) training courses, which
prepared future leaders for members of the Buddhist Youth Association, while also being a performer in the lion dance team, who conducted traditional dances to mimic the movements of a lion as an act of bringing good luck and fortune in the Vietnamese culture.

Like Adam, Leo had been to the temple since he was four or five years old, according to his memory, and also a member of GDPT. His parents took him and his brother to the temple every weekend, mostly Sundays, when they would go to their age groups and congregate in learning the Buddhist scripts, discussing their meanings and applications for modern life, and participating in group activities or field games. He taught me how the Buddhism classes he had been taking were divided into different levels, starting from how life was before the Buddha and “as you go to more classes it goes deeper into the life of the Buddha” (Leo, Interview 1, line 53). He further shared that these classes were named after classic Buddhist terms, and their members had a badge on the uniform sleeve with a visual form of the names, such as “a bird hatched from a nest” (Interview 1, line 80) or “a stick with three leaves” (line 94). As Leo told me, he had passed all these classes and now he was with the older group, who got to learn more about solving practical daily problems. Leo was also a member in the lion dance team, although he had newly started,

Meanwhile, Ella was of Chinese descent, born in New York and raised in Evergreen. Ella had almost refused to join my study until she realized that she could answer my questions in emails instead of in-person in front of a scary recorder, which would make her “super nervous and uncomfortable” (Ella, personal conversation, 09/22/2019). We ended up texting, emailing and talking after services or during Sunday lunch. She did not feel the need to find a pseudonym, because to her the current English name was itself a diversion from the Chinese name chosen by her parents when she was first born (Ella, personal conversation, 11/14/2019). Therefore, Ella
was the only participant whose pseudonym was chosen by me, the researcher, instead of self-chosen like the others.

**Non-Vietnamese American practitioners.** Vidya, Traveler and Lala all spoke English and identified themselves as White or Caucasian. Vidya and Traveler both lived in Guffside (pseudonym), a suburban city 1.5 hours’ drive from Evergreen, while Lala lived nearby Thanh Tinh temple. They had been coming to the temple for several years not only on Fridays to the English-speaking sangha but also on Sundays and numerous special events hosted by the Vietnamese American community. Unlike practitioners who would come just for sitting meditations, they could be seen any day and anywhere on the temple ground talking to other laypeople, helping around with chores, or teaching English to nuns and monks. They caught my attention as much as I caught theirs once they learned I was a graduate student, they approached me with smiles, hugs, pats on the back, and small talks full of care and positivity just about anything in daily life. Lala and Traveler graciously took me on walks around the temple for the interviews despite the moisture and heat of a July afternoon in Southern State, while due to a recent health condition, Vidya sat with me in the Ancestor Hall or in her car whenever I needed a conversation, which would be on the Sundays when both of us came out from service. During these trips, I discovered the nooks and crannies of the very place I had thought I myself was familiar with.

**Summary of Chapter Three**

In this chapter, I presented the situating of my mode of inquiry as well as my epistemology and positionality as a researcher. After that, I provided an overview of the methodological approach for the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities of members in a Buddhist temple over time, for which I
adopted place-sensitive and interactional ethnographical practices. I discussed the methods of data collection and data analysis as well as the ethical considerations that I took during the process of the study. Lastly, I provided the contextualization of the research site with specifics about the research population, the informants, and the daily structure of the place. In the next chapter, I reported the findings to the first research question, “How is space produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple?”
CHAPTER FOUR. SPATIAL PRODUCTION

The ways people, place, and space work together to form one another are complex, varied, and dynamic, and are the focus of this section. This chapter presents the overall themes that emerged in response to the first research question: *How is space produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple?*

The first research question focuses on the social production of the space within a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple. Looking at each side of the spatial triad as theorized by Lefebvre, namely spaces of representation, spatial practices, and representations of space, I argue that similar to any other social space, Thanh Tinh temple is “a construction and material manifestation of social relations which reveals cultural assumptions and practices” (Barker, 2012, p. 399). Lefebvre (1974/1991) critiqued conventional social science inquiries for their tendency to favor theory, commonly understood as language and abstract ideas, over experience, or the material attributes and properties of what is social space. In the following pages, I heeded his advice and unfolded the spatial elements mediating abstractions and experience through the three common-mistakenly fragmented aspects of spatial unity: the physical, the social, and the mental.

An important point to emphasize is that the spatial triad in Lefebvre’s theory does not have a beginning entrance and end point; one can enter the triad from any side and there would still be overlapping areas between one and another. The triad should therefore be seen as integrated, each element needs to be considered in the relation to the other two, in order for the theory to be useful for the understanding of the spatial production process. As Lefebvre said it himself:

*Relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable”, nor are they ‘positive’ in a sense in which this term might}
be opposed to ‘negative’, to the indecipherable, the unsaid, the prohibited, or the unconscious. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 46).

In Lefebvre’s argument, the lived, the conceived, and perceived realms of space are supposed to be intertwined and imbricated with one another “so that the subject, the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40). The actual movements, configurations and spatialization of the subjects within the space will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, which looks at not the identity but the nomadic subjectivity of the participants; and not the collective identity, but the multiplicity of the space.

Spaces of Representation

Spaces of representation or the “spatial imaginary” is “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of inhabitants and users” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). This is the lived space, what is felt, and what is experienced by the body as it moves through the material enactments of space. In this section, I will be discussing two main themes: the marginal placement and shifting spatial figurations; and the material appropriation of space at the temple.

Marginal Placement and Shifting Spatial Figurations

This section described both the marginal placement of Thanh Tinh temple within a larger sociopolitical context and the shifting spatial figurations constructed by its members through their bodily movements, discursive practices, and interactions on the temple’s grounds.

Marginal placement. As previously stated, this ethnographic study took place in Thanh Tinh Meditation Center (pseudonym), a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple located in a historically mixed neighborhood of a midsized, central capital city hereby called Evergreen, of the Southern state (pseudonym). According to the 2010 US Census count, Southern State has the
10th largest Vietnamese population of the US States, with upwards of 28,000, of whom approximately 58% were foreign born and 42% born in the US (US census, 2010). Of those foreign born, 79% entered the US prior to 2000. According to another listing of fifty metro areas with largest Vietnamese American populations in the U.S., Evergreen ranked among the 40th to 45th with roughly 5,500 people in total, which was three times smaller than that of its adjacent city Guffside (Pfeifer, n.d). By 2014, there was reportedly 1% of adults in the whole Southern state who were Buddhists, as opposed to 84% Christian and 26% Catholic (Pew Research Center, n.d.). These statistics might give one an impression that there was not much activity among the Vietnamese American Buddhist population in Evergreen, but a closer look at the temple revealed otherwise.

Thân Tinh temple was situated in a small-size urban district of East Evergreen, a metropolitan county of Southern state. As shown by data from the Census viewer, the area was highly racialized, with “White alone” population and “Black alone” population each densely concentrated on one side of an interstate running across the city. The 2010 Census data showed 64% of the population in Thân Tinh’s district were Black, 24.3% White, 5% Asian and the median household income was $37,600 (US Census, 2010). 61.6% of people aged 25 and older in the district had high school as the highest level of education, 8.2% enrolled in an undergraduate institution and roughly 1% in graduate school (US Census, 2010).

A few streetlights off the main boulevard not far from the temple was a condense Asian American population, with three Asian-owned supermarkets and about a dozen Asian-owned restaurants. In a plaza on a parallel street with the street of Thân Tinh temple, there was a Community Center for Vietnamese Refugees, which could be easily told from the flag of the South Vietnam waving next to the American flag in front of the plaza. Although there was
allegedly no affiliation between the temple and this community center, their proximity was a
daily, physical reminder of when Vietnamese Americans first migrated to Southern state:

The settlement of Vietnamese people on Southern State began in the Spring of 1975, immediately after the fall of South Vietnam's capital, Saigon. The Catholic dioceses of Southern State, operating within the U.S. Catholic Conference, were the state's primary volunteer agencies in charge of resettling Vietnamese refugees. [...] Catholic refugee service workers placed Southeast Asians wherever sufficient housing and resources could be found. [...] As more Vietnamese arrived in Southern State over the course of the twentieth century, they established their homes in places where Vietnamese communities already existed. (Bankston, n.d.)

On the one hand, Thanh Tinh lay on the coordinates of a historical, social and political displacement of an uprooted population. The fact that there were barely any statistics at the federal and state level on the ethnic group of Vietnamese Americans, other than under the overarching and annihilating “Asian” group, illustrated the near-invisible positioning of this population in the social fabric of Evergreen as well as the U.S. The idea of living in Southern State, a “poor state with education [achievement] ranking around the top lowest in the country” (country monk, Fieldnotes, 07/19/2019) had been reiterated many times by country monk during his speeches in both languages and assumedly seen as a no-brainer among members. On the other hand, the less desirable geographical location facilitated unique engagements between the temple and the community around it.

Shifting spatial figurations. Far from standing in a wealthy neighborhood or an out-of-the-way secluded suburban like some famous Buddhist temples in the U.S., the short distance between Thanh Tinh and a growing Asian neighborhood provided easy access for the members, who predominantly comprised of Vietnamese Americans. Posters in Vietnamese of the events hosted by the temple could be found on bulletin boards in front of many Asian markets and restaurants, a popular means of spreading news to the targeted readers. At the same time, the temple introduced itself to the public as “a peaceful park right next to a busy corner of the
Evergreen City” (Temple’s Website), suggesting that it aimed to serve and attract local people in the community for their enjoyment and recreation. The Google reviews for the temple, all in English, revealed its attempt to expand on the virtual space: “This place is great for those who just want to go into great meditations. Interfaith groups and everyone is welcome;” “I go to this wonderful oasis to Meditate several times.”; or “A lovely center for peaceful meditation and reflecting” (Field note, 03/15/2019). The number of 36 Google reviews and an existence of a well-maintained website in English was not typical of a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in the U.S., because other temples would either not have a website or publish in one language, Vietnamese, only.

Location and distance are such elastic concepts; the temple drew people to it no matter from where. Traveler and Vidya, who had been to Thanh Tinh for five years and more, drove three hours back and forth for each trip here weekly, and in Traveler’s case, for three or four times a week. Driving a few hours from adjacent areas was not uncommon for many English-speaking practitioners on Friday night, either. Besides, the temple welcomed schools’ fieldtrips, corporate’s team-bonding tours, and visitors from out of state several times a month. “They came from everywhere to observe and learn the practice of mindfulness,” said Hot Pot. One time, a Friday practitioner, a Vietnamese American man in his sixties, shared in a discussion that he had “come home” to the temple after 37 years living away, and he was very emotional to see the place change, although “warm feelings from people remained the same” (Fieldnotes, 03/01/2019).

The spatial, physical and virtual figurations described above prelude the becoming-minority figuration of the temple: “The minority marks a crossing or a trajectory; nothing happens at the center,” […], but “at the periphery there roam the youthful gangs of the new
nomads” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 36). Contrary to a conventionally conceived disadvantage experienced by people at the periphery of a society, life abounded at the margin, and so did possibilities for placemaking imaginaries.

**Material Appropriation of Space**

Within the locality described above, there were patterns of behaviors and events that illustrated the material appropriation of space in the main buildings, namely Meditation Hall and Harmony Hall.

**Space appropriation for Meditation Hall.** Chánh Điền, or the Meditation Hall, was the landmark building of the whole Thanh Tinh temple complex, and it also played an important role in people’s perception of the place. This was where weekly events including sitting meditation, group counselling, ritual services, Buddhist Youth meetings, and occasional events such as weddings, funerals, tea parties, and customized gatherings took place. Six of ten participants mentioned the building as the place they spent most time at or felt most comfortable in, and the other four acknowledged Meditation Hall as where a lot of meaningful events happened to them. Hạ Buồn, for example, shared why she spent most time and felt most comfortable in Meditation Hall: “Because for some reason there’s some special magnetism or energy that helps settle my soul” (Hạ Buồn, Interview 1, lines 163, translated).

The exterior of the Meditation Hall resembled a typical Buddhist temple in Vietnam, but instead of having elaborate designs and costly materials, it had simplified designs with common materials for buildings in the U.S.

From the main entrance through two towering gates, a concrete driveway big enough for two cars driving opposite led to the parking lots. Along the driveway was large areas of green grass with islands of oak trees and flower beds. A brick-paved courtyard about 200 feet long linked between the driveway and Meditation Hall. A few steps into the courtyard, there was a large lotus shaped by light-yellow bricks, blooming out from a brownish background. Right where the lotus ended was a stone censer about 2.5 feet tall,
carved with intricate flowering vine designs, two handles shaped into a pair of scaly dragons clutching each side of the bowl, their tails curling up and entangled in clouds. Three oak trees shaded the yard with their sturdy, thick and leafy branches. From afar, Chánh Điển had similar yet simplified traits of a Vietnamese Buddhist shrine. The main front had a dome upheld by two pillars and two symmetrical red-limerick walls with round windows shaped into the Wheel of Dharma. Floating over this body structure was two layers of red-tiled roofs with sweeping curvature that rose at the corners of the roof. The ridges of the roof were decorated with ceramic ornaments, while at the top center was a ceramic sculpture of the Wheel of Dharma. Seven rows of beige quarry tiled stairs with handrails led up to the porch, to the right corner of which was a seven-feet tall copper bell, and to the left was a large wooden drum similar in size. The entire outer wall of the building, top to a few feet from the ceiling, was tiled with rustic brown limerick bricks. In between three sets of dark brown wooden doors, two pieces of wood slices with calligraphy English writing read: “Be Mindful” and “Breath.” (Field note, 02/03/2019)

The physical architecture of the temple contained many important features of traditional Vietnamese temple architecture, such as massive gateways, a large courtyard, typical red roofs and yellow walls, along with several religious symbols and objects. These images triggered in the minds of people who migrated from Vietnam memories of their original country.

Commenting on how Thanh Tinh reminded him of the past, Lê Khánh Hoàng, a middle-aged Vietnamese American man who grew up in Saigon, mentioned the childhood days when he went to a village temple with his mom and grandma, burned the incense, chanted the sutras, and whispered prayers, which is “very much similar to what I do nowadays with my family” (Lê Khánh Hoàng, Interview 1, translated). This concurred with Mazumdar’s (2009) finding from the Hindu community in California, where sacred placemaking with replica of sacred centers in India gave people a sense of home in America, the new country.

The interior of the Meditation Hall was spacious and had little furniture, no wall or ceiling decorations.

I removed my shoes, put them alongside a few other pairs and slowly pulled the handle on the right-side door to tiptoe into a massive, shiny, smooth open wooden floor. A crisp, chilly sensation ran through the feet. The whole room smells of subtle sandalwood incense. The entire floor had a cherry color, except for a mahogany wavy curve flowing
from the middle door and growing wider towards a platform for the altar area along the rear wall, where a white marble statue of Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha sitting on a lotus was erected on a greyish sandstone pedestal. The entire shrine almost reached the arched ceiling, also made of wood with three rows of built-in recessed lights shining down on the statue, which gave an immense sense of venerability. Beneath the statue was a bronze censer placed on a deep brown hardwood stand. There was a small drop slot on the stand, suggesting that it was also a donation box. A small Zen painting with English calligraphy, “Donations are appreciated”, leaned against the stand at its bottom. 

To the left of the altar platform was a stand for a round wooden fish, about two feet in diameter, hollow with a ridge outside, resting on an embroidered cushion. To the right was a metal standing bell, supported from below with the rim uppermost, like a bowl in shape, also resting on an embroidered cushion, its striker inside the bowl. Next to these instruments was two more hardwood stands, each with a pot of white orchids and a tray of fruit offerings. Along both sides of the creamy yellow walls, there were five round windows with brown wooden frames, inside each was a stained glass five-petal lotus. 

Fixated along these walls all the way to the doors were long wooden benches matching the color of the floor. There were one exist door and one entrance door to the back room on each side of the altar platform. (Fieldnotes, 02/03/2019)

There was evidence of compromises, modifications and re-appropriations in the Meditation Hall, which evaded complete authenticity and reterritorialized this transnational space. Just like any commercial building in the United States, a Buddhist temple like Thanh Tinh, particularly the Meditation Hall, had a set of local building regulations to abide. Exit doors clearly marked with signs, entrances to restrooms, handrails and handicap entrances, evacuation maps and fire extinguishers were some examples of such. In terms of design, the building had a minimalist style in its exterior and interior instead of extravagant decorations, luxurious materials like gold or silver and vibrant color combinations of red, green and yellow commonly found in Vietnamese temples. In terms of function, the large open floor free of clustery objects or bulky sub-altars, with no fixed chairs or desks gave room for both a congregational and a multi-purpose orientation of worshipping and socialization. In terms of role, the building adjusted to the changed status of Buddhism from a dominant religion in Vietnam to a minority religion in a U.S. city through American-friendly representations of the English language within its space.
These few features exemplified a process of adaptation to life in a new country, as discussed by many diasporian scholars (Adams, 2013; Mazumdar, 2009; Nguyen, 2010; Sheringham, 2010).

**Space appropriation for Harmony Hall.** While Meditation Hall was the official building for visitors and formal services, Hội Trường Lực Hòa, or Harmony Hall, “pretty much seemed to be the hub” of the temple (Traveler, personal communication, 12/04/2019). The Vietnamese name carried a Buddhist concept of The Six Harmonies, which was a Dharma, or Buddhist teaching, that elaborated on how to live harmoniously as a community. Legend had it that on the very first days, this building was all there was of the temple; besides a mass of grassland. The altar for Buddha was set up in here and people came here for worshiping as well as other communal activities. As more people came, extensions were added and eventually there was a separate building for Meditation Hall. The vacant space then was re-purposed to include Harmony Hall, a community gathering space; the monks’ residence; a community kitchen; a small library-and-reception room; and two meeting rooms for members of the Buddhist Youth Association. There remained statues of Buddha and Arahants displayed in the library, as physical traces of the past glimpsing at the present.

A lot of comings and goings happened around Harmony Hall, which gave a sense of it being a semi-open and multi-functioned, rather than enclosed space, as a typical hall would suggest. On most normal days, monks, nuns and laypeople would have meals, study, or welcome guests here. On Sundays or Retreat Days, Harmony Hall would be a lunch room, or “cafeteria,” in the eyes of Leo - a middle school student (Leo, Interview 2), hosting roughly a hundred people sitting side by side on benches, across a long, narrow table from each other, over a tray of vegetarian food. Around Lunar New Year time, however, these very tables and benches turned into audience seats facing the backwall, which was now a decorated stage with a platform about
15 feet wide, where performances by children and adults would take place during New Year’s celebrations. A small door inside Harmony Hall connected it to the indoor kitchen, whereas the main double-frame glass doors opened out to another kitchen area with long prep tables, stoves, fridges and a smoothie’s station further out under the terrace. This was where all the vegetarian food sales took place once every few months, with handmade dishes and people crowding over the tables to exchange the foods as well as conversations.

A clock with hourly chiming bell was hung right above this area. The sound of the chimes would be loud enough for anyone, be they getting in lines at the tables for food, cleaning up, or having a conversation, to stop everything and stay in silence until the strikes stopped. This way, the clock functioned as a sonic panopticon (Foucault, 1977/1995), an internalized all-seeing machine that regulated an expected behavior in a space where returning-to-the-moment was a privileged value. Along the right outer wall of Harmony Hall, underneath a wide sunshade, was a long, one-arm deep, continuous kitchen sink with a score of faucets one arm’s length away from each other. This was where people would wash dishes after each Sunday’s community lunch. A line of glass windows at eye level above the sink allowed inside looking out and outside looking in, blurring the borders around this building.

The design and usage of Harmony Hall were intended for a very communal setting. Extensions and adjustments to this building were customized to the need of the people at different periods of time. The kitchen sink with multiple faucets, for example, resulted from a “reform” brought about by country monk just a few years ago. As the Abbot monk, he did not feel comfortable with the practice of laypeople serving food to the monastics and a group of them voluntarily washed all the dishes for the whole community after each Sunday lunch. Therefore, he proposed to build a sink wide enough for all individuals, monastics included, to
take turn and wash their own dishes, a practice which soon become appreciated by many (Lê Khánh Hoàng, personal communication, 05/17/2019). Likewise, the setup of tables and benches enabled conversations between members, and the effortless transition between inside and outside of the building enabled practical movements for communal work, such as preparing and serving foods, a highly important task at the temple.

There was not a professional architectural model for the temple to be built after, instead, the two main buildings, Meditation and Harmony Halls, were (re)constructed according to the needs of the inhabitants in the space. As warned by Feldman and Stall (2004), “places that are organized, codified, and institutionalized according to professional models privilege so-called expert knowledge and opinions over those of lay-persons” (p. 187). Such a case was not inherent at the temple, where no one took total domination to decide what the space looked like. Evidently instead, the material appropriation of the temple’s space is an interactive and reciprocal process, involving both the physical environment and the group of individuals. In the process of appropriating a physical setting, the self and the social are expressed in spatial form, and this in turn has a transformative effect on people.

**Spatial Practices**

This dimension in the Lefebvrian triad, spatial practice, “embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation,” which ultimately “ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). As he continued, “from the analytical standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38). In other words, spatial practices embodied in our performative actions in spaces legitimize and re-affirm the structure of the world through pre-existing socio-spatial arrangements. This dimension highlights the perceptions of the world,
and the more we achieve certain levels of spatial competence in spaces inscribed with certain meanings or significance, the more contiguous and coherent the spatial practices exert themselves in those spaces. In what follows, I discussed the emerging themes, which are 

Material Configurations of Objects and Human Bodies; When the Subaltern Speaks: Lost in Translation; and Dressing Culture, Tasting Home.

**Material Configurations of Objects and Human Bodies**

The sitting arrangements and body movements as exhibited on weekly events such as the Friday Sangha and Sunday Sangha made visible the material configurations of objects and human bodies within the spaces of representation of the temple.

**Friday Sangha.** Depending on which day of the week it was, and which group of participants were occupying the space, there would be different activities taking place and signified distinctively through the sitting arrangements on the open wooden floor. Out of four different sitting arrangements I could observe, I will elaborate on two in the following analysis, given that Friday and Sunday were when the temple welcomed the relatively largest numbers of participants compared to other days in the week.

Friday evening, according to the schedule, was time for the English-speaking sangha. As early as seven o’clock, people would start driving in, park their cars, and gather at the front stone censer, around the oak trees or at the porch of the Meditation Hall to exchange some small talks. Twenty minutes later, they removed their shoes and walked into the hall, which by now was ready for the session.

It was a quiet, cool April evening. I came early, right after 7. I met George, Miranda and some other regular faces standing on the front porch. I stepped inside Meditation Hall. A lady in her forties, with blue eyes and short gray hair touching her shoulders, was helping one Su Co setting things up, quietly, slowly and carefully in their every movement so as, I suppose, to minimize the noise.
I sat down on the right corner-most seat, near the side door through which I just entered. “I’m early today,” I thought to myself. I lowered my body down onto the zafu, a small, round, dark brown pillow about 14 inches in diameter and 8 inches high. Trying to adjust myself into a comfortable position, I could hear a light crumbly sound of the reedmace seeds pressing against each other inside the pillow. I crossed my legs, ankles and knees resting on the zabuton, a square, dark brown cushion about 30 inches long with a thin layer of memory foam. In front of me was a collapsible brown wooden book holder with hollow floral pattern designs, in between its wings a laminated sheet of paper with the mantra for tonight, “Repentance for Life.” One handbreadth to my right was another seat; there were seven seats on this last row; two rows ahead.
To my left-hand side near the middle entrance door, there were another two rows of seats, five on each row, facing the altar. Across the floor was three rows just like on my side. The book holders were arranged in a way that allowed both sides to face each other. The last width of the rectangle was two rows of cushions facing the entrance door, right in front of the platform for the Buddha altar. A microphone was in the middle of the first row, its height adjusted to meet one’s face in sitting position.
Soon enough, people entered through each of the three entrance doors into the shared silence and started filling in the pillows and cushions, a few sat down on the benches near the walls. Most tried to tiptoe or walk lightly on the wooden floor, still a vague creaking sound followed their steps around a completely quiet room. Some people slowly released the heavy wooden door and would not let go until it shut; some pulled it open to come in and let it close behind with a muffled slamming sound. A few men and women joined their hands to bow at the door before walking to a seat; some others nodded in greeting someone they recognized before sitting down. Nuns and monks came in from the back door through Ancestors’ Hall. They gently sat down on the rows in front of the altar, fixed up their robes, and drew a faint, lasting smile before closing their eyes. At exactly 7:20 p.m., Thay opened the back door and walked into the room to the middle of the first row near the altar. Everyone stood up to welcome him, he bowed to them and they bowed in return. Everyone then turned to the altar, when Thay lighted an incense to officially start the session. (Fieldnotes, 03/05/2019)

The sitting arrangement facilitated a dialogical and cordial atmosphere, where practitioners on all four sides of the room could see and talk to each other as well as the monks and nuns from almost any corner without feeling much a sense of linearity or hierarchy. The pillows and cushions put as a set, one after another, suggested both individuality and communality. With his eyes closed, a person would feel as if he was sitting by himself while in fact, he could see himself physically close to someone else once the meditation was over. Lala, a participant, elaborated on this:
I love to sit quietly, and I love to sit quietly with everybody. It just taught me that we can interact with people without even talking to people. And just being a part of something without having to converse. I love that. (Lala, Interview 1, lines 145-151)

Although the non-hierarchal seating revealed the culture of Friday sangha to be casual and welcoming, Thay’s entrance signaled a shift of power control, when people gave in their autonomy of being seated to stand up and follow his cues in conducting rituals. Each Friday session followed the same structure as shown in Table 4.1, with little variation.

Table 4.1. Event Map of a Friday Sangha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sub-event</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:10 – 7:25</td>
<td>Getting ready</td>
<td>- People started coming in, including monastics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:25 – 7:30</td>
<td>Rules briefing</td>
<td>- A person greeted the sangha and read the rules aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:31</td>
<td>Thay entering</td>
<td>- Thay (or another service host) entered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7:32 – 7:40 | Opening ceremony      | - Thay sang a mantra and offered incense
  One monk struck the standing bell three times
  - Practitioners prostrated on the floor at each strike |
| 7:40    | Sitting meditation      | - One monk turned lights off                                             |
| 7:40 – 8:10 | Dharma talk and discussion | - Thay guided the sitting meditation                                      |
| 8:10 – 8:20 | Dharma talk and discussion | - Thay shared a dharma talk on a certain topic                          |
| 8:20 – 8:25 |                           | - Thay asked people who came for the first time to introduce themselves and why they came |
| 8:26 – 8:50 |                           | - Practitioners discussed the topic                                     |
| 8:51 – 8:55 | Quote sharing           | - Monks and nuns shared English quotes
  1-2 practitioner(s) shared Vietnamese quotes |
| 8:55 – 8:59 | Reciting Dharma         | - The whole sangha recited a sutra                                       |
| 9:00    | Dismissal               | - Sangha stretched, stood up, bowed before dismissal                      |

Total duration: 95 minutes

The introduction at the beginning of each service set the norms and expectations for the practices in the space. It was repeatedly stated in the greetings and in Thay’s talks that the temple
welcomed people regardless of their religious background, but people were expected to come on
time and not leave in the middle of the session to show respect to other practitioners. The
introduction also emphasized the meaning of the three bows, which was “not a religious act of
worshiping the Buddha,” but “to thank the Buddha for his teachings; thank the teachings
themselves; and thank the fellow practitioners;” and lastly, the introduction half-invited, “you
may join us if you’d like” (Fieldnotes, 02/15/2019). The practitioners were given a choice in
whether to bow or not. Clearly, the introduction was carefully tailored to the needs of the Friday
sangha and revealed what counted as a practitioner. An average practitioner could have any
religious background, likely come to the temple for the first time, willing to stay throughout the
session and learn about the mindfulness practices.

According to Lefebvre (1991), “the relationship to space of a ‘subject’ who is a member
of a group or society implies his relationship to his own body and vice versa” (p. 40). The spatial
practices conducted by practitioners inside Meditation Hall evidenced the subtly but consistently
prioritized role of silence inside the space. Movements within the space were kept to minimum.
People would join hands above their heads, or simply raise hand, to signal that they wanted to
speak. Thay would keep turns to invite comments from different corners of the group by
extending his hand to those directions. There was no rule established about not talking, but the
performative act of non-talking was taught and reinforced through members’ practices to the
extent that any sudden movement or speech would look like a deviation from the rest of the
entity. However, when speech was exchanged during discussion time, people were highly
involved with their whole body – they leaned forward or sideward, sat straight up to look over at
whoever talking, or turned their head around with a hand bow to the direction of the speaker to
show appreciation for the comments. Through their body configurations, people participated and exerted their membership in the space.

**Sunday Sangha.** Sunday’s service was scheduled to include a chanting and prayer session followed by community lunch, therefore lasted longer than Friday evening. At 11:00 a.m., people would start coming inside Meditation Hall. Inside the hall, *zafus* (pillows) were placed evenly on two sides of the room, leaving a middle space about three feet wide. Since there were no *zabutons* (matts), there seemed to be more space to put *zafus* on each row, and there were about ten rows on each side, enough to sit about one hundred people. The wooden holders with two books on each were put in front of each pillow towards the altar, prompting everyone to face the Buddha statue in their sitting. The sequence of a Sunday session was illustrated in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2. Sequence of a Sunday Session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sub-event</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11:20 – 11:29 | Getting ready   | - People started coming in  
- Front-row laypeople reminded turning off cellphones, led meditation songs on microphone for the mass to follow in song books                                   |
| 11:30       | Monastics entering | - One person invited everyone to formally stand up, look to the Buddha statue  
- Same person spoke on microphone to invite inviting the Venerable Sangha to head the weekly praying session  
- Another person held open the door connecting to the Ancestor Hall  
- Another person the door connecting to the Ancestor Hall |
| 11:31 – 11:33 | Opening ceremony | - The monastics stepped out and settled their stance on the platform  
- At one bell strike, everyone bowed to the ground; at another, they all stood up and looked to the altar |
| 11:33 – 11:40 |                  | - Sitting meditation                                                                                                                                            |
| 11:40 – 11:50 |                  | - Thay sang Buddhist mantras to praise Buddhas  
- Thay sang prayers for the dead and the ill                                                                 |

(table cont'd.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sub-event</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11:50 – 11:55 | Opening ceremony | - Thay recited three vows to take refuge in the Three Jewels, namely Buddha, Dharma and Sangha  
- Laypeople repeated after him in unison  
- A woman led the congregation to sing the Taking Refuge Buddhist song |
| 11:55 – 12:20 | Sutra chanting   | - Thay instructed sangha to open a page in the Buddhist scripture  
- Thay led sangha in chanting a chosen sutra  
- Three bows at the strikes of bell concluded the chanting session |
| 12:20 – 12:45 | Dharma talk      | - Thay shared a Dharma talk                                               |
| 12:45 – 12:50 | Dismissal        | - Thay or people in charge made short announcements  
- Thay invited everyone to stay for lunch  
- Thay led the sangha in chanting the Transfer of Merits mantra at the sound of the wooden fish |
| 12:50 – 1:00  |                 | - People put away mats, pillows, books and book holders                   |
| Total duration: 90 minutes |        |                                                                           |
| 1:00 – 2:00 |                 | - Community lunch (optional)                                              |

Many participants noticed the differences between Sunday and Friday sangha, especially those who spent time regularly in both. Lala noticed the formality: “Sunday I feel a tad more formal, because it is, and forward-focused” (Lala, Interview 2, lines 8-9), while Traveler observed the behaviors and manners within a religious structure:

Sunday is more like Catholic religion in that it’s very structured. They wear different outfits. They come in a certain way. They say this prayer. They kneel. They stand, they bow at certain times. And a Catholic church is structured like that. Certain times in a year they seem to chant certain prayer. (Traveler, Interview 1, lines 275-278)

Both Lala and Traveler described the differences through spatial configurations; however, Lala described herself embedded in the space whereas Traveler looked at the spatial practices at a thin distance from himself, evidenced by the repeated pronoun “they.” This was probably because of their chosen seats inside Meditation Hall. For many months during my fieldwork, Lala was often sitting on a pillow in one of the top rows on the right side, whereas Traveler found himself a spot on the bench nearest to the stage in that same area. Although they
were not far from each other, the perspectives between sitting on the floor and sitting on a bench higher up and further away might have resulted in them having different “sense of place” (Basso, 1996). Despite Thay’s multiple reinforcements during his Dharma talks that anyone regardless of age could sit on the bench, it was the cultural norm on Sunday for elderly people, those older than sixty years old, to sit on the bench. The unspoken seating arrangements afforded for people to move laterally within their level of hierarchy but also hindered moving up or skipping a level.

Figure 4.1. Sitting Arrangements Illustrated by country monk
Interestingly, when asked to draw the sitting arrangement as they perceived it, the informants showed subtle differences that could give a clue to whether they were thinking of the Friday or Sunday setting. This further displayed how material configurations shaped and were shaped by people’s material and discursive practices, as well as the embeddedness of spatial practices in people’s perception (see Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.2. Sitting Arrangements Illustrated by Lala
The formality and structure stressed by the participants were manifested through an extended period of ritual service and corporal traces. The following description is from a fieldnotes I took:

All the monks and nuns formed two rows in front of the Buddha altar on the platform with Thay in the center. They bowed to the statue and sat down to initiate the sitting meditation. Thay instructed everyone to breathe in and out, using Vietnamese then English. Five minutes later, Thay woke the bell, everyone stood up. A monk to his left lighted an incense, offered it to Thay in a hand bow, and stood aside while he sang a mantra to praise the Buddha. After that he said a prayer to the dead, listing their names and death ceremonies, as well as the severely ill, sending positive energy to them. To conclude the opening ritual, Thay would read aloud the vow to take refuge in the Three Jewels, namely Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Laypeople repeated after him in unison. Each of the three names was punctuated with one bell strike that signaled bowing with heads touching the ground and a light touch of the wooden striker to the bell that signaled standing up. When everyone stood up at the last touch on the bell, a laywoman led the whole congregation in singing a Buddhist song through a microphone, which reiterated ideas of taking refuge. (Field note, 05/09/2019)

This opening procedure differed from that on Friday nights, when the monastic members, or monks and nuns, gradually entered the Meditation Hall and settled down on their own until the Head Monk, or another Master in charge of that night’s session, opened the back door by himself and entered last. Nobody had to stand up and hold the door or respectfully invite the monks and nuns in, like how it was on Sunday. There was no unison singing on Friday nights, either. The following description details the second section of the service, the Dharma chanting:

At the end of the song, Thay handed the incense back to the monk next to him, who slowly put it into the censer, left hand holding the right sleeves of his robe. They then sat down, facing the Buddha statue, book holders with the Buddhist bible in front of them. Thay instructed several times in both English and Vietnamese for everyone to open the chanting book to a certain page, calling out the title of the sutra. Sounds of paper ruffling spread in the air. A laywoman started waking the wooden fish in a long, booming rhythm, followed by Thay’s voice through the microphone, beginning the sutra. The monastics and laypeople joined him seconds later, still with a constant beat of the wooden fish and occasional striking of the bell to signal a half body hand bow. At the end of the sutras, everyone stood up and bowed to the ground three times, each at the signal of a bell strike. All the monks and nuns then stood up, turned around on the platform, looking at the crowd for a fleeting moment. Thay invited everyone to sit down, and started the Dharma talk for the day. (Field note, 05/09/2019)
The rituals performed inside Meditation Hall in a Sunday morning involved much body movement, sounds, and verbal instructions. Like the participants noticed, formality was highly stressed during this service. Along with that was hierarchy. The physical distance and uneven heights between the monastic members and laypeople drew a clear line between the two groups, where one was at a higher position than the other, whereas on Friday both monastics and practitioners sat on the lower floor facing each other. Thay stood the whole time he was giving the Dharma talk, while the other monks and nuns as well as laypeople were sitting. There were three levels of heights in this arrangement, with him being in the highest position next to the Buddha altar. Unlike Friday, there was no discussion after the talk, and Thay himself called his talk “a lecture” (country monk, Interview 1 & 2), which assumed it to be one-way, top-down, or monologued. The sangha was focused on chanting, performing rituals in sync with one another, and listening to the talk. There was little individuality featured, instead, the whole sangha was acting as one and abided by movements of the monastics. Power was more centralized on Thay, or the leader of the ceremony, through both actions and speech. The different configurations of space through arrangements of objects and human bodies clearly exemplified Lefebvre’s theory that space is socially produced through people’s acts of performing it. In other words, “people do not simply ‘experience’ the world; they are taught—indeed disciplined—to signify their experiences in distinctive ways” (Myers, 2002, p. 103).

When the Subaltern Speaks: Lost in Translation

There was a translation corner carved out in Meditation Hall for non-Vietnamese speaking practitioners in every Sunday service. To the right of the stage where the monastics would be sitting, performing rituals and giving the Dharma talk, close to the benches against the wall and near the exit door, there was a set of zafu (pillow) and zabuton (mat) for a translator.
Two monks took turns to perform this task for each service, one of them was Hot Pot. Once the chanting stopped and the monastics turned around to face the sangha, Hot Pot or his counterpart would transition to the seat, take out a microphone and start translating the talk, while the person nearest to him on the bench would help passing out headphones from underneath the bench to about five to seven people who needed translation. These people put the headphones on, sometimes sought help from around or exchanged it with each other until they could hear the sound transmitted. Every Sunday, non-Vietnamese speakers naturally moved towards the top three front rows when they came in. When a newcomer came and joined the bottom rows near the doors, laypeople around her would silently point to the translation corner to move her up across lines of seats until she reached the top rows, while someone on the bench would hand out some headphones and gesture for her to put them on. This pattern over time proclaimed the cultural norm and right of access for non-Vietnamese speakers, who were invited, directed and guided to a designated space where they could fully enjoy the experience of being at the temple with the assistance specially measured for their needs.

The fact that the temple attempted to provide full access for non-Vietnamese speakers illuminated the social constructions of what counted as membership. Although most temple goers on Sunday were Vietnamese speakers, accommodations were made for a handful of those who did not speak the language. A Western need was met in an Eastern space through the assistance of the subalterns, who were supposedly historically, politically, economically, socially and geographically subordinates in the hierarchy of power of the empire's metropolitan homeland (Gandhi, 1998; Morris, 2010; Nayar, 2015; Spivak, 1988). The Westerner-guests were included as members into the space of the temple, and the power shifted to the subalterns who guided them where to go and provided them with what knowledge was circulated within that
The translator functioned as the gatekeeper between borders, he decided what message passed through to his listeners. Hot Pot shared his thoughts when asked about the translation task:

**HOTPOT:** Yeah, [...] it's very challenging yet rewarding because like when I first came here my English and... I was not that familiar with Dharma talk or...

**CHAU:** the terms?

**HOTPOT:** the terms, stuff like that, stories, and ... it was so difficult to do translation, especially when you do it directly... Like when you hear with your ears and then you have to translate here [point at head] and then you have to speak with your mouth immediately. So everything is just like... spontaneously. And that really drains your brain energy. Like ... every time after I'm done with one translation for the Dharma talk, I'm like... burnout. Coz it's really... it's easy to get tired, especially when you have to translate a poem, or a lot of terms, or things that you don't think that the American people will get it. [14:29] Because somehow when you translate and you hear, you know, "Oh... oh no I shouldn't tell this story, it's gonna mess up" [laugh] so sometimes I have to make up my own Dharma talk. [laugh]

[...]

[clock bell strikes - he stopped, I stopped too]

**HOTPOT:** But you know, after five years, I kinda ... I'm more familiar now than I used to.

**CHAU:** Do you enjoy doing it?

**HOTPOT:** No, not really [laugh]

**CHAU:** Did you volunteer to do it?

**HOTPOT:** I have to [laugh]

**CHAU:** "I have to volunteer" [laugh]

**HOTPOT:** Yeah I have to volunteer. Coz like... but now it's way easier than it was before.

**CHAU:** Yeah, you get used to it

**HOTPOT:** Yeah, and you know, before I usually stick to the words and that will be pretty difficult to translate. But right now I just get the idea and then I express it in my own words so it's way easier to translate that. And you know, sometimes when I "Oh my goodness I just cannot catch what they are talking about so I'm gonna create my own Dharma talk" [laugh] (Hot Pot, Interview 1, lines 221-257)

Through his practice, Hot Pot created his own Dharma talk as a creative mechanism to tackle the challenge of instantly delivering the content from one language to another. Joyfully admitting that he did not follow the original oral text verbatim, Hot Pot consciously got lost in translation, which means “to accept both the contingency of language and our inability to fully encapsulate otherness within our frame of reference” (Farquhar & Fitzsimons, 2011, p. 653).
Through his spatial practice over time, Hot Pot had the power to convey his own message to the non-Vietnamese speakers. However, Vidya, one of the message recipients, was able to sense when translations got lost:

VIDYA: Yeah, I listen to the interpretations when… sometimes it’s a little vexing, because sometimes the novices think nobody needs to hear everything Thay says [laugh], they don’t translate it out. I say “What does he say?!” [laugh]

CHAU: Aw…

VIDYA: [laugh] … and it’s frustrating for that. But most of the time… one… Brother Ted (pseudonym) is really good at it, trying to get it all out. You know, there’s another Brother here who’s… he kind of… sometimes he holds it down here [pointed to her lower stomach] and you can’t hear anymore, sometimes he cuts out [laugh] the things he thinks we don’t need to hear. [laugh] censor…

VIDYA: … but that’s … that’s what the interesting stuff is, you know [laugh]

(Vidya, Interview 1, lines 222-231).

Seeing what got “cut out” as “the interesting stuff,” Vidya was exercising her power as an agentic recipient of the subjugated knowledge. The dynamic power relations between the translating and the translated bodies beautifully proved Foucault’s theory that power is a rapport of forces, and force never exists in the singular. Furthermore, social practice activates spatial meanings, which “are not fixed, but invoked by actors who bring their own discursive knowledge and strategic intentions to their interpretation” (Gieseking, Mangold, Katz, Low, & Saegert, 2014, p. xxiii). The interactions between Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese speakers added another intricate layer to the notion of membership and illustrated that membership at the temple was locally created, shaped, and maintained by people within the community.

Dressing Culture, Tasting Home

Dressing culture. Thanh Tinh was where members and visitors performed their membership in the space through various forms of personal appearance. This was demonstrated by the ubiquitous presence of the Aodai (traditional Vietnamese dress) as well as monastics’ costumes, laypeople’s robes for meditation, different Buddhist jewelry and car ornaments. At the
same time, casual outfits such as jeans and T-shirts for men or blouses and pants or knee-length skirts for women also appeared as a common style. Semi-formal outfits such as suits or jackets were less common.

The monastic members at the temple dressed in the Theravada tradition of Buddhism with different levels of formality in different ritual services and settings. For Sunday services and other Buddhist ceremonies, monks and nuns were formally dressed in their triple and five-fold saffron robes. A complete set of monk’s triple robes consisted of three parts, namely, the main robe or the outer robe, the under robe or the waistcloth, and the upper, or inner robe. For nuns, there were two more items, a bodice and a bathing cloth. Unlike the Indian robes which exposed one shoulder, the Vietnamese robes covered the entire arms and shoulders with long sleeves tight around the arms and wide around the forearms. For non-ceremonial daily activities such as gardening, walking, cooking and cleaning up, monks and nuns changed into a more casual outfit, with just the blueish grey or brown long-sleeved inner robe and wide-legged pants of the same color. On Friday nights with the guided sitting meditation, the monastics dressed down with no saffron robes, but each member wearing a sleeved “inner” robe and a sleeved outer robe wrapped like a kimono and fastened around the waist, brown for monks and blueish grey for nuns. In general, the monastics’ costumes at Thanh Tinh were simple, versatile, not meant for comfort or fashion but symbolized personal mortality, non-attachment and suggested a life taken apart from the world.

Although they had no obligation to wear a robe, some laypeople and practitioners wore the blueish grey robe on Friday and Sunday before each meditation or service session. Similar to the casual wear for monks and nuns, these are blueish grey cotton robes with wide-legged pants, long sleeves and slightly bigger size than regular clothes to wear over the full body. Unlike
monastics, laypeople and practitioners were not expected to regularly wear robes outside functions other than temple activities or Buddhist disciplines. Vietnamese American laypeople would put their robes on in front of the restroom area or anywhere outside the Meditation Hall, whereas non-Vietnamese American practitioners would put them on neatly before appearing from their vehicles, which arguably showed a level of respect and sensitivity to the culture of the place. Although it was not announced or acknowledged openly, only people who had frequented the temple for quite some time would be seen in these robes. The practice of changing into an austere attire before entering the service signified a commitment to uphold the Buddhist precepts from people who had vowed to “take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,” meaning to adopt an ascetic lifestyle that abided by Buddhist ethics.

Besides the Buddhist clothing items, Ao dai was highly popular among the members, especially on special occasions such as Buddhist ceremonies, Tet (Lunar New Year), or other nonreligious events such as weddings and fundraiser. Ao dai is to Vietnamese culture what kimono is to Japanese culture; it is the national garment traditionally worn by both men and women but is nowadays dominantly more common among women. Its name literally means “long shirt,” Ao dai is a tight-fitting, cross-collared silk tunic with a front flap and a back flap worn over trousers. In any event at Thanh Tinh temple and even on a regular Sunday, one would see women in Ao dai of various colors, patterns, styles and materials attending the service and gathering in groups for pictures or conversations. Sometimes, Non-Vietnamese American practitioners, men and women would be seen in this costume, especially during Tet holiday. Men would wear a less tight-fitting set, usually made of brocade, a richly decorative shuttle-woven fabric, with dragon or floral embroidery. Lala, who self-identified as Italian American, shared her thoughts on wearing this costume:
Sometimes I see you in Aodai, the traditional Vietnamese dress, right?

Oh, one of the ladies, when I went to the banquet, she asked me to wear one of hers, I was uncomfortable. I didn't know if it was disrespectful to wear it. And then somebody said "No it's a sign of respect". So, if somebody offers it to me I'm gonna wear

Yeah it's so comfortable, I could wear that every day, every year.

I mean, you got pants on but yet you feel pretty. No no no, that's the way to go. It was wonderful, wonderful.

Yeah it's so comfortable, I could wear that every day, every year. (Lala, Interview 1, lines 313-330).

Showing a little confusion about whether to wear the dress, Lala later claimed a sense of respect for the culture that she did not find ownership in, through the act of wearing Ao dai. The positive words associated with the dress, such as “respect,” “comfortable,” “pretty,” “wonderful” showed her excitement for the outfit and at the same time, a connection to the space of Thanh Tinh temple. As indicated by Basso (1996), “relationships to places are lived most often in the company of other people, and it is on these communal occasions-when places are sensed together- that native views of the physical world become accessible to strangers” (p. 57).

These findings concurred with what Sheringham (2010) found about the importance of fashion and appearance to place-based identity, where these factors “represent[ed] important elements in maintaining or creating a sense of Brazilian in Gort” (p. 71). But further, the mingle of different ethnicities, the constantly switching appearances between immigrants and non-immigrants, Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese in the same space through the same spatial practices, illustrated the complex relation between body and the space as discussed by Feld and Basso (1996):

At the very least, we can agree that the living-moving body is essential to the process of emplacement: lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them. [...] By the same token, however, places belong to lived bodies and depend on them. [...] The lived body is the material condition of possibility for the place-world while being itself a member of the same world. Just as there are no places without the bodies that sustain and vivify
them, so there are no lived bodies without the places they inhabit and traverse. Bodies and places are connatural terms. They interanimate each other. (Feld & Basso, 1996, p. 24)

As evidence showed, clothes and fashion help Lala, a non-Vietnamese member, to acclimate to the environment around her and explore that world through her body, while it also helped Vietnamese descent members feel at home, be it real or imaginary, in their bodily movements in the space.

**Tasting home.** Food was another important aspect of the everyday lives at Thanh Tinh temple, and the practices of making as well as consuming Vietnamese vegetarian dishes constituted to the feeling of being at home in the space. Food-related activities included Sunday vegetarian buffet, the occasional vegetarian food sales, the mindfulness retreats and annual fundraiser. The vegetarian food sales, for example, were always advertised one week in advance through posters at the bulletin board, email listserv of the Friday night sangha, and by words of mouth. People would drop by the temple three days before the sale to help with the cooking and cleaning process, they would also entrust certain people with certain signature dishes. Similar to the case of the Brazilians in Gort, this act of food making reflected “a conscious invention of home, and imagining of place” (Sheringham, 2010, p. 77) through a sensory practice.

Preparing, eating food and talking over the lunch table became resources for enacting a sense of place for both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese members at the table.

**LALA:** [...] So I like the meal, I like her, I love the sharing of the meal and I think that might come from being Italian. But meals are always very special

**CHAU:** But most of the time, outside of here, we talk during meals. And a lot of information is exchanged during meal time. But when I come here, I feel like, we exchange some other things too but not the talk. And that's also amazing.

**LALA:** I know, I've been trying... When I'm eating at home just try to not talk too much to myself but I try to be real quiet, and try to appreciate, like Thay say, you know, good farmers who bring this food, and all that. And I mean, this place is instrumental, and I become vegetarian. (Lala, Interview 1, lines 161-169).
Relating the sharing of the meal in the Italian culture to that in the Vietnamese culture, Lala acknowledged a collective sense of being between the two. Moreover, she brought home the Buddhist view on food that she learned from the temple and claimed it to be “instrumental” in her becoming vegetarian.

Mealtime on Sundays followed a particular pattern. Ten minutes after the service, one person would strike the mindfulness bell at the center of the courtyard, the chimes of which could be heard from anywhere on the premises. People would gather in the kitchen, make a line on each side of a row of tables and move slowly along the line with the dishes they chose. As they exited the lines, people would either go sit at the table stones underneath the oak trees outside the yard or go into Harmony hall and find a spot among the dining tables and benches to sit, normally in a group next to someone they knew. The meal would start off in silence, then as people were finishing up, they would start exchanging small conversations at a low volume.

Below is a piece of fieldnotes from my observation of a Sunday lunch:

I sat with Vidya and her friend Suzie, Lala, Ella and her sister during lunch today. There was a new dish being offered today, and we wondered for a while what it was made of, or how it was cooked. Then the conversation quickly changed into various topics of cooking. Suzie shared her simple and fail-proof recipe for making coffee bread by “practically putting the dough in a coffee can to bake it and it will smell great.” On the same note, Vidya commented that this weather was perfect for baking sweet potatoes and she would bring some for the Su Cos. “The American people they like yellow yam, but the Vietnamese like the purple ones better, they say it’s sweeter but boy you have to try baking the yellow one.” Then she walked me through every step, namely taking out a baking sheet, pray some oil, put the potato on, set the timer for the oven, watch the nectar coming out and peel the skin to eat. Shortly after, she told me she would go home now to pick the citruses from her neighbor. She taught me how blood oranges came out later than citruses, while tangerines were the most early. Just then, Suzie talked to her across the table, comparing her to her sister in that they both were “such a witch in the kitchen.” We kept talking at the table until most people had left the room to go wash their dishes. I offered to take Vidya’s plate, she asked “Why? Why did you do that?” which made me almost awkward, until she answered it herself: “Because you’re so nice, that’s why!” I giggle shyly and ran off to the sink area. (Fieldnotes, 11/24/2019)
Unlike other meals when we just ate and exchanged some regular greetings, this was a “rich point” (Agar, 1996) where people on the same table were all engaged in sharing recipes and expressed their passion with making food as well as their comfortability with each other’s company. Vidya was teaching me casually how to make food and I offered to wash her plate, which was a commonly observed practice between couples, friends or adults and the elderly at the temple, as an act of care. Through seemingly insignificant spatial practices, people were establishing relationships and strengthened the community in the space of the temple.

Representations of Space

Representations of space mean the abstract conceptions we as humans construct of lived space. The temple understood as a conceptualized space provides a rigorous Vietnamese American cultural capital, which, in Bourdieu’s theory (1986), indicates the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social group. I will now elaborate on Symbols Structure Place, and Institutionalization of Place.

Symbols Structure Place

Flags and anthems. Various material and discursive place-making practices at the temple signified the existence of multiple homes, the intricate link between home and homeland, and the intersection of home, memory, identity and belonging.

Flags were indispensable items at any key event for the temple, such as Lunar New Year, Buddha’s Birthday, Parents’ Day, Vietnam Night, or the annual fundraiser. At any such event, the temple would display the American flag, the flag of the Republic of Vietnam, along with the Buddhist flag along the walls surrounding its premises. There was a flag ceremony at the beginning of every ceremony, where the American flag would be raised first, on the background
music of the Star-Spangled Banner, followed by the flag of the Republic of Vietnam raised and a choir of Vietnamese Americans leading everyone to sing the South Vietnam’s national anthem. Except for non-religious events such as the Vietnam Night, the flag ceremony would end with the Buddhist flag raised and the choir leading the song of Vietnam’s Buddhist Association. The co-existence of these flags was telling of the hybrid identities and beliefs expressed by members at the temple.

The Republic of Vietnam, or South Vietnam flag, was the national flag during that country's existence from 1948 to 1975 and is now of a defunct state after the Vietnam War ended in 1975. It was a yellow flag with three horizontal red stripes in the middle, being named the Heritage and Freedom Flag. Although the official flag of Vietnam as a country is now a different design, the ubiquity of this version of flag among Vietnamese diasporas around the world conveyed that it was an important symbol to a generation of the Vietnam war’s victims and refugees. In an event such as the Vietnam Night, the choir comprising of mostly female singers were wearing yellow Ao dai as their stage uniform and stood next to a ten-feet, standing replica of the Vietnam country also in yellow. These traces of the flag were worn on bodies and material things, indicating the community’s embodiment of identity and geography. People of the community were wearing the place of an imagined country on their bodies. This spatial representation marked the temple as a safe space, a site of social, political and cultural enactments expressed through the identity politics of people performing their lives on the material ground of the temple.

At the same time, the American flag, as well as discourses of the “American society” kept recurring as a symbol of the new shared homeland for the temple members. At each ceremony, American flag would be the first one to be raised, along with the national anthem
being played from a pre-recorded video at one time or performed live in a violin duo by young children at another time. Associated with the flag was the image of the country, which was mentioned with positive remarks by adults and children alike.

In a speech during the Vietnam Night, a teenage girl shared what she was taught about America:

I live in a household where America is seen as the savior of the Vietnamese people. My family arrived in America, they were given a chance to live in a country that treat their citizens with respect. (Fieldnotes, 04/27/2019)

… while another teenage boy reminded himself and his generation of the privilege they had on this land:

To all the second generation Vietnamese, many of our parents have suffered through the tragic Vietnam war, left their own homes, and reached America for a safe haven. We have received an invaluable gift from the moment we were born in this country and we can't take this gift for granted. It's a privilege that we have this life's opportunity, security and wealth. It's not right. Not everyone has what we have. Therefore, every morning you wake up, take a breath from the gift of life that our parents provide us. (Fieldnotes, 04/27/2019)

Within just one event and ten minutes of two different speeches, various terms associated with “America” such as “savior,” “chance,” “safe haven,” “invaluable gift,” “opportunity,” “security,” and “wealth” evidenced a strong attachment to U.S. as a nation from Vietnamese American people, and an awareness of the different political contexts in which they were living. The sense of belonging and security that temple members felt on the new land, in its turn, made them feel at home and increased their sense of citizenship through attempts to contribute and participate as an active member of the society. Adam, a participant, provided an example for such active involvement:

CHAU: So tell me some of the memories that you had from this temple
ADAM: Mainly these big events, like Trung Thu and that because a lot of people come and like want to ... and just watch us [15:50] and like see what we do. One of the recent ones was actually involving me organizing a food drive at this temple.
CHAU: Oh, oh yeah I remember the food drive
ADAM: Yeah. I talk with... like... usually the older leadership of the temple will have meetings, monthly meetings I'm pretty sure. And I attended one of them with like two, three other Huynh Truong. And then like I... before this we had this all planned out and they... they're like "Okay you should ...since you wanna do this you can talk about this at that meeting." So I did, and I basically proposed that we... I'll have four bins, and we have a whole month to fill it up and like we'll see what we got. And so ...

CHAU: Was it a success?
ADAM: Yes it was a success. We got almost six hundred pounds of non-perishable food.
CHAU: That's a lot
ADAM: It's a lot
CHAU: And in one month?
ADAM: In one month.
(Adam, Interview 1, lines 219-235)

This spatial imaginary embraced by Adam as a young-generation member privileged solidarity within, between and across spaces, and prioritized the public good over individual interests.

The Buddhist flag, which has been used since the nineteenth century to universally represent Buddhism around the world, was present at Thanh Tinh temple at every ceremony, as if to materialize, concretize, and solidify the figurations of Buddhism as an imagined country.

The Buddhist flag was first assembled by the Buddhist leadership in Sri Lanka under the British colonials, and its design was credited to Henry Steele Olcott in 1885, a retired American Army Colonel who was the president of the Theological Society in Sri Lanka at that time (Irons, 2008; Flags of the World, 2007). The flag had the same size and portions as a national flag, with five vertical stripes in the order of blue, yellow, red, white, orange, each one-sixth of the distance from the hoist and representing a color of the aura that emanated from the body of the Buddha when he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree: “blue (compassion), yellow (the Middle Way), red (benefits of the practice of the Buddha’s teachings), white (purity), and orange (wisdom)” (Irons, 2008, p. 71). The sixth stripe on the flag consisted of five horizontal stripes of
the same color starting from the top, representing eternal world peace, that “regardless of race, nationality, division or color, all sentient beings possess the potential of Buddhahood” ("Origin and Meaning of Buddhist Flag," n.d.).

While it grew in popularity to become the official symbol for Buddhism globally, the Buddhist flag was remarkably meaningful to Vietnamese people during the 1960s, the same time of the Vietnam War:

when it became a symbol of the struggle of the Buddhist community against the presidency of Ngo Dinh Diem, whose government was attempting to make Roman Catholicism the state religion. The issue came to a head on May 8, 1963, when government forces entered a Buddhist gathering in Hue and tore down the Buddhist flags that had been hoisted against government regulations. In response, on June 11, 1963, a Buddhist monk, THICH QUANG DUC, immolated himself on a street in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). (Irons, 2008)

Given these snapshots of the symbols and practices that were foregrounded at specific historical conjunctures, the prevalence of the Buddhist flag along with the Vietnam’s National Buddhist Anthem being sung in choir and by everyone in every Buddhist ceremony at the temple depicted a spatial imaginary for more than just a Buddhist community, but also a united country that could grow out of political conflicts and separations from the past:

Phật Giáo Việt Nam thống nhất Bắc Nam Trung từ nay
(Vietnamese Buddhism has united North, South and Central from now)
Một lòng chúng ta tiến lên vì đạo thiêng
(As one, we moved on for the sacred religion)
Nào cùng vui trong ánh đạo vàng rạng ngời bốn phương
(Let’s rejoice in the golden aura spreading all four directions)
Vang ca đón chào Phật Giáo Việt Nam
(Singing aloud to welcome Vietnamese Buddhism)
Phật giáo Việt Nam thống nhất Bắc Nam Trung từ nay
(Vietnamese Buddhism has united North, South and Central from now)
Nào cùng nắm tay kết nên một Đài sen
(Let’s hold hands to form a lotus stance)
Cùng làm sao cho đóa sen ngoài đồi đồi ngát hương
(Work diligently for the lotus to forever aromatize)
Muốn phương thành nhiễu Phật Giáo Việt Nam
(Let Vietnamese Buddhism permeate everywhere)
The co-existence of the three flags on one site of Thanh Tinh temple exemplified Barker’s (2012) reasoning when he argued for the need to “disentangle the couplet” of nation-state, because “national cultural identities are not coterminous with state borders” (p. 259). The Vietnamese American Buddhist culture as symbolized through material configurations of the American flag, Republic Vietnamese flag, Buddhist flag as well as the national anthems accompanying them at the temple attested to national, ethnic and cultural identities that spanned the borders of nation-state. As suggested by Hall (1992), we should think of national cultures not as unified but representative of differences, as they are “cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and ‘unified’ only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power” (Hall, 1992, p. 297).

**Visual displays as power of culture and culture of power.** Visual displays at the temple, especially in Meditation and Harmony Halls, illustrated an intricate relationship between culture and power. The decorative items, notice boards, images and posters around Harmony Hall all recalled distinct traits of the Vietnamese culture, from the language to traditions and ways of life.

Along the walls inside Harmony Hall, there were brown wooden boards shaped like pieces of wood slice with Vietnamese calligraphy writings on them, such as “Tăng Ta Hòa Hợp” (Harmony between monastics and laypeople), “Lâm Trọng Chánh Niệm” (Working in Mindfulness), and “Waiting Without Thinking”. To the left of the kitchen door was a 36”x24” dry-erase board, with a neat handwriting of highlighted events or reminders for the community, written in Vietnamese. A first-aid cabinet was hung near the board. On the rear wall where a raised wooden platform indicated the stage area, there was a white backdrop with printed image of a pink pig inside a circle, Vietnamese writing on its edge: “Chúc Mừng Năm Mới – Ki Hợi 2019” (Happy New Year – Earth Pig 2019). Handmade 3D paper models of flowers in yellow and red were arranged into another larger circle, becoming the foreground of the stage.

Through the door into the kitchen to the right, there were two sets of benches and rectangle tables with brown vinyl tablecloths. Two laminated letter-size papers with the Five Contemplations for Mindfulness Eating in Vietnamese were taped on the
tablecloths, the corners slightly worn off over time. A weekly schedule for monks and nuns was written on another dry-erase board at a corner of the wall behind these tables, detailing each person’s name and tasks, such as watering garden, mowing the lawn, cleaning certain areas.
(Fieldnotes, 03/18/2019)

Whereas the decoration inside the Meditation Hall was kept to the minimum with no hanging decors inside the building and a few written texts all in English, Harmony Hall had more items and all the texts were in Vietnamese. These texts were about either Buddhist principles, announcements, or reminders, but purposefully aimed at certain readers. This could be explained by the fact that Vietnamese Americans tended to convene in this space more frequently than Non-Vietnamese and naturally had more ownership of the language. The tasks written on a white dry-erase board was a form of power that controlled and dictated monastic members’ activities. The daily existence of the Lunar New Year backdrop even a while after the celebration was a subtle reminder of the traditions for people living away from the country of its origin. All these visuals implied that the intended usage of this building was for Vietnamese-speaking participants, whose roles were made dominant and privileged through the access to a language not understood by other raced users. This illustrated Lefebvre’s remark: “Man does not live by words alone; all ‘subjects’ are situated in a space in which they must either recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify” (1991, p. 35).

**Symbolic discourses of nature as peace and mindfulness.** Nature and nonhumans occurred through various discursive practices at Thanh Tinh temple. There was predominantly a large area of greens, including perennial plants and bigger trees around the temple’s premises. Nature and nonhumans, such as the trees, the flower beds, the vegetable garden, the birds and the cats were occasionally mentioned in many conversations between lay people, guests, and in Dharma talks.
Landscape was viewed as an attraction for many people frequenting the temple. In the “About Us” page on its website, the temple prided itself over “thirty-two live oak trees and beautiful landscapes, which makes this religious institute become a peaceful park right next to a busy corner of the Evergreen City” (Temple’s website). Adam, the seventeen-year-old participant who had been in the GDPT since he was small, reflected: “I think of trees when someone mentions the temple. The temple physically is surrounded by a lot of nature so that is the first thing I picture when someone mentions the temple” (Adam, Interview 2, lines 24-26). The temple was also referred to with attributes of a park in Google map reviews. One review, for example, complimented on “the most beautiful and peaceful garden,” emphasizing the scenery of the place. The word “oasis,” which etymologically means “a fertile or green area in an arid region (such as a desert)” (Meriam Webster Online Dictionary), was found three times in Google Map and Facebook reviews: “I go to this wonderful oasis to Meditate several times”; or “Wonderful oasis of peace,” or “Great place to find yourself ... your real self ... a much needed oasis of peace in Evergreen”. These remarks hinted at the quiet and secluded aspect of the temple and contrasted it with the presumably arid surrounding metropolitan city.

Nature is a part of life at the Temple. People’s life activities were embedded in nature, and nature shapes the identity of the space as well as the subjectivity of people in it. Hạnh was excited and smiling brightly when sharing her thoughts on what she enjoyed about living as a resident nun in the temple, her Vietnamese tone and inflection sounding like a bird song:

HABUON: Uh... I like the peacefulness inside Meditation Hall. Because for some reason there’s some special magnetism or energy that helps settle my soul. And the second thing I like is there are a lot of oak trees here. It creates such a tranquil atmosphere, as if I was living in the countryside! [raise voice excitedly, smiles brightly] [laugh]

[…] HABUON: Yeah, just like when I was living in my countryside [in her village], which makes me very happy.
[...]

**HABUON:** I feel as if I was living in my countryside, with the clusters of bamboos out there, and the other tall big trees [laugh]

[...]

**HABUON:** For example, we could do gardening. I really love gardening [smile brightly], and love planting trees [laugh]. Because I really love it where... the way when I plant them and watch them grow, which makes me very happy. (Hà Buôn, Interview I, lines 160-189, translated).

As can be seen, Hà Buôn linked the nature at the temple with a nostalgic memory from her past and embraced it in her daily activities.

Nature was included in children’s learning, both informally through their weekly activities on the premises, or formally during the summer retreat. In a small garden put together by the monastics and laypeople, there were a variety of vegetables and herbs that were grown seasonally and harvested to be consumed in daily meals, Sunday buffets, as well as vegetarian food sales. This garden was a popular learning site during the *Youth Retreat*, where groups of children aging six to seventeen would take turn to visit with their counselors, who were mostly members from the Friday sangha with background in education, psychology or counseling. During these trips, youths in each group were encouraged to study the plants, irrigation system, eco-friendly fertilizers and other bio factors in the garden, before discussing how the garden was or was not an exemplary model for sustainable ecosystem. In addition, at every community meal including breakfast, lunch and dinner during this three-day retreat, country monk would lead a communal chanting of the *Five Contemplations Before Eating*:

This food is a gift of the earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work.  
May we eat with mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive this food.  
May we recognize and transform unwholesome mental formations, especially our greed and learn to eat with moderation.  
May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that reduces the suffering of living beings, stops contributing to climate change, and heals and preserves our precious planet.  
We accept this food so that we may nurture our brotherhood and sisterhood, build our Sangha, and nourish our ideal of serving all living beings. (Fieldnotes, 07/26/2020)
… then, he would invite three sounds of the bell before everyone started eating in silence. During the retreat, children were taught to appreciate where the food came from, to be sensitive of other living beings, and to contribute to averting climate change. Nature here was not only some symbol of a way of life but also an enacted practice of life.

Nature was also connected to people at a spiritual level in the temple. In three of his Dharma talks in Vietnamese and two in English, country monk told attendees about a practice he always promoted, which was to light an incense in front of any tree on temple’s premises that needed to be cut down, because it had been serving people for a period of time and its sacrifice helped people create new spaces for their purposes. The practice of respecting nature and the spiritual was considered a norm, although country monk occasionally elaborated on its purpose, for instance, when he made announcements at the end of a Dharma talk: “At three in the afternoon there will be a ritual to pay tributes to the forsaken spirits, let us all join a shared prayer. The construction of the new Meditation Hall had caused several oak trees and countless living beings to sacrifice for us, so doing this is not superstitious, it is a spiritual act” (country monk, Fieldnotes 02/03/2019).

This practice of paying respect to nature (See Figure 4.3.) was taken to heart by people at the temple, evidenced by a new young flowering magnolia liliiflora planted inside a tree stump, which had stopped many passersby on their way in and out of the restroom area at the back of the Meditation Hall. Around Lunar New Year time, which was in February, the tree would start blooming inside a stump and attracted people, who would wonder how the tree had first been planted that way. And it kept changing throughout different seasons, into a circle of natural life. This finding was reminiscent of Tuan’s (1993) remark:

Space becomes symbolic when it intimately conjoins human and social facts with those of nature. Symbolic space is a mental artifact, necessary to the ordering of life, and so in
In this sense it is a practical venture; and yet it is also infused throughout with the aesthetic values of balance, rhythm, and affect. (Tuan, 1993, p. 172)

**Figure 4.3. A Circle of Natural Life**

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**Institutionalization of Place**

As welcoming as it was, Thanh Tinh temple had a set of rules and regulations that were constantly reinforced through everyday discourses and activities among monastics, laypeople and everyone else entering the space. In other words, rules were embodied in specific actions and things at the temple.

The website of the temple publicized “The Vow of Living in Harmony,” which listed seventeen policies for monks, nuns and novices. Seven of these policies were directly concerned with detachment from the materialistic life, for example:
All financial matters are to be taken care of by the Finance/Accounting staff. Monks and nuns shall not have access to or participate in any of the temple’s financial matters. Members shall not keep personal money or accept personal donations, except for Lunar New Year lucky money. Thanh Tinh Temple will take care of all basic financial needs for monastic sangha members.

[...]

To maintain a simple lifestyle, all members of the monastic sangha shall not use cell phones less than 3 years old, nor vehicles less than 4 years old, nor possess luxury vehicles, such as Mercedes, Lexus, Volvo, BMW, etc. (Temple’s website)

Except for Adam, Leo and Ella, 7 of 10 participants elaborated on the rule of abstaining from a materialistic lifestyle throughout their interviews, when asked about what policy stood out to them. Traveler, Lala and Vidya were impressed, Lê Khánh Hoàng was satisfied with the rule, while country monk, Hot Pot and Hả Buôn saw it as a deciding factor for a harmonious life in the monastic sangha and at the temple. Hot Pot, for instance, explained how this rule helped Thanh Tinh stand out from other temples:

We're not... we're not able to receive personal donations. Uh, and that is ... that makes Thanh Tinh temple very different from other temples, because other temples they allow members of the monastery to receive personal donation from lay people or whenever they go and conduct a funeral service or a praying service, they are allowed to receive money. But here we don't do that, all the donations will be sent directly to the community or sent to uhm the finance and accounting team of the temple, so we don't take personal money and for me that is very important because I believe ninety point ninety nine percent of other temples they do it in a different way. And this keeps us uh... stay together in harmony and keep us continue our practice as the monastic so that we don't spend a lot of time and energy thinking about how to make more money, or how to... uhm... develop relationships with rich people. (Hot Pot, Interview 2, lines 98-108).

What he said about this rule was reflected on what he did to maintain it. Before having an interview with me, Hot Pot had been hospitalized for four months because of some complications in his health, and therefore had been away from the temple for a noticeably long time. As a Vietnamese tradition, many laypeople in the community sent him money to wish him a speedy recovery. However, one day in front of the Meditation Hall, he asked the Abbot monk for permission to speak in front of the sangha to thank them for caring, but at the same time “respectfully send all the money received to the shared donation box” and “offer merit transfer
to everyone as well as the Buddhist business of building our new Harmony Hall” (Fieldnotes, 09/22/2019). This action showcased the representation of space as constructed by social relations, or in Massey’s (2005) terms, the “ever-mobile power-geometries of space-time” (p. 166).

Financial matters were common topics in the Dharma talks on Sundays. A country monk discussed incidents at temples across the U.S. or in Vietnam where the monastic sangha exploited laypeople’s trust and abused the donated funds for their personal uses, and reiterated that the temple was a nonprofit organization, which meant nobody owned its property for himself or herself, and everybody had equal rights and responsibility to it. Vidya took this rule seriously, when asked how she had contributed to the temple, she admitted to not having a lot of money to give away, but she did not feel pressured about it, because her other contribution was warmly appreciated by the temple:

I think I'll just bring a good feeling that I'm happy, that's all I can bring. I don't have a lot of money to give them, not a wealthy person by any means, and I'm by myself, I have to support myself and uhm I don't have a lot of discretionary cash so I put a little in when I can, when I can't I can't. That's about all I can do but uh, Thay always likes me to bring my good energy. (Vidya, Interview 1, lines 509-513)

Talking about her good energy as a contribution to the space, Vidya was also seen bringing fruits, baked goods, or eggs, to share with the nuns and other laypeople. Sometimes during lunch, she would pull out her checkbook and wrote a check to put in the donation box. Like her, other people brought toilet paper, cat food, vegetables or anything they had, to share at the temple, without necessarily acknowledging that they had brought those. As can be seen, the rule dictated social relations although at first it had been born out of the power dynamics of social relations (Massey, 2005).

Besides financial transparency, a set of mindfulness rules shaped how people perform themselves and interact with each other within the space of the temple. These rules focused on
mindful behaviors according to Dharma, or Buddha’s teachings, such as mindful walking, mindful eating, mindful sitting meditation and mindful speech. A specific rule seemed to solidify all the mindfulness rules, which was that of pausing all physical movements across the temple’s space at the sound of the *Mindfulness Bell*. The idea behind this was for practitioners to take pleasure in stopping and consciously breathing in and out when they heard the sound of the bell, either struck by a person or coming from a chiming clock. Since there was a bell hung right outside Harmony Hall, at different times on a day, and especially around lunch time, some monk or layman would strike the bell in a certain rhythm. Whoever walking or talking around the area would stop what they were doing, or lightly touched someone to remind them to stop, and everyone would stand still where they were until the bell stopped. Near the kitchen area was a chiming clock, every hour it would chime with various number of strikes to signal what hour that was. People who heard that sound would have the same reaction in stopping and looking at the clock, the sky, or people around them, until activities were resumed at the end of the sound. A guest speaker once called the sangha at Thanh Tinh temple “people of the bell:”

I humbly stand before the most honorable people that I've ever met. I call y'all the people of the bell. If I'm telling someone where I’m going, I would say “I'm seeing the people of the bell.” I've never been around a group of people that can stop and get back to their selves when the bell rings. And I appreciate that. (Fieldnotes, 04/27/2019)

The practice of pausing every activity at the signal of the bell was implemented everywhere and every time on the premise of the temple. This rule regulated people’s behaviors, and somehow it was internalized into their life even outside of the temple. Vidya shared an “odd” feeling about the bell sounds:

I found the practices ... it's very odd. The same bell they have here... I think it's grander and chimes on the clock, they also ring at the church in my little town. And I can be walking around the block with my dogs, and hear the same bell and stop and listen, and pause. I can stand in my backyard and hear the bells. (Vidya, Interview 2, lines 99-102).
The mindfulness rule enacted in the space of the temple was living with Vidya in her daily practice. Space was a carrier of value and meaning, and as remarked by Raffaeta and Duff (2013), “the production of place is first and foremost the creation of a structure of feeling” (p. 341).

**Summary of Chapter Four**

My first ethnographic experiences within the material space of Thanh Tinh temple and the people there had a great influence on the larger dissertation study discussed in subsequent chapters. In this chapter I have attempted to answer the first research question, namely, “*How is space produced in a Vietnamese American Buddhist temple?*”, by presenting spatial production from three aspects. I started with walking readers through the spaces of representation at the temple, then transitioned to detailing the spatial practices that people performed within the space and ended with the representations of the space according to different people’s perceptions. Most significant was the realization that space was socially constructed and constantly produced, or reproduced, through social interaction. What this means is, according to Massey (2005), “[c]onceptualizing space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics” (p. 59).
CHAPTER FIVE. NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITIES

The nomad was a figuration created by Braidotti “as a situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 4). In her theory, “nomadic becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness” (p. 5). This chapter focused exclusively on the second research question: “How is nomadic subjectivity re-created within the space of the temple?”

For the second research question, the nomad is a useful tool to theorize the multifarious ways that people at Thanh Tinh temple try out places for themselves in the contemporary American social and cultural terrain, and ultimately transpose subject positions and differences along the lines of flight towards unknown planes. With this said, the nomadic subject cannot be discussed out of the relation to change and community:

“The nomadic vision of the subject as a time continuum and a collective assemblage implies a double commitment, on the one hand, to processes of change and, on the other, to a strong ethics of the ecosophical sense of community—of “our” being in this together.” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 210)

Within the theoretical framework of nomadic thoughts, I adopted various approaches of ethnography to navigate and interpret data. In the first three sections, I used interactional ethnography, which invites a series of ethnographic questions: “how is identity [in this study, subjectivity] (re)formulated in a group; for, with and by whom; when and where; in what ways; for what purposes; under what condition; and with what outcomes or consequences in particular events or chain of events” (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 173). In the last section, I placed the ethnographic data to work in the context of organizational discourse analysis (Oberhuber & Krzyzanowski, 2008). Organizational discourse refers to “material practices of texts and talk set in currents of political economy and socio-history” (Boje et al., 2004, p. 571). The findings below will be presented in four main sections: Mapping Diasporic Multiplicities in a
Transnational Space; Constructing the Multiplicity through Potential Subjectivities; Transposing Differences through Interconnected Subjectivities and lastly; Belonging, Political Subjectivity and Nomadic Citizenship.

**Mapping Diasporic Subjectivities in a Transnational Space**

As the first grounding step in exploring the nomadic subjectivity constructed, shifted and complexified through relations and interactions at the temple, I justified how it is considered a transnational space before mapping the diasporic subjectivities within this space.

**Roots and Routes Burgeoning a Transnational Space**

Transnational migration is a constant process of migrants reworking their “simultaneous embeddedness” within “fluid social spaces” and across “multilayered and multi-sited arenas” (Levitt, 2009). These arenas are inhabited by not only migrants but also non-migrants, whose lives are transformed through flows of people and social remittances such as ideas, norms, practices and identities even when they do not move. Building on Lefebvre’s (1991) theory of space as a social production and Faist (2000) formulation of transnational social space, Kivisto (2003) described transnational immigrant communities to “characterize situations in which international movers and stayers are connected by dense and strong social and symbolic ties over time and across space to patterns of networks and circuits in two countries” (p. 12). He further offered two factors to analytically distinguish between transnational immigrant communities and ethnic communities that are not transnational: First, individuals in a transnational immigrant community have “a relatively powerful identification” in terms of “shared histories, traditions, values, and so forth” (p. 14); and second, ethnic communities tend to be grounded in more nation-specific social space while transnational immigrant communities still maintain “sustained interpersonal contact” with the homeland (p. 15).
Given the components above, I argue that Thanh Tinh is a transnational social space, where both immigrants and non-migrants crafted their complex subjectivities, grew out new roots and paved out diasporic routes in the midst of a highly dynamic phenomenon that is transnationalism. The community comprised of mostly first-generation immigrants, who shared the refugee past and still maintained physical, mental and emotional connections to the sending country. At the same time, they constructed a new reality informed by space with second-generation immigrant descents as well as local people in the receiving country.

Throughout this chapter, I would like to focus not so much on the Vietnamese American, Vietnamese, American, or American Vietnamese identities as on the interconnected becoming-subjectivities in the diasporic hybridity of nonunitary, dynamic relations and negotiations, a “thought experiment” (Barad, 2007, p.100) enabled by nomadic thoughts and conditioned by Buddhist concepts. Simply put, I focus on the sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions rather than the psychological dimension of individuals’ identities. Thinking with nomadism does not mean trying to follow a prescribed framework or structure through faithful representations; instead, the expected outcome of this thought process is “the production of pragmatic and localized tools of analysis” for the power relations at work in society (Braidotti, 2011, p. 6).

Mapping Diasporic Subjectivities

Not one participant in my study, when asked to identify his or her race and ethnicity or discuss their national identity without any given boxes of pre-set categories, could provide an easy and ready answer without asking for clarification about the purpose of the question. This (non)problem stemmed from a complexity of identity politics that Lowe (1991) beautifully described:

From the perspective of the majority culture, Asian Americans may very well be constructed as different from, and other than, Euro-Americans. But from the perspectives
of Asian Americans, we are perhaps even more different, more diverse, among ourselves: being men and women at different distances and generations from our “original” Asian cultures – cultures as different as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Indian, and Vietnamese – Asian Americans are born in the United States and born in Asia; of exclusively Asian parents and of mixed race; urban and rural; refugee and nonrefugee; communist-identified and anticommunist; fluent in English and non-English speaking; educated and working class. [...] The boundaries and definitions of Asian American culture are continually shifting and being contested from pressures both “inside” and “outside” the Asian origin community. (Lowe, 1991, p. 1034-1035)

A look at the community of Thanh Tinh temple could identify any one such example on the list, and more. In a broad sense, temple-goers or their ancestors arrived in the United States at different historical times, mingled with different groups, lived in different geographical areas, and identified themselves with different political ideologies. The only common factor between these people, particularly among the participants, was the movements of their physical and mental bodies in space and time, crossing various borders, creating new positions and cutting new lines of differences. For this reason, instead of representing the participants’ identity, which, as Braidotti argued, “is a bounded, ego-indexed habit of fixing and capitalizing on one’s selfhood,” I would instead trace their subjectivity, which “is a socially mediated process of relations and negotiations with multiple others and with multilayered social structures” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 4). As the lives of the participants unfolded, the bodily roots of their subjectivities grew horizontally with more lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals into a “rhizome,” also known as “multiplicity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2016, p. 9), rather than into an arboreal figure with one original, locatable starting point. In what follows, I will look at the participants in their nomadic roles, between the common nametags they were perceived with, and the added functions they actively adopted at the temple.

**War-time migrants and flame keepers.** Lê Khánh Hoàng and country monk narrated their migration from Vietnam to the U.S. with both spatial and temporal movements; the turning points of their personal lives coincided with those of the country’s history. Country monk was
born in 1968, “at the peak of the Vietnam War” (country monk, Interview 1, line 19) in Huế, a border line city between the North and the South. Once the Imperial City and hosting the entire Royal Family during the 18th and 19th centuries, this 28-square-mile city witnessed such historic incidents as Huế Phất Đận shootings (1963), when nine unarmed Buddhist civilians were shot dead during the Buddha’s Birthday commemoration under the regime of Roman Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem (Bowden, 2017); and The Siege of Huế (1968), one of the longest and bloodiest battles (Smith, 1999) between the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Marine Corps, versus the People's Army of Vietnam and the Viet Cong, as part of the North Vietnam Tet Offensive, a major military campaign which eventually led to the end of the war in 1975. Meanwhile, Lê Khánh Hoàng was born in 1965 in Saigon, the Southern capital of the Republic of Vietnam during the war, also where the last battle took place, the war ended, and the transition period into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam began.

The two men lived through war time on the same side of the battle but under contrasting conditions, between intense hardships and peaceful childhood at opposite ends of the spectrum. Since his dad had been “a secret police” and “worked for the South of Vietnam,” country monk and his whole family were “faced with social pressure and political pressure” after 1975, on top of his father being “captured by the new government with Vietnamese Communist party in the Re-Education Camp for six years” (country monk, Interview 1, lines 18-25). Lê Khánh Hoàng, as he explained, “had lived equally long under both regimes,” and had not “done anything bad,” therefore, he lived “comfortably” because “they couldn’t force us into the Camp or treat us badly” (Lê Khánh Hoàng, Interview 1, lines 432-435, translated). Drawing a connection between serving in the previous regime and doing something bad reflected Hoang’s worldview as socially constructed through public narratives in networks of family and relations within his community.
In making decisions about their lives, country monk and Lê Khánh Hoàng circulated in a network of limitations and adaptations by moving from one point to another as a pragmatic means to accommodate themselves in striated social spaces. Lê Khánh Hoàng attended school without any hindrances but later decided to “cross the border in 1987,” explaining how “open-minded” that decision was: “I don’t hold grudges against anyone, that’s how open-minded I was. I thought to myself, because of the [new] regime that life was hard, but nothing ventured, nothing gained so I had to do so [cross the border] for my own’s sake. That’s all” (Lê Khánh Hoàng, Interview 1, lines 435-437, translated). Similarly, country monk showed a hint of pride in being one of a handful students in his village finishing high school despite having a politically problematic family background:

[...] In fact, with my background, the government did not allow me to continue my education high school. But somehow I believed in education because I think education is the key of foundation my life, so I focused on anything education. Therefore, they allowed me to finish high school. [...] I left my village a little bit early compared to my brothers and sisters. [...] I graduated from high school 1987, I do believe that is the turning point of Vietnam under the new leadership of Nguyen Van Linh. Later on, they call it Doi Moi [Renovation], probably the new government recognized something needs to be changed to lead the country to the right direction [chuckles]. At the same time, I have the opportunity to improve my education almost two years in Technical Institution. Unfortunately, I did not have a full scholarship. [...] So 1989, early 1989, I left Hue and moved to the South of Vietnam and looking for a job for surviving. (country monk, Interview 1, lines 28-40)

Coincidently, when two randomly chosen participants mentioned the same year of 1987 as a turning point in their lives – one risked his life to cross the ocean on a boat and the other marched over obstacles for his education. From that point on, Lê Khánh Hoàng passed by Malaysia, stayed in Philippines for 4.5 months to learn English, and finally stepped on U.S. land to reside in Virginia in the same year. During that period, country monk had moved to multiple other locations in Vietnam before his whole family was sponsored U.S. residency by the Humanitarian Operation (HO) program and arrived in Texas. Not long after, he left his family
and moved to Atlanta, then Southern State, each time to pursue another degree in higher education. Their paths were marked by false starts, reroutes, denied access, hiatuses, dead ends, interruptions, and recalculations. However, each decision was social and exploratory rather than individual and definite; and showed a sense of agency in the subjects. On this note, Pignatelli (1993) remarked: “agency is an agonistic, daring enterprise marked by uncertainty, resolved and trail” (p. 421).

The intersection of specific spaces with specific histories, as evidenced in these immigrant narratives, had constructed a complex cultural capital, of which country monk and Lê Khánh Hoàng worked as the flame keepers for the younger generations at temple. *The Night for Vietnam* was one remembrance event orchestrated by country monk and members in his generation to not only resolve the “distressed, hopeless” feelings or “resentful issues” from the war and “transform these griefs slowly and mindfully” but also for “the youngest group” to “remember where they come from” (country monk, Interview 2, lines 210-221). Commenting on the Buddhist Youth Association, Lê Khánh Hoàng emphasized its crucial role in teaching children of compassion, a “core Vietnamese value” that was hard to reinforce in “the American society where material needs were prioritized and easily satisfied” (Lê Khánh Hoàng, Interview 1, lines 211-216, translated). “In one important sense, school curriculum [which I would like to extent the case to any curriculum] is what older generations choose to tell younger generations” (Pinar, 2008, p. 185) – by expressing their expectations for what the young generation should learn, country monk and Lê Khánh Hoàng reinforced important cultural standards for the fund of knowledge at Thanh Tình temple.

**Religious workers and community bonders.** Hà Buồn and Hot Pot belonged to a 10 years younger generation than what Lê Khánh Hoàng and country monk had been living in. Hà
Buôn was born in 1987 and Hot Pot 1989, the very years Lê Khánh Hoàng and country monk set a steppingstone in their lives. Both Hot Pot and Hà Buôn were born into Vietnam’s Renovation period, which was an economic reform after the North – South reunification in 1975 to transition from a command to a socialist-oriented market economy. Contrary to the other two participants, however, Hot Pot and Hà Buôn did not elaborate on the sociopolitical context of where they grew up when prompted by the same question. Instead, coincidentally even, they reminisced about the cultural and religious memories before talking about the preceding events that led to them staying at Thanh Tinh temple.

Hà Buôn grew up in a village, where life “was very beautiful and peaceful” because “although we didn’t have much, each household shared everything with the other in harmony” and “people were honest and lived by their conscience” (Hà Buôn, Interview 1, lines 19-23, translated). She always wanted to join monastery but did not get approval from her mom until she turned thirteen. She then was admitted into a village temple, resided there, went to school for academic knowledge and went back to study Buddhist teachings. She continued to pursue higher education in Buddhist Studies in Vietnam before being invited to work for a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in a U.S. state for six years, and then moved to Thanh Tinh temple due to “some dependent co-arising” (Hà Buôn, Interview 1, line 9, translated). She then became a resident nun and had lived at the temple for almost two years. While serving with the temple’s work, she also attended a community college to improve English and deepen her knowledge in the field of psychology.

Hot Pot came to the U.S. as an international student attending a college in the Southern State. After graduating, he moved to Evergreen intentionally to find a job and stopped by Thanh Tinh for a visit. Afterwards, he met with Thay, the Abbot Monk, who was also country monk in
this study, and was invited to stay on the residence. After that, country monk kept extending the invitation and Hot Pot never had to move out. He finally took refuge in the Three Jewels and became ordained and had been working as a Lay Minister for five years at the temple. For him, this was a life-changing experience, in a way that it complicated his cultural identity even more:

I'm someone who was born and raised in Vietnam in my young adult time. So I understand the Vietnamese culture, the Eastern culture. And I was born and raised as a Catholic. So when I came here, I changed to ... ... Well it's not really about change, it's about growth and development. So when I came here I learned about American culture in the last ten years. So I'm kinda knowing both cultures, Eastern and Western. Not only from the temple but also from work, networking, social interaction, school, friends, uhm... and now I'm a Buddhist. So I'm thinking of myself, I'm just like a hot pot or something [laugh]. (Hot Pot, Interview 1, lines 55-62).

In acknowledging that becoming Buddhist was not a “change,” but “growth and development,” and that his familiarity with Eastern, Western and Buddhist cultures turned him into “a hot pot or something,” Hot Pot had made an agential cut (Barad, 2007) that provided a contingent resolution of the ontological inseparability within co-existing descriptions of his multiplicity. He was all at once, a becoming-East-West, becoming-Buddhist, and becoming-hotpot.

As evidence showed, Hả Buòn and Hot Pot’s movements across time and space led to them becoming resident nun and monk at Thanh Tinh temple and gained them a status of “religious workers” in the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) term for ministers and non-ministers in religious vocations. However, besides religious expertise, these participants also served as community bonders, who promoted values and relationships between the temple and its members. Hot Pot would rotate with two other monks in hosting Friday English-speaking sessions when country monk was out of town. Either being given or choosing a topic himself, Hot Pot did thorough research to prepare for his dharma talk as a sign of respect for the audience:
[...] coz I think that they spend time to come and you know, if we don't prepare and we say "We'll just wing it" and you know, not saying anything or not sharing anything valuable, then it's just a waste of time and that will reduce the quality of the sangha as a whole, especially for newcomers. And I don't want that happen whenever I take turn. (Hot Pot, Interview 2, lines 51-55).

Stressing the need to respect the audience’s time and ensuring “the quality of the sangha,” Hot Pot revealed his role as an active quality controller for public representations of the temple, especially to English-speaking visitors. He also contributed to Thanh Tinh’s growing popularity in the virtual space by managing content on the website and social media, remarking that the size of their Facebook page’s followers had doubled in size and the engagement increased since he took over. Besides, he also evinced a strong passion in conducting events for younger generations, such as the Youth Retreat:

But talking about a year in general, the one I like the most is the Youth Retreat. Because it focus[es] on the next generation. It focus[es] on helping kids here. And that's what I'm really... passionate about. Because I see even in my own family, there are gaps of generations that we need to somehow build the bridge for them. Like my... my little cousins, they are not able to understand their parents or grandparents. I think all the kids here facing the same problem. They grow up in a different culture, they speak English. And they were raised at a different school system, a totally different society comparing to their parents and grandparents so sometimes there are gaps, big gaps in a family and they have a lot of troubles that they cannot trust or cannot share with the parents or grandparents, and right now there's a lot of Vietnamese American kids here having issues and Thay deals with them a lot. So I think the Youth Retreat is a good venue for them to come and learn how to take care of themselves. Uh... I myself is very interested in helping them develop self-leadership. (Hot Pot, Interview 2, lines 217-228)

Pointing out the generation gap as a central issue within the community, Hot Pot actively saw the need to “build the bridge for them,” a familiar image in literature on diasporic communities across time and space:

Bridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives. Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds [...]. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. (Anzaldúa, 2013, p.1)
While Hot Pot’s movements accentuated his role as a conductor between the Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese speaking populations, the older and younger generations, Hạ Buồn constantly tried to promote the good practices between the culture she grew up in and the one she newly adjusted to, with a foundation of Buddhist knowledge. Throughout the interview, she uttered the word “respect” 16 times, showcasing it to be an important value in Vietnamese culture, especially towards teachers and the elderly. She also emphasized democracy as an American value that positively influenced her lifestyle in the U.S. Seeing herself as benefiting from all cultures but not fixated on one, Hạ Buồn refused to claim one identity and suggested instead to avoid getting stuck within pregiven identities and look at just the good practices that could be adopted from any culture:

Claiming the Vietnamese or American essence to be my culture is not totally true. When we live, we have a tendency for integrations. We should seek to learn the good practices from not just American or Vietnamese people but anyone in… when we communicate with them, we learn what’s good in them without differentiating [where they’re from]. Since you asked about my identity, I must answer this way, in essence, nothing is totality. Picking one [identity] would make it wrong. Because… we always integrate lots of different cultures. (Hạ Buồn, Interview 1, lines 418-413, translated).

Strongly showing a mental movement between fixed boundaries of identity, Hạ Buôn was aware of her subjectivity as an anatta, a non-self that comprises not of a permanent, unchangeable soul but is an assemblage of constantly changing components. With this, Hạ Buôn saw her existence as entangled with others; she appreciated learning from and working with others and believed that the whole community living in harmony should be a goal the temple should strive to achieve as well as an achievement they should strive to maintain.

Made in the U.S.A. – Cultural inheritors and sense-makers. Adam, Leo and Ella were all born on U.S. land as U.S. citizens and claimed their homeland to be the U.S. The connections they had with their parents’ homelands varied from a one-time visit to being taught by adults about the values and cultural practices that belonged to that country. When asked about their
racial and ethnic identity, all three participants showed certain level of duality between two or more integrated cultures. Ella identified as “an Asian American specifically Chinese” (Ella, Interview 1, line 2); Leo claimed to be a Vietnamese person, “it’s just that I was born in the U.S.” while Adam gave an extended reflection on being a Vietnamese American:

I feel both grateful and disturbed as an American citizen. I am grateful because I am surrounded by many opportunities to explore and develop myself as a person. As I make use of my opportunities, I must remember the people around the world and especially in Vietnam that does [do] not have the same opportunity as I do. If I were to describe my national identity, I would consider myself a Vietnamese American. However, being American is a concept that I find weird. People can say that America is the land of the free and what not, but it also hold[s] hundreds of cultures across the world so "being American" sometimes has no meaning. There is no American stereotype that can be put on a nation with hundreds of other cultures. Being Asian or being Vietnamese American personally means that I am still connected to my Vietnamese/Asian culture. Even though my parents were from Vietnam [and I did not], I still live in a Vietnamese environment to some extent. (Adam, Interview 2, lines 51-61)

Besides replicating a common discourse that was widely circulated at the temple about being “grateful” for the “opportunity” to live in the U.S., which was a privilege not offered to many other non-U.S. counterparts, Adam further articulated feeling “disturb” and “weird” at an empty label, as “being American sometimes has no meaning.” This conundrum was shared by Ella, who realized “being Asian American is difficult, because often I am told that I’m Americanized and sometimes told I’m too Asian” (Ella, Interview 1, lines 5-6). These findings concurred with other studies (Anzaldua, 1987; Tokunaga, 2018; Verkuyten et al., 2019) in showing that self-contested sense of belonging demonstrated an issue of multiple identities:

Like all identities, they are not only a matter of who people are to themselves, but also who they are to others. […] Immigrants’ multiple identities involve how immigrants themselves think and feel about their ethnic and national group memberships, as well as religious, local, racial, and supranational groups to which they belong; how members of these groups view immigrants and act toward them; and the balance or tension between these views. (Verkuyten, 2019, p. 391)

Other than moving between geographical spaces, three young participants navigated and negotiated through the premade racial and ethnic categories while also constructing their own
subjectivities in the temple’s space. Ella alternated between the different cultural hats that she was put on and made peace with it:

When my mom tells me that I’m too Americanized I do agree sometimes. Whenever I go out a lot and waste my money on useless things she says I’m too American. I sometimes agree to whenever my friends say I’m too Asian because I obey my parents and I eat rice everyday and listen to Chinese music. (Ella, Interview 2, lines 13-16)

Seeing “wasting money” as an American behavior and “obeying parents,” “eating rice” or “listening to Chinese music” as an Asian one, Ella internalized the social construction of race, ethnicity and possibly immigrant status on her own life. She found the temple relatable to her experience in many of its events, which were celebrated in both Vietnamese and Chinese cultures. Talking about what she enjoyed most, Ella stressed: “I have to say New Years is my favorite because it resembles my culture and makes me want to go back to my country. The loud popping firecrackers and cute dancing lions always puts a smile on my face” (Ella, Interview 2, lines 30-33). Expressing pleasant feelings as well as claiming ownership of China as her country, somewhere to go back to even though she had been born and raised all her life in the U.S., Ella exemplified what Brah (2005) called “processes of multi-locationality across geographical cultural and psychic boundaries” (p. 191), a mechanism observed in diasporic communities.

Expressing the same interest for Lunar New Year, which “is New Year but in the Lunar calendar,” Leo pointed out how it helped him “see the culture of Vietnamese” and taught him about a different temporal system, which was “not the same calendar as normal calendar we have” (Interview 1, lines 188-189). Unlike Ella who claimed China to be her country, Leo associated himself in the same “we” with the U.S. culture by acknowledge its calendar to be “normal”. Moreover, he favored “a Christmas thing” (Interview 2, line 8) hosted by the temple every December when adults and children brought in gifts to exchange or “steal” from each other as a game, something that brought him excitement and joys. Leo shared most extensively about
the experience of attending the annual Youth Retreat, when he made lots of new friends, discussed topics about school, family or community with the volunteer counselors, and especially joined a variety of activities such as talent show, water balloon fight, and field games, all of those “unique” and “can’t be found anywhere else” (Interview 1, line 203). These favorite events evidenced Leo’s attachment to the U.S. culture, while exhibiting a fluid, nomadic sense of belonging in moving through the space of the temple.

The teenagers’ interactions and movements through the temple’s space reflected their role as inheritors of a complex culture as well as sense-makers of the place-making practices at Thanh Tinh temple. Adam, Ella and Leo sometimes stated, in an essentializing, rigid, and binary way, what felt American to them and what was not. At other times they had a fluid, hybrid, and nomadic understanding of cultural identity. Both binary and subtle thinking were strategies, acts of agency and creative proclamation, to manage their multi-locationality and to construct their subjectivities as sense-makers through movements within and beyond the space of the temple.

**Birthright citizens and transnational villagers.** Vidya, Traveler and Lala were not of Asian descent and their immigrant history went back a few generations. Vidya had been constantly on the move in her younger years. Carrying the French heritage, she lived in Indiana during her childhood, then moved to Texas, New England, and to the Indian Reservation in Arizona to teach for the Indian Boarding school for the Navajo Hopis, before finally living in Southern State. Sharing the same mobile youth, Lala grew up in “Little Italy” (Interview 1, line 18) in Pennsylvania and went to a private college there before transferring to another university in Colorado and found a job in Southern State, which turned out to keep her for much longer than expected. Meanwhile, Traveler had lived in Southern State “pretty much all my [his] life” (Interview 1, line 17), enjoying a “very typical South American way,” which he described as
“deep south in a lower middle class,” with a “very strict Catholic” stay-at-home Italian mom and eight children (lines 31-34). Both Lala and Traveler shared similar stories about being born and raised as a Catholic, going to church every Sunday, having the first Communion, Confirmation, or other religious observations in the church. Vidya reflected on her years-long journey from being raised a Presbyterian, constantly “seeking for a perfect church that would… really I would feel I fit in” (Vidya, Interview 1, line 124), to when she became “a follower, and a devotee, of an Indian teacher, […] her teachings are perfectly in accordance with Buddhism,” (lines 145-146), Mata Amritanandamayi, whose religion is love:

[...] And she really really really cares for the Earth and people in general. And she comes from Hinduism but she transcends all religion. In the same way that Thich Nhat Hanh came from Zen Pure-land Buddhism but transcended it to become kind of a universal teacher, she's one of the very rare rare souls they call in Indian parlands, a god-realized soul. And I was fortunate enough to meet her. I think that's been the biggest influence of my life for last twenty eight years. (Vidya, Interview 2, lines 11-16)

The participants recalled their first visit to the temple at different points in time, all with lots of emotions and ruminations. Vidya chronicled her journey since the teenage years trying various religions and “seeking for a perfect church that I would feel fit in” (Interview 1, line 124) until she happened to learn about Buddhism: “I’m more like a free thinker, and Buddhism is very practical, very real. It says, ‘Look at what is,’ […] look at yourself at this moment” (lines 142-143). Saying how she had been “lonesome for a group” before someone told her about Thanh Tinh where there was translation for English speakers, she remarked: “It’s always been my karma to be around people of other races” (line 149), recounting her time on the Indian Reservation or in the Foreign Director position at a college while showing comfort in a situation where people spoke a language she could not understand. After five years being a member of the temple, she got a Dharma name given by Thay, the Head of Sangha, because she could strongly relate to Buddhism, and also because “I was damn tired of explaining, ‘Well, I have an Indian
teacher and I follow her, I’m not a Hindu, but I practice meditation and mindfulness.’ It’s easier to say, ‘I’m a Buddhist’ [laugh]” (Interview 2, lines 376-378). Her stories elucidated how movement across “ethno-cultural-cartographic borders” can result in “transitions of psychological states of being” (Pandurang & Munos, 2014, p. 2).

Traveler recounted first coming to a guided meditation session at the temple not long before the summer *Youth Retreat* that he volunteered in, and then another mindfulness retreat for adults organized by the temple’s monastic sangha. By the end of that retreat, he remembered feeling “the emotions wielding up in me,” explaining:

Maybe it was that I had been introduced to something I had felt before. […] And I drove by, I parked my car and pulled over and cried. I wouldn’t say I was sad, but I know I cried because I couldn’t stay here anymore. (Interview 1, lines 174-178).

Traveler claimed not knowing “any other place like this [the temple]”, because his preexisting beliefs “fit right in to the teachings of this temple” (line 185) and the culture of the temple was very different from what he grew up in. He was impressed with the way people at the temple practiced the Buddhist teachings through mindful speech and mindful behaviors, and above all, with the non-judgmental attitude toward people of other religions, races, and backgrounds – all of which did not require a language competence to understand:

I think you can understand a lot without knowing what they’re saying. Body language, facial expressions. […] Like brother Andy [pseudonym], almost every Sunday he comes to find me and gives me some vegetables from his garden. It’s not hard to understand that, the pure act of kindness… (Interview 1, lines 284-288).

Traveler was observing and adopting the social remittances (Levitt, 2001) brought about by Vietnamese American members at the temple to the culture he had been granted access and membership ever since he was born, and his thought process reflected a conscious attempt to make “values from two worlds fit” (Levitt, 2001, p. 97).
Similar to both Vidya and Traveler, Lala recorded that “something moved in me… It really just clicked” (Interview 1, line 57) when she first came to the temple on a Friday night session. Over time, she came to love the interactions and the vibes from the place on any given day of the week, not only the Friday sessions, to the point where she had to “contemplate” whether to leave town for the weekend because “I’m gonna miss service” (lines 210-212). She enjoyed learning about the Buddhist teaching, which “speaks” to her, particularly, she emphasized feeling “secure” and “safe,” explaining how important the sense of security and safety was for her:

I know I’m not supposed to do a comparison, okay, because comparison is not good. But okay this is a good example. Sometimes I would just go try out [different faith-based places], and I sit in a row, I just find a pew and sit. And sometimes somebody would come and say, ‘this is our pew.’ I didn’t really feel safe and secure there, whereas when I come here, it doesn’t matter where I sit, I just feel like people are happy I’m here, we don’t even have to speak the same language. I understand without understanding, just by… everybody’s inflection’s the same, you know. […] So I’m understood, in a sense, and I’m just safe here. I’m always looking for safety, always. (Interview 2, lines 52-63).

Within a short excerpt, variances of the word “safe” were uttered 4 times, which denoted not only a sense of “being free from harm or risk” but also “unlikely to produce controversy or contradiction” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.), and above all, a sense of belonging where her existence made people feel “happy” and she could understand as well as be understood.

All these three participants not only visited Thanh Tinh regularly but also actively contributed to the activities as members at the temple, from weekly services on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday to special events such as vegetarian food sales, Youth Retreat, The Night for Vietnam, and Buddhist celebrations. They were birthright citizens of the U.S., who now identified as transnational villagers (Levitt, 2001) of a diaspora, a space which “goes beyond geo-territorial terms of referencing” and by doing so, they were “creating an
imaginary – a landscape of dream and fantasy that answers to their desires” (Pandurang & Munos, 2014, p. 2).

Throughout this section, I demonstrated how the intersection of specific spaces with specific historical, racial, gender and political conjectures produced a complex cultural capital not commonly discussed in school curricula or textbooks. By doing so, following Popkewitz’s (2009) proposal, I challenged the notion of social research as “finding useful knowledge” for the politics of “the designing people” (p. 303) that are commonsensically accepted in U.S. progressive and contemporary urban reforms.
Constructing the Multiplicity through Potential Subjectivities

In this section I reported the findings of the socially constructed nature of subjectivities at the temple. I first conducted a comparative analysis of two participants’ remarks on how they saw themselves belonging to the community as a part of the whole. Second, I examined how such sense of community was conditioned through the norms and expectations, as well as roles and relationships exerted through the material and discursive practice at the temple, particularly through the Friday night session.

Comparative Analysis of Collectively Constructed Subjectivity

One finding of analyses of all the interview transcripts revealed a consistent claim about the socially constructed and situated nature of identities and sense of belonging by 7 of 10 participants. The following excerpts showcase this claim. Placing these two extracts side by side in a contrastive analysis (Castanheira et al., 2007), I recognized common as well as unique descriptions of experiences related to the process of (re)formulating identities, and becoming a member, or building a sense of belonging to the community they are living in (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Contrastive Analysis of Collectively Constructed Subjectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Lala</th>
<th>Hot Pot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First time visiting</td>
<td>I worked near here. And I would pass by the Temple a lot, and one day I was talking about it, and I got a book on Buddhism, and I googled it and well, I just go one Friday night. [...] When they read the Five Precepts, I don't... Something moved in me. It really just clicked.</td>
<td>I ['d] like [to] just imagine Thanh Tinh temple as a tree. Then the root, the trunk, I think [...] are the first founders of the temple. And then going up a little bit will be the younger generation, the second generation of Vietnamese Americans. They were brought here when they were young, and they have jobs, they're about middle aged right now, uhm... And then on the top, the leaves and the small branches are the third generation or those who come in the late years...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a part of something</td>
<td>I love to sit quietly, and I love to sit quietly with everybody. It just taught me that we can interact with people without even talking...</td>
<td>The tree as the image of the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table cont'd.)
In her interview, Lala reflected on her journey to find “something that clicks” for her spiritual life and her encounter with the temple, which turned out into a community she enjoyed “being a part of.” While expressing her comfort being with a group of people even without conversation, she acknowledged the conditions within the community, or the “action of the actors” (Castanheira, 2007) that enabled her shift in subjectivity across time, from a passerby to a member. In juxtaposing Lala’s opinion with Hot Pot’s, I identified a similar mode of embedding self in the relationships with others within a new space. Hot Pot, who grew up in Vietnam and could supposedly relate more comfortably to the other members at the temple, described a struggle to adjust and figure out the purpose of becoming a member, while a local resident who did not grow up in the Vietnamese tradition seemingly found what she was looking for soon after she entered the space. Hot Pot expressed the need to gain local knowledge (Geertz, 1983/2000), i.e., “what is the purpose of joining monastic life;” and he explored the conditions for gaining new knowledge, i.e. “it’s not always peaceful, it’s not always mindful;” as well as constructed a
“reconfiguration” (Geertz, 1983/2000) of thoughts about a monastic life, i.e. “not about finding an ideal environment … but to accept the challenge and work on it.”

A pattern of viewing subjectivities as constructed from relationships within a particular space, which is the temple, was evident from the two excerpts. Moreover, Hot Pot’s conceptualization of the community as a tree, with different subgroups playing different roles in the tree’s growth, revealed his understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence between members of the temple as a multiplicity. Both Lala and Hot Pot talked about practicing and joining in the actions of actors at the temple as crucial to their sense of belonging and the formulation of their subjectivities a part of a multiplicity that was bigger than the sum of individual fixed, pregiven identities. This was a local knowledge produced by both participants through participating in the everyday practices of life at the temple.

**Friday Sangha’s Culture-in-the-Making**

The comparative analysis presented above suggested the need to examine how the local knowledge formulations were “proposed, recognized, acknowledged, interactionally accomplished by and intertextually and socially significant to” (Castanheira, 2007, p. 175) members at Thanh Tinh temple. In the coming section of analysis, I analyzed fieldnotes from one sangha meeting on the first Friday of a month, which was April 5th, 2019 as a macro unit of analysis as proposed by Castanheira, to illuminate the process where “people come together and affiliate over time in a local group” to construct “local situated roles and relationships, norms and expectations, and rights and obligations, which shape and are shaped by what members need to know, understand, produce and predict” (p. 175).

Since the temple did not have an annual schedule for operation and new members were welcome any time, each Friday session was unique in and of itself because of the interactions
that old and new members enacted with each other in the space. However, the selection of this session was informed by my ethnographic knowledge of the site. From the analysis of my fieldnotes and interview transcripts, I distinguished the *First Friday of April* session as one where a group of people came together in a physical space, some of them for the first time, to join an ongoing process of structuring a reality that they would co-inhabit for one hour and thirty minutes. Moreover, the first Friday of a month was when the whole sangha would recite *Beginning Anew*, a classic Buddhist mantra for mindfulness practitioners regardless of their level of mastery. The focused data for this analysis was 1.48 hours of audio recording, beginning at 7:25 (five minutes prior to the official beginning of the session). The recording and fieldnotes helped me examine formulations of subjectivities from both the early setup and the moment-by-moment interactions throughout the entire session, the principles of practice communicated by Thay, the *spiritual teacher*, and how members of the group responded to such principles while constructing their own subjectivities and contributing to the multiplicity of the group. To listen to *First Friday of April* session, scan the bar code in Figure 5.1 or visit https://bit.ly/38mjzd1.

*Table 5.2* presents the “event map” (Castanheira et al., 2001) of the *First Friday of April* Session, as well as my analysis of interactional spaces, events jointly constructed, and the opportunities for learning local knowledge of the cultural practices in the Friday session, through a moment-by-moment analysis of what members were being told to do, the chain of actions taken by Thay, the participants, and other monastic members.
Figure 5.1. First Friday of April Session
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Key actor’s actions and language choices</th>
<th>Member actions and potential subjectivities</th>
<th>Norms (N) &amp; expectations (E)</th>
<th>Role (R) &amp; relationships (Rp)</th>
<th>Local knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7:25-7:30 | Greeting | One volunteer (V) reads the welcome script.  
- Welcome to the meditation center  
- Meaning of the mindfulness bell  
- Rule on time and participation (entire practice)  
- Rule on cellphone use  
- Rule on walking: slowly, mindfully  
- Location of doors and restrooms  
- Email register for news  
- Outline of a Friday night practice: three parts: guided meditation, talk on a subject, Q&A  
- Rule on comments: “Please keep your comments to under two minutes.”  
- Meaning of incense: “The incense represents virtue, morality, concentration, and wisdom. Burning the incense reminds ourselves of the impermanence of life.”  
- Meaning of bowing ritual: Then we show respect to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This takes the form of three bows, expressing thanks. | - Entering Meditation Hall  
- Adjusting their seats  
- Sitting in silence  
- Listening to the speaker | (E) This is primarily a meditation center  
(E) Focus is on mindfulness practice  
(E) Rules are to be followed  
(E) Don’t talk too long  
(N) Follow in performing bowing rituals | (R) Fellow practitioner  
(Rp) Informing newcomers of general instruction and rules  
(Rp) Explaining meanings of practice | Mindfulness can be learned and practiced through silence and stillness  
Burning incense reminds of impermanence  
Bowing means to show thanks |

(table cont'd.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Role (R) &amp; relationships (Rp)</th>
<th>Local knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:25-7:30</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Please note that we are not worshipping Buddha. We are thanking him on the first bow. On the second bow, we are showing gratitude to the teachings. And on the third bow, we are thanking our friends in this room for supporting us. You may join us if you like. - Info on how to schedule a private session with Thay for help with personal issues.</td>
<td>(E) You may not join if you don’t like AND joining is optional.</td>
<td>(Rp) Clarifying actions as NOT worshipping</td>
<td>Thay is also a psychologist and can provide consultation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Beginning of session</td>
<td>- Thay (“spiritual teacher”) enters&lt;br&gt;- Thay greets everyone and turns toward the statute&lt;br&gt;- Thay strikes the bell into a long rhythm&lt;br&gt;- Thay sings a sutra in Vietnamese to thank Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, bell at each interval&lt;br&gt;- Thay sits down, one monk turning off the lights</td>
<td>- Standing up and turning toward Buddha statue&lt;br&gt;- Bowing to greet Thay&lt;br&gt;- Bowing to the ground at each bell strike (some bowing upper half body)&lt;br&gt;- Sitting down on pillows (some on benches)</td>
<td>(N) Sutra sung in Vietnamese starts the session</td>
<td>(R) Thay is spiritual teacher, lead instructor, experienced practitioner, shifter of activity&lt;br&gt;(Rp) Officially starting the session</td>
<td>The bell and singing of sutras indicate the start of the session&lt;br&gt;Bowing shows respects&lt;br&gt;Bowing to the ground is optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:40 – 8:10</td>
<td>Sitting meditation</td>
<td>- Thay gives general instruction for meditation. Dear brothers and sisters, please sit back, totally relaxed. Keep your head and your back naturally straight, upright.</td>
<td>- Sitting still, following instruction</td>
<td>(N) People sit straight and in silence with closed eyes during sitting meditation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table cont'd.)
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Key actor’s actions and language choices</th>
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<th>Role (R) &amp; relationships (Rp)</th>
<th>Local knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7:40 – 8:10| Sitting meditation  | *Close your eyes but open your heart, open your mind* to accept and enjoy the present moment. This is open group, so we welcome, respect and accept all brothers and sisters. However, please do not come late because it will disrupt others and prevent them from following the instructions or benefitting from the whole session of group sitting meditation.
- Thay sings a sutra in Vietnamese about the mindfulness bell, followed by English version. *Listen, listen to the sound of the bell. The sound of the bell reminds us let go all afflictions, let go all dissatisfactions at this moment. Maintain your body and your mind in the state of mindfulness so that you can smile in every moment. Eventually, we're able to reconnect with our Buddha nature, with our true self, which is full of love, compassion, wisdom.*
- Audible breathing (some)
- Adjusting on mats and pillows
- Sharing one piece of mat/ pillow with latecomers
- Refrained coughing/ sneezing                                                                                       | - Sitting still, following instruction                                                                                                                                  | (E) Be open-minded while meditating (E) Everyone is welcome in this open group (E) Do not come late and disrupt others | (R) All practitioners are Thay’s “brothers and sisters” in the spiritual sense (Rp) Thay directs actions | Silence is a crucial rule in sitting meditation. “We” as a collective all have “Buddha nature” that we can “reconnect” |

(table cont'd.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Key actor’s actions and language choices</th>
<th>Member actions and potential subjectivities</th>
<th>Norms (N) &amp; expectations (E)</th>
<th>Role (R) &amp; relationships (Rp)</th>
<th>Local knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:40 – 8:10</td>
<td>Sitting meditation</td>
<td>- Thay guides the group on sitting and breathing: “Consider your breath as your anchor, remind yourself the most important thing in my life at any time in any place is my breath. Please take care of your breath.”&lt;br&gt; - Thay guides the group on mindfulness:&lt;br&gt; Be aware of thoughts, bodily actions, and feelings, emotions. Acknowledge, accept and let go.&lt;br&gt;- Thay tells the group to practice noble silence for the remaining time.</td>
<td>- Audible breathing (some)&lt;br&gt;- Adjusting on mats and pillows&lt;br&gt;- Refrained coughing/sneezing</td>
<td>(N) Thay can talk for 20 minutes uninterrupted&lt;br&gt;(Rp) Thay has the right to talk during silent meditation&lt;br&gt;(Rp) Thay is the timekeeper to decide limits on activity</td>
<td>Silence is valued as noble.&lt;br&gt;Breath is the anchor to connect self to the present.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:10 – 8:30</td>
<td>Dharma talk</td>
<td>- Thay talks about cultivating good karma</td>
<td>- Listening to the talk, moving their heads to see Thay occasionally&lt;br&gt;- Laughing in response to jokes&lt;br&gt;- Raising hands when polled for opinion</td>
<td>(N) Thay can talk for 20 minutes uninterrupted&lt;br&gt;(R) Thay is the lecturer</td>
<td>Buddhist concept can be applied to daily life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 8:50</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>- Thay invites newcomers to introduce themselves: “We have a tradition here every Friday night, if you come here for the first time please introduce yourself, where you are from and why you came here tonight.”&lt;br&gt;- Introducing themselves if they were new&lt;br&gt;- Old members join hands into a bow towards new members in the directions they were from</td>
<td>(N) Newcomers are introduced before discussion&lt;br&gt;(R) Thay is the discussion leader to approve who talks next, for how long</td>
<td>Members can explain, correct or question each other to further the group’s understanding of the topic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Event</td>
<td>Key actor’s actions and language choices</td>
<td>Member actions and potential subjectivities</td>
<td>Norms (N) &amp; expectations (E)</td>
<td>Role (R) &amp; relationships (Rp)</td>
<td>Local knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>- Thay asks practitioners to share their opinions about the topic</td>
<td>- Members give comments one by one, saying “In my experience,” “I think,” “I believe,” “I have a little struggle understanding…” and follow up with one another.</td>
<td>(E) Newcomers need to introduce their name, and say why they came</td>
<td>(Rp) Practitioners share their understanding and non-understanding of the topic with each other</td>
<td>Personal knowledge of members was utilized in constructing group’s knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30–</td>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>- Thay lightly strikes the bell when someone talks for over 2 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:51</td>
<td>Quote sharing</td>
<td>- Thay asks monastic members to share quotes in English, one by one</td>
<td>- Monastic members read their quote</td>
<td>(N) Language learners can practice speaking on Friday night sessions</td>
<td>(R) Thay is the teacher checking on the competence of some students</td>
<td>Friday night session is also helpful to language learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:51–</td>
<td>8:55</td>
<td>- Thay asks one regular member (Traveler) to “do your homework,” sharing a quote in Vietnamese</td>
<td>- Traveler tried to read a quote in Vietnamese</td>
<td>(N) Language competency can be made public</td>
<td>(R) Thay can give grades to assess Vietnamese learners</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Thay gives Traveler an A plus</td>
<td>- Other members laughed, tried to adjust their seats to see Traveler</td>
<td>(E) Thay trusts members to be confident sharing their language skills</td>
<td>(Rp) Members support others in learning new languages</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Thay explains why he got an A: “Hold on, A plus is not about his Vietnamese, but because of his honest[y]. He said, ‘My karma is very bad’ [laugh]. A very good quote, I have to say. So please whenever you hang around with brother Traveler, be mindful okay? ”</td>
<td>- Other members applauded when he got an A and laughed when Thay explained why</td>
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<th>Local knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:55 – 8:59</td>
<td>Reciting Dharma</td>
<td>- Thay invites 5 volunteers to recite the <em>Beginning Anew</em>                                                   - Thay extends a hand towards each volunteer when he counts from one to five ]</td>
<td>- Five volunteers raised hands to read the paragraphs aloud - Other members held the laminated handout and followed to read in silence</td>
<td>(E) The Buddhist script has knowledge to be verbalized  ]</td>
<td>(E) Some members can read the script aloud</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td>- Thay invites everyone to massage their legs before standing up - Thay bows to the group - Thay turns around and bowed to the statue - Thay turns back and says good night to the group</td>
<td>- Members followed the instruction - Members bowed to the opposite site of the seats - Members turned towards the statute and bowed - Members said good night to Thay - Members picked up pillows and got in line to the storage room - Members chatted with each other while in line.</td>
<td>(N) At this point it is okay to not sit in “the right position”</td>
<td>(E) Members bow to each other and the statute</td>
<td>(Rp) Members know each and exchange small talks beyond the meditation session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2 maps the events and discursive practices during the First Friday of April Session, including the actions constituting each event, the norms and expectations, the roles and relationships enacted through members’ subjectivities, as well as the local knowledge being formulated within the group. Analysis of actions and language within and across the events showed a “general pattern of structuring” (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 179). This pattern comprised of a series of interactions in the space, including formal greeting as a whole group; introducing the procedures and purpose of each event; modelling the expected outcomes; engaging group members in the actions; and lastly, returning to formal greeting as a whole group. Along with this pattern of interactions was a pattern of sounds, including verbal speech; the mindfulness bell; Thay’s singing of the sutras; silence; group discussion in the form of one comment after the other; individual verbal speech; and silence in the end.

The two intertwined patterns of interactions and sounds were observed across all other Friday sessions, which illuminated the community-oriented formation of subjectivities, where members new or old could join and contribute to the group’s events with their personal experience. Furthermore, while leading the events and shifting between them, Thay also indicated the historical identity of the group, which had always, already been constructed by participants through many “traditions,” such as newcomers introducing themselves, monks and nuns reading English quotes, and practitioners reading English quotes. Altogether, the norms and expectations, roles and relationships and the local knowledge being formulated engendered the Friday night session as a peculiar learning community where members’ subjectivities grew into a rhizome, which “is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2016, p. 21).
Additionally, the more I engaged in mapping the events of the participants’ thinking, language, affect, movements, changes and community, the more I was drawn to the Buddhist concept of *dharma*, one of the three *Jewels* besides the Buddha and the Sangha, in Buddhist thoughts. Dharma commonly refers to the Buddha’s teachings, but it also means phenomena. In other words, the core of all Buddha’s teachings centers on the contingent nature of all phenomena, which is known as the doctrine of mutual causality or dependent co-arising. Macy (1991) succinctly explained this doctrine as followed:

The contingent nature of the self – and the consequent spaciousness and workability of experience – is […] grounded in the radical interdependence of all phenomena, set forth in the Buddha’s central doctrine of causality, *paticca samuppada*, or dependent co-arising. In this doctrine, which the Buddha equated with the Dharma, or saving teaching itself, everything arises through mutual conditioning in reciprocal interaction. Indeed the very word *Dharma* conveys not a substance or essence, but orderly process itself – the way things work. (Macy, 1991, p. xi)

The mutual conditioning and reciprocal interaction between actors and phenomena as shown in the discussion above illustrated the self as a process and learning as a process of self-reorganization.

**Transposing Differences through Interconnected Subjectivities**

In this section, I illustrated through a telling case, the various subjectivities being constructed and opportunities for membership being afforded for individuals at the temple, which evidenced a transposition of differences through community-oriented discursive practice. Telling case, as theorized by Mitchell (1984), is a case where “the particular circumstances surrounding the case serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent” (p. 239). Instead of looking at a typical case for analytical exposition, I searched across data for a telling case, which is not defined by size but by “a series of decisions and actions that lay a foundation for developing theoretical inferences from detailed ethnographic analyses”
(Green & Bridges, 2018, p. 478). In what follows, I first constructed the data set for the telling case, and then identified *The Night for Vietnam* as the telling case to be analyzed intertextually for empirically grounded connections that evidenced a transposition of differences through community-oriented discursive practice.

**Context for the Telling Case**

*Table 5.3* synthesizes the locally constructed data set for the telling case. Following the “principles of conduct for bounding studies within an ongoing ethnography” (Green & Bridges, 2018, p. 478), I organized the data from audio recordings and fieldnotes to build a historical grounding with layers of social organization “intertextually tied to particular moments of discourse” that verified the selection of the telling case. From the “special events” organized at the temple listed in Chapter 3, I selected the non-religious events where speech was delivered, either by Thay or other actors, and looked at the languages of instruction being utilized in each event, the amount of each language as well as the content being communicated. I indicated each time a language was shifted using the initial letters (V for Vietnamese and E for English), along with the duration the language was used.

**Table 5.3.** Locally Constructed Data for the Telling Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Language used</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/05/2019</td>
<td>Lunar New Year (Tet) Eve</td>
<td>12:30 a.m. – 12:45 a.m.</td>
<td>V (00:00 - 05:20)</td>
<td>New Year greetings from one Vietnamese American youth, one White practitioner, and Thay were delivered on Lunar New Year Eve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>E (06:20 – 08:14)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>V (08:26 – 10:58)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E (11:00 – 14:00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V (14:04 – 14:33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/13/2019</td>
<td>Mental Health Professional Training Workshop</td>
<td>7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>E (entire duration)</td>
<td>Workshop with speakers’ presentations on Mental Health was held at the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/27/2019</td>
<td>The Night for Vietnam</td>
<td>8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.</td>
<td>E (00:00 – 00:30)</td>
<td>People gathered to share personal narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V (00:31 – 01:36)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Language used</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>07/27/2019</td>
<td>Youth Retreat</td>
<td>9:30 a.m. –</td>
<td>E (entire duration)</td>
<td>and thoughts or comments for Vietnam in remembrance of the Vietnam War which ended in 1975.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A startup businessman was invited to be the guest speaker and gave a talk to Youth Retreat campers about Responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/21/2019</td>
<td>Tea Meditation</td>
<td>7:30 p.m. –</td>
<td>E (00:00 – 00:30), V (00:31 – 03:50), E (03:51 – 04:40), V (04:41 – 05:10),</td>
<td>Members gathered on a Saturday evening to join temple’s tea meditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>E (05:11 – 05:32), V (06:30 – 08:00), E (08:05 – 09:15), V (09:16 – 10:00),</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/2019</td>
<td>Fundraiser</td>
<td>9:00 p.m. –</td>
<td>E (00:10 – 05:10), V (05:11 – 10:17)</td>
<td>Thay gave a speech during the temple’s annual fundraiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>09:10 p.m.</td>
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**The Night for Vietnam**

While laying out the analytic process in Table 3, I identified a pattern, or “bounded units of analysis” (Green & Bridges, p. 480) where two languages, namely Vietnamese and English,
were used interchangeably over time in community events at the temple. *The Night for Vietnam* was chosen as a telling case not because it was representative, but because it serves to illustrate language shifting as a purposeful construction of local knowledge and collective subjectivities among members, or learners of the local knowledge. A running record of a segment from my time-stamped audio-based fieldnotes below reveals a chain of activity within the first fifteen minutes into the event. The timestamp provided a written record of “when-in-time a particular chain of activity occurred” (Castanheira et al., 2001, p. 362). The running data record represented three types of information: general description of activity as observed by me as the researcher; data and methodological notes marked by [ ]; and the direct quote from the actor in italics. To listen to *The Night for Vietnam* beginning, scan the bar code in Figure 3 or visit https://bit.ly/347qiXT.

![QR Code](https://bit.ly/347qiXT)  
*Figure 5.2. The Night for Vietnam* Beginning
Table 5.4. Running Record of Chain of Activity in *The Night for Vietnam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00 – 00:30</td>
<td>Female MC stands in front of the projector screen, looks at the sound system where two men were standing, and starts speaking into the mic: <strong>Nammo Shakyamuni Buddha. The Night for Vietnam remembrance at Thanh Tinh Temple is beginning shortly. Please take a seat in front of the statue of the Bodhisavatta of compassion, a symbol of strength, patience, loving kindness and toleration. In this peaceful and serene moment, please turn off your cellphone and sit quietly to honor this significant event.</strong></td>
<td>Establishing a signal for commencement of group activity. Getting attention from and transmitting local knowledge to English-speaking audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:31 – 01:36</td>
<td>Male MC stands next to female MC, reads from the script into the mic: <strong>Nammo Bồ Thích Ca Mâu Ni Phật. Đêm Việt Nam lần thứ 3 tại chùa TB sẽ thực hiện trong giấy lát. Xin kính mời quý phật tử và đồng hương cùng vui lòng tiến vào hàng ghé nơi tôn tượng mẹ hiền quan âm, biểu tượng của sức mạnh, lòng từ bi bao dung và nhân nhục. Đế buổi lẽ được trạng nghiệm xin tắt đt cảm tay và giữ yên lạng. Xin cử lễ Hồ Chuông cầu nguyện.</strong></td>
<td>Getting attention and transmitting local knowledge to Vietnamese-speaking audience. Signaling Vietnamese-speaking staff to strike the bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[BELL BELL BELL]</td>
<td>The bell signals collective orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02:05 – 04:38</td>
<td>Thay holds the mic on one hand and the script on another, reading in a slow, light voice: <strong>May all people listen deeply to the sound of the bell to invoke the powerful energy of Compassion and Wisdom inherent inside each of us. Let’s listen to the Awakening Bell to eliminate a painful past and be released from the pressure of a life full of conflicts and urgency. In the Night for Vietnam, we vow to practice deep listening so that we could empathize with other people’s agony, the same agony endured by millions of Vietnamese people who lost their lives to the Vietnam War. We pray for everyone to overcome the agonies of an injustice, greedy and selfish lifestyle. The afflictions and agonies from the past could only be transformed through compassion and empathy for the loss and agonies of the whole nation before and after the Vietnam War.</strong></td>
<td>Teaching about the meaning of the Bell to English-speaking audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04:40 – 07:30</td>
<td>Thay lightly closes his eyes, and speaks without the script, one hand lowering down: <strong>Thay</strong> sings a sutra of the bell, repeating the poem he was reading right before.</td>
<td>Teaching about the meaning of the Bell to Vietnamese-speaking audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[BELL BELL BELL]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:00 – 08:40</td>
<td>Female MC breaks the silence from the bell resonation: <strong>Nammo Shakyamuni Buddha. Tonight, we will pray for Vietnam and honor our heroes, who sacrificed their lives for our liberty, freedom and justice. We will listen to the voices from all generations, so that we can understand each other more. This is the opportunity to combine the strength within Vietnamese immigrant community, regardless of our backgrounds and conditions. Even though we have many different perspectives, but we have the same dream for Vietnam as an independent nation, whether Vietnamese can have freedom, democracy and equality.</strong></td>
<td>Stating the purpose of the ceremony in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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</table>
| 08:41 – 09:56 | Male MC translates what female MC was saying, and invites everyone to stand up for the flag ceremony:  
*Đêm Việt Nam nhậm mục đích tương niệm tất cả những người đã hi sinh cho đất nước Việt Nam trong nhiều thế hệ. Lắng nghe tiếng nói từ nhiều thế hệ để hiểu nhau hơn. Dù có nhiều khác biệt về quan niệm sống nhưng tất cả đều chúng một mục nguyện cho người dân được hưởng tự do dân chủ và công bằng.*  
Nammo Bồ Sư Thích Ca Mâu Ni Phật. Chúng con xin kính mời chư tôn đức tăng ni cùng quý phật tử và đồng hương cũng nhẹ nhàng đứng lên để làm lễ chào quốc kì hoa ki và việt nam cộng hòa. | Stating the purpose of the ceremony in Vietnamese  
Directing people as a group |
| 10:00 – 13:30 | [People standing up]  
A pre-recorded U.S. National Anthem video was played, with images shown on the screen.  
Right after the first song stops, a choir with males in black pants and white shirts and females in light yellow Aodai start singing the Republic Vietnam’s National Anthem. | Performing the national anthems with elaborated presentation of the Republic Vietnam’s song |
| 13:31 – 13:56 | Female MC smiles lightly after the music ends and reads from the script:  
*To commemorate the heroes who have sacrificed for Vietnam, to commemorate the South Vietnamese soldiers who died in prison, to commemorate people who died at the border, under the sea, and in the forced labor camps, to commemorate the political prisoners and those who have been fighting for the human rights, a moment of silence.* | Recalling different groups of war victims in English |
| 13:57 – 14:40 | (Female speaker?) reads in Vietnamese:  
*Để tưởng nhớ những anh hùng đã nẫm xương hi sinh cho đất nước, để tưởng nhớ những chiến sĩ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đã chết trong lao tù, để tưởng nhớ những đồng bào đã chết trên con đường vượt biên, vượt biên và những người đã và đang tranh đấu cho nhân quyền ở Việt Nam, xin lắng lồng tưởng niệm.*  
[Solemn Music for silent moment] | Recalling different groups of victims in Vietnamese  
Voicing the silent moment |
| 13:57 – 14:40 | Male MC invites the Venerable Sangha (monks and nuns) and the general public to sit down, in Vietnamese. There was no English translation of this.  
Nammo Bồ Sư Thích Ca Mâu Ni Phật, con xin kính mòi chú tôn đục tăng ni vớ quý phật tử cùng an toạ. | Directing people as a group |
The pattern of activity and speech recorded in the analysis accentuated the role of non-verbal forms of communication, namely the sound of the bell and songs, both pre-recorded and live performances. The bell had played a significant role in daily activity at the temple, as shown in Chapter 4, and it continued to function as a symbol for community collectivity in special events, such as *The Night for Vietnam*. The sound of the bell accorded by Thay’s interpretation of its meaning marked shifts in activity, intensified the group’s self-awareness and solidified their relations into “a perfect oneness” (*Table 5.4*). Similarly, the songs and music piece that punctuated the first fifteen minutes of the event were social practices that implied a cultural, political and historical context on which the event was coming into shape. The U.S. national anthem coming first indicated a sense of primacy towards the country that was home to the community at various periods of time. The Republic Vietnam’s anthem, as discussed in Chapter 4, was both a cultural and political act to reminisce a past regime that was a part of many members’ life. Both national anthems contained “organizational discourse,” meaning that “discourse is the principal means by which organization members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are” (Mumby & Clair, 1997, p. 181). The solemn music played during the silent moment was in fact breaking the silence; or giving voice to that moment of remembrance. Together with the war songs being performed or played throughout the program, it was setting the tone for the event and channeling audience’s emotions into a nostalgia for Vietnam as an imagined nation. I argue here that sounds and songs functioned as a form of “aesthetic discourse” (Nissley, 2002; Vanrooij, 2007) that contributed to the (re)formulation of the collective multiplicity on the temple’s ground.

Analysis of the telling case also indicated the interwoven usage of English and Vietnamese as the languages of instruction, with English being spoken at the first moment of the
event. Similar to the finding in the previous section, the use of both languages constructed the community’s multiplicity as having two languages and as continually becoming. Furthermore, the relatively equal amount of time spent on each chunk of speech in each language differed from the pattern observed in Sunday services, when Thay included some English instruction for meditation at the beginning of the ritual in his speech and an interpreter provided translation exclusively to those who needed it through a system of headphones and internally-transmitted-signal microphone. In *The Night for Vietnam*, two languages were alternated even though there was repetition in the content of the message, and the number of English-speaking audience accounted for about one-fifth of the total attendees. The constant switching of short intervals between two languages throughout the developing event resonated with findings about classroom identity (re)formation in Castanheira et al. (2007) in that it was “community-orienting, and thus instrumental” (p. 182). The way the speakers alternated between Vietnamese and English without making any group wait too long for the information to be conveyed to them connected the audience as a whole instead of dividing them, and reinforced the message of Thanh Tinh temple as a bilingual community, when people were expected and afforded the opportunities to listen across languages. The act of addressing the language needs illuminated what counted as membership at the temple, and formulated potential subjectivities, which were characterized by not only one language, ethnicity or one history but also by concerns, hopes, and relations in one community.

**Transposition of Differences Theorized through Nomadic and Buddhist Thoughts**

The findings from the telling case exemplified a transposition of differences, a concept in nomadic theories that was inspired from music and genetics (Braidotti, 2006). The term signifies “an intertextual, cross-boundary or transversal transfer” not simply in quantity as the “weaving
together of different strands,” but rather in “the qualitative sense of complex multiplicities” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 5). As a thinking tool, transposition allows for the conceptualization of difference as positivity. The constant shifting between two languages, the community-oriented discourse and the involvement of people across racial, social and historical contexts in one space, constructing non-linear and “discontinuous but harmonious” stories throughout one event at the temple illuminate Braidotti’s theorization of transposition:

It is thus created as an in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing: nonlinear, but not chaotic; nomadic, yet accountable and committed; creative but also cognitively valid; discursive and also materially embedded - it is coherent without falling into instrumental rationality. (Braidotti, 2007, p. 5)

Intertextual evidence from interview data demonstrated how local knowledge from *The Night for Vietnam* offered its participants a contemplative and creative stance that respects the visible and hidden complexities of the phenomenon they were learning about. Lala admitted how much she had not known before attending the event:

I did not understand how many Vietnamese people were killed during the Vietnam War. And they were mostly civilians. So it prompted me to study a little bit about the Vietnam War. And when I heard about people who were conscientious objectors, I used to be judgmental towards that, like "I know you've been to the US, you followed your government". And now I almost have respect for them, that they did not want to participate in that... no business being... And I would've never expanded my horizons had I not done that. So I guess this place has taught me to be a little more open. (Lala, Interview 1, lines 336-342)

Frankly reflecting on her judgement against the conscientious objectors and acknowledging the event for expanding her horizon, Lala’s story was entangled in Traveler’s in what almost seemed like a mutual causality, or dependent origination from a Buddhist perspective. Traveler was one such conscious objector, who was married with a young child at the time he was drafted to a country he had never known about, and ended up “going to jail for a while” (Interview 2, line 233) as he decided not to go. With this personal history, he shared a distinct perspective about how the war affected him:
And I remember, you know, we saw the war on television here. A lot of, I mostly saw... I didn't think about the Vietnamese that much because the stories we got primarily with the Vietnamese are... all Vietnamese, they're not North and South, they're not two countries. They're just all Vietnamese and you can't trust any of them, so I did learn a lot. I would hear Americans come back and [...] most of the men would say, you know you can get a girl over there to live with you, cook, clean your clothes, everything for you. [...] But for years, [...] I didn't stop to think about that girl that these guys are talking about, that they get to live with them, doesn't want to do that. She has to do that to feed her brothers and sisters, maybe her parents too. Uh... I just... I never thought of that on those terms, or the children that were mixed raced, that were left behind, and nobody wants them. (Traveler, Interview 2, lines 233-245)

Like Lala, Traveler shared how much he had learned from the event and admitted his lack of insights into the lives of Vietnamese people portrayed on the media. Further, he saw the ripple effect of the war on him across space and time: “it affected my life a whole lot over the years, and it's just... the coincidence that I ended up here with so many Vietnamese people” (Interview 2, line 246-247). Traveler’s remark exhibited a dependently co-arising reality, in which “each and every act is understood to have an effect on the larger web of life, and the process of development is perceived as multidimensional” (Macy, 1991, p. xv). This sense of mutual causation was also felt by a second-generation member of the Vietnamese American community, Adam, who frankly asserted that he “can’t personally relate” but he did find the event to be “a solemn way to remember a turning point in Vietnamese history that shaped where we are today” (Adam, Interview 2, lines 32-35).

The data illustrated that regardless of their self-identified racial and ethnic identities or other differences that were naturalized through mainstream political discourses, the participants were connected through a web of interpersonal relations, which showcased a nomadic conception of the subject. Positioning the subject as “becoming-minority” or “becoming nomad” (Braidotti, 2011, p.29) decolonizes the dualistic modes of thinking and deconstructs the phallogocentric identities constitutive of the Western thought.
Belonging and Political Subjectivity in Nomadic Citizenship

In this last section of findings, I revealed complex issues pertaining to the concept of belonging, political subjectivity, and how they constituted nomadic citizenship at both the local and transnational level. I employed organizational discourse analysis (Oberhuber & Krzyzanowski, 2008) to work with the ethnographic data. Organizational discourse refers to “material practices of texts and talk set in currents of political economy and socio-history” (Boje et al., 2004, p. 571). Bloome and Clark (2006), citing Gee (1996), distinguished between discourse with a lower case “d,” which indicates “ways of using language within face-to-face events” and Discourse with an upper case “D,” meaning “broad social, cultural and ideological processes” (p. 227). It is important to acknowledge here that I will engage more with the Foucaudian discourse understood in the latter sense. As Sayer (2000) suggested, “discourses in society can be performative as well as descriptive because they are embedded in material social practices, codes of behavior, institutions and constructed environments” (p. 44) – I will employ organizational discourse analysis before looking at the impact of those discourses on the material world.

Sense of Belonging

The concept of belonging is “both vaguely defined and ill-theorized” in various social disciplines, where scholars tend to either take it for granted because of its self-explanatory nature, or equate it with identity and citizenship (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644). In this section, I am following Yuval-Davis’s (2006) distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging. She theorized belonging in three aspects, first, as “a feeling or emotional attachment, which pertains to feeling ‘at home,’ comfortable, and safe;” second, as “an act of self-identification or identification by others”; and third, as “always a dynamic process” (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp. 197-
Meanwhile, the politics of belonging is concerned with the maintenance and production of “the boundaries of the political community of belonging” through “hegemonic political powers” as well as “their contestation and challenge by other political agents” (p. 205). In this section, I adopted Yuval-Davis’ framework and organize the discussion on belonging around two analytical levels, namely social locations and identifications and emotional attachments. These levels emerge from “a material and affective space that is shaped by everyday practices and social relations as well as by emotions, memories, and imaginaries” (Blunt, 2005, p. 506). The third level on her framework, ethical and political values, referred to “specific attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are drawn” (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 203), which I would argue to be more relevant to the politics of belonging. Politics of belonging, since it encompasses contestations over the participatory dimensions of citizenship and the entitlements entailed in such membership, will be discussed in its entirely in the second section, which is Nomadic Citizenship.

Social locations. Social location refers to the particular gender, race, class, nation, profession or generation that people belong to, however, even in their most stable format, these positionalities are “virtually never constructed along one power axis of difference” as reflected by official statistics (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 200). A look back at the self-reported demographic information that the participants provided me (Chapter 3) supports this claim.

While the participants identified themselves exclusively in some identity categories, such as age, gender, or country of origin, their self-reported answers in some other categories constructed a positionality along multiple grids of differences, such as race, ethnicity and nationality, years at the place, or role at the place. These intersecting social divisions constituted each other to portray each participant from a unique standpoint. For example, Vidya, Lala, Ella
and Hà Buôn all identified as female, however, Vidya and Lala were white, which granted them connection to a hegemonic majority, while Ella and Hà Buôn belonged to a racialized minority. Even then, Ella’s status as a second-generation, U.S.-born citizen differed from that of Hà Buôn, who grew up as a nun in Vietnam and just immigrated to the U.S. six years prior to the point of this study. Likewise, Vidya belonged to an older generation that had been through many ups and downs of the country’s economy, while Lala was a middle-class certified public accountant.

Findings from interviews and fieldnotes data around participants’ sense of belonging supported Yuva-Davis’s (2006) assertion that in specific historical situations related to specific people, there are some social divisions that are more important than others in constructing individuals’ specific positionings. For instance, Traveler’s racial identification as a Caucasian lawyer shaped his live into a distinct social location at the temple:

**CHAU:** Do you feel belong here?
**TRAVELER:** Oh yes
**CHAU:** In what ways? What manners?
**TRAVELER:** Uh I know where everything is. I can sleep here any time I want. I can eat, I drink anything I want, I don't have to ask. It's like going to your aunt's house or you grandmother's house. Uh... everybody knows me because I'm an older white American. It's easy to... for me to stick out uh... among... primarily Vietnamese people. And over the years, I've been involved with enough stuff. You know, I've done legal work for a bunch of people, uh, Thay will ask me to do certain things sometimes. Uh, so people know who you are. (Traveler, Interview 2, lines 154-162)

Traveler was conscious of him being “an older white American” who could help with “legal work,” those attributes that made it easy for him to “stick out” or sleep in, eat or drink at the temple without asking, as a privilege of belonging to a place. He was seen multiple times helping in the kitchen during vegetarian food sales, or attending community meetings, sometimes giving opinions about certain issues being discussed, suggesting aspects for everyone to consider before voting on a solution, or being trusted with some task. Traveler was also invited to give a speech at The Night for Vietnam or in Lunar New Year Eve, as a member from the Friday night
sangha. His voice was featured on these cultural and political occasions, suggesting the power relations within which he was operating and on which his subjectivity was constructed.

Apart from the more dominant social divisions such as race and class, some participants identified themselves within lesson common social divisions, such as the status of refugee, or their membership in a religious profession. When first asked about themselves and how they came to attend Thanh Tinh temple, both country monk and Lê Khánh Hoàng recalled not just their first access to the temple, but their further past and chronicled their journey as refugees leaving Vietnam either through the Humanitarian Operation for former reeducation camp prisoners or by boat and ship along several Southeast Asian countries to arrive in the U.S. The two means of entrance to the new country reflected different starting points on the social power axes that these two participants positioned themselves in.

Meanwhile, Hot Pot and Hà Buôn frequently mentioned their role as lay minister and resident nun, respectively, when asked to introduce themselves, signaling these social locations as crucial to their sense of belonging. Hà Buôn, in particular, shared that she took refuge in the Three Jewels since she was thirteen because she had always wanted to live in a Buddhist temple and practice the Buddhist way of life, such as being mindful and living with respect for all living beings. Remembering how her mom was reluctant and sad to send her off to the temple but did it finally “out of an understanding of dharma and dependent co-arisings,” she also recounted the highlights of her progress until attaining the Bhikkhu level, becoming a fully ordained Buddhist.

On the other hand, Hot Pot transitioned from a born-and-raised Catholic to an ordained Buddhist only after his interaction with people and experience of the lifestyle at the temple: “I adore the lifestyle here, living very simple, apply mindfulness to daily life, helping others without expecting things back. So I choose to engage more and became a lay minister until now” (Hot
Pot, Interview 1, lines 12-14). He further articulated the intricacy of the various social locations that he was entangled with by comparing himself to a “hot pot,” a mixture dish made up of numerous ingredients. This act of naming constructed his social locations using his own creative freedom and autonomy as a social agent.

Interestingly, youth participants looked at the less common social locations to describe types of visitors to the temple, which is a highly unlike the trend observed among the adult participants. Instead of stating Vietnamese Americans or Whites or Blacks as markers of difference, Leo answered my question of “what types of people visit this temple” by not listing any categories other than “mostly like very nice people who just want to practice Buddhism with each other”. He further distinguished between “people who like and wanna learn Buddhism,” which implied the Friday participants, and “people who already know about Buddhism but still want to learn,” which indicated the Sunday participants (Leo, Interview 1, lines 213-216). For him, interest in and a willingness to learn a religion was a common social positioning for everyone at the temple.

Through the findings above, I demonstrated the complex grids of power relations on which the participants’ social locations were constructed. Although status of refugees or membership in particular professions are less common than race, gender, class or ethnicity, they are no less crucial in constructing individuals’ specific positionings. What this means is, in alignment with arguments from other theorists (Ortbal & Rincker, 2009; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2006), that rendering these locations visible has engaged myself as a researcher in a political project that recognizes not just social identities but more importantly, social power axes, in a commitment to emancipatory social research.
Identifications and emotional attachments. Constructions of belonging not only include narratives that people develop about who they are and who they are not, but also reflect emotional attachments: “Individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fueled by yearning rather than positing of identity as a stable state” (Probyn, 1996, p. 19). In their narratives, the participants showed how the emotional feeling of belonging and longing to belong became attached by an individual to a place and generated what Antonsich (2010) termed “place-belongingness,” or “feeling at home,” in which context home means “a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment” (p. 646).

Data from fieldnotes illuminated the performative dimension of belonging being constructed at the temple. As discussed at lengths in earlier sections, the rituals performed on each Friday night and Sunday morning, as well as on special events, were repeated with little deviation over time with various groups attending the temple. A set of behaviors were normalized through daily performativity, such as pausing all movements at the strike of a bell or a clock chime; bowing to the statue of Buddha in the Meditation Hall; chanting; meditating; keeping silence; joining hands and bowing instead of waving as a form of greeting. These highly ritualized movements exemplified Bell’s (1999) observation, inspired by Butler’s thoughts: “Through embodied movements, the citation [of normalized codes] operates to recall and reconnect with places elsewhere that, through those very movements, are re-membered; at the same time, a site of diasporic belonging is created” (p. 3).

Data from interviews exhibited various relational and cultural factors that constituted the affective dimension of belonging. Traveler and Vidya both emphasized how relationships with people at the temple helped them feel positive about the temple, about Buddhism, as well as
about life. Vidya identified herself as “Vietnamese in the previous life” because she could comfortably relate to people who got her heart:

**CHAU:** So do you feel belonged to this place?

**VIDYA:** I do.

**CHAU:** In what ways?

**VIDYA:** I don't know, they got my heart. The people got my heart. It's the sangha, you know.

**CHAU:** Can you say more about that?

**VIDYA:** Yeah, I feel... I don't know, maybe I was Vietnamese in the previous life. I don't know. But I appreciate their family values, I appreciate their kindness and their laughter's. You see, Vietnamese people laughing and talking and joking, they don't walk around with a long face. Uhm... I'm sure they chew each other out royally in Vietnamese and I don't understand, but ....

**CHAU:** [laugh] Sometimes

**VIDYA:** [...] But I know that basically the Vietnamese culture has brought a very beautiful group of people into being in the world. And I just feel very happy being around those people. (Vidya, Interview 2, lines 295-312).

Interestingly, Traveler expressed his sense of belonging to the place by talking about points when he did not feel belonged. Describing a tradition that he found similar to the culture he grew up in, Traveler explained why it was not essential to his sense of belonging:

**CHAU:** Is there any point where you don't feel belonged [here]?

**TRAVELER:** The traditions, the chanting. I mean I don't mind the chanting, but I used to be a Catholic. The chanting is like saying the Rosary to me.

**CHAU:** Saying the?

**TRAVELER:** The rosary, you know, you have Virgin Mary. There's some beads that are shaped in the rose configuration, and ten beads are one, and they all mean something. I used to know all of that stuff, and I said that, and I understand the repetition of something like a mantra, which is really all that is, can give you some calm. And I don't mind it, but I don't need all of that.

**CHAU:** What do you need?

**TRAVELER:** To see people being good.

**CHAU:** Uhm. The actualizing, action of Buddhism, you mean?

**TRAVELER:** Uh yeah, like when we go to the park on a Sunday sometimes, you know every now and then, you know Americans are not gonna be singing karaoke unless they're drunk. Uh, and you know, grown men are not gonna get in a big circle and dance on one foot. But the Vietnamese do that and they're very happy doing that [laugh]. So I can do that there and enjoy it, the freedom of it. And I see how they act. You know, they bring food and "here eat something". (Traveler, Interview 2, lines 165-183)
While they join everyone else in performing the place-making practices peculiar to the temple, both Vidya and Traveler related much more strongly to the daily interactions and the relationships established with people at the temple. Similarly, Leo stated: “What I like most is probably the people” (Leo, Interview 2, line 102) when talking about being a member of the Buddhist Youth Association. He enjoyed the activities they participated in, such as cleaning projects around the temple, or training for the lion dance with his friends. On the same thought, Adam remarked that he liked “the brotherhood and sisterhood that GDPT [Buddhist Youth Association] cultivates with its members and leaders” (Interview 2, line 19). Again, relationship was a crucial component in the emotional attachment of the participants to the place.

These findings illustrated an inclusive form of belonging that Probyn (1996) theorized as “a mode of affective community-making based on physical proximity rather than a common identity” (p. 33) and Diprose (2008) proposed as to include “affective bodies” (p. 36) inclined towards each other in a corporeal – “prerreflective, felt and lived” dimensions of belonging together and to places (p. 28). These aspects of belonging move beyond the communitarian idea of community, especially ethnic community, as a unified and hegemonic entity where members assume the same identity and assimilate to the readymade identities granted to them through power relations of the dominant culture.

Nomadic Citizenship

There are various contestations in the literature regarding the definition of citizenship, however, in this section I am only focusing on the anti-racist and feminist political theorists’ conceptualizations of citizenship that encompass difference. Rather than disregarding the differences among citizens, these theorists promoted ways in which differences can be recognized and responded to. Yuval-Davis and Werbner (1999) proposed that in order to
understand citizenship in all its complexity, it must be perceived as a relationship “inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging” (p. 4). Additionally, Braidotti (2011) provided possible models of nomadic citizenship, which are based on “delinking the three basic components of the liberal view of citizenship: ethnic origin, national identity, and political agency” and recompose them “in new packages of rights and entitlements that require flexibility and hence multiple ecologies of belonging” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 19).

In what follows, I first explored the politics of belonging through the ethical and political values embraced as requisites for belonging in the community. Next, I conceptualize citizenship as political subjectivity to analyze not the individuals as rights-bearing subjects, but their process of negotiating power positions.

**Ethical and political values: Politics of belonging.** Politics of belonging, according to Yuval-Davis (2006, 2007), is essentially concerned with the boundaries of the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into ‘us’ and ‘them’. Closely related to this are the attitudes and ideologies concerning what role specific social locations and specific narratives play in the determination of what counts as being a member of a community. Data from the research illuminate a set of ethical and political values as the signifiers of belonging and membership in the temple.

The first value being embraced by members of the temple was a sense of diasporic origin, meaning that they shared an image of Vietnam as an “imagined community,” one where members “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). *The Night for Vietnam* was indicative of this value, when the whole event was held as a remembrance for a
country and its people across all historical landmarks of the past, the present and the future (See p. 28 for more details). Furthermore, the discourse of Vietnam in its current political state under the Communist government occurred frequently over time in dharma talks in both English and Vietnamese, though more elaborated in the latter. country monk was aware of the phenomenon, explaining further that he chose the topics related to what the sangha were concerned about:

**country monk:** Usually I pick the topic that I also believe is really needed for the group. For example, the group on Sunday. Because most of them still concern for Vietnam, have a strong relationship with the people in Vietnam. So if something going on in the country make[s] them worry about or concerned about their relatives or parents so I see that most of them go to this temple so I should pick the topic tied with the teaching of the Buddha and how to help them to deal with the issue in the country right now. (country monk, Interview 2, lines 106-111)

An intertextual reading of the data revealed that “issues in the country” referred to poverty, a lack of democracy, and violation of human rights, all consequential of a problematic government. The following excerpt was quoted from a special prose titled *New Year Eve Repentance*, which was chanted in the format of a sutra inside Mediation Hall on the eve of Lunar New Year, after the firecracker and lion dance show:

Xuất thân quê tự Việt Nam
*(Original homeland from Vietnam)*
Đổi thay lịch sử chuyển sang quê người
*Regime uprisings shifted to others’ land*
Ngậm ngùi vẫn nhớ một đời
*With pity, we remember it an entire life*
Thắp lên một nến chung lối cầu mong
*Lighting an incense, together we pray*
Bớt đói khát, bớt làm than
*Less poverty, less misery*
Cố thêm quyền sống bình an mọi bè
*More human rights and peace everywhere*
Biết tôn trọng, biết lắng nghe
*Knowing how to respect, to listen*
Cho dù khác biệt này kia những gì
*Despite all differences here and there*
Bớt đi những chuyện thì phi
*Less gossiping of distorted truths*
Đâu còn đau khổ chỉ vi bất nghiệm
No more suffering because of unfairness
(Fieldnotes, 02/04/2019)

Although there was no personal pronoun used in the Vietnamese excerpt, the discourse of “homeland,” “others’ land,” “remember an entire life,” and “together,” denoted a diaspora which, by definition, is “a transnational network of dispersed political subjects” (Werbner, 2002, p. 121). Finding the structure of the prose to be different from the Buddhist sutras chanted regularly at the temple, I later learned that country monk was the author of the New Year Eve Repentance (personal conversation, 11/17/2019). He shared that he was not quite satisfied with any prewritten Buddhist script to be used for such a special occasion as the New Year Eve, so he composed a prose that incorporated Buddhist values and the traditional values of the Vietnamese culture to be used internally, while not providing the author’s name. As a spiritual leader as well as a teacher that constructed and delivered the curriculum of the temple, country monk was maintaining the social location of refugee and the narratives of diasporic subjectivities through his power positionality. Remarkably, instead of invoking a longing to return to a lost homeland, the discourses around Vietnam illustrated hopes for a better future and responsibilities of the diasporic community for its imagined origin. I would argue here that this act was motivated by a “homing desire,” which as Brah (1996) postulated, is radically different from “a desire for a homeland” due to its “precarious relationship to ‘nativist’ discourses” (p. 177). This finding augmented Tololyan’s (1996) depiction of the diasporic subject as “a figure for double and multiple consciousness, for a split, even dispersed subject-in-process that crisscrosses boundaries and resists totalization” (p. 28).

The second value was inclusiveness, which was observed and recognized by all ten participants. Leo recalled his favorite memory of the place, when his family was struck by a natural disaster and lost their home with nowhere to stay, they were offered a place to stay in the
temple for several months. During this time, he was doing homework at the stone tables on the courtyard and enjoyed the scenery around, which made he feel “calm” and “focused.” In his opinion: “No one really belongs to the temple. It's like you can come whenever you want and it doesn't really matter what you are and like you're still welcome to come to the temple” (Interview 1, lines 36-37). Similarly, other participants gave abundant examples about being included in the temple’s activities despite language barriers (Traveler), through gestures of offering food (Lala) and being invited for lunch (Ella).

This inclusivity was not only felt at an emotional level by the participants but also a value reiterated through official policies. country monk emphasized that he wanted the sangha to support local community through their “spiritual,” “educational,” and “psychological” services, instead of merely focusing on the “traditional functions of a Buddhist temple to serve only the Vietnamese ethnic group” (country monk, Interview 1, lines 195-196). Hot Pot claimed that “we” as a temple “tried to be inclusive,” in that:

**HOTPOT**: A lot of other temples, they don't have services, or they don't welcome people from other religions. We do. We welcome all brothers and sisters regardless of their background, regardless of their religions, race, so as long as you can provide any benefit, and as long as everything is properly handled, we welcome everyone. Uhm, and you know, for AA group, people [who are] alcoholic and stuff like that, this is the first and the only temple in the US right now help with that. And you know, for the Friday night group, you can tell that a lot of different people come in. So we try to include everyone as much as we can because based on the teachings of the Buddha, he doesn't say that hey we need to help those who follow us, he says that we need to help those who can't... uhm so that's what we do here. (Hot Pot, Interview 1, lines 329-337)

Within a short excerpt, the word “we” was repeated nine times, indicating a collective subjectivity that attempted to blur the existing border between *us* and *them* through ethically framed judgments about who belonged and who would be excluded. Instead, Hot Pot saw other temples of the same ethnicity as “them,” distinct from what he called “we” on the institutional
and ideological ground regarding who to be included. This finding showcased the complex multileveled, fluid and relational dynamics in politics of belonging at the temple.

**Transposing contested notions of citizenship: Thinking through political subjectivity**

Exploring citizenship on the premise of methodological nationalism which accepts such nation-state binaries as origin/destination, rights/obligations, and immigrant/citizen is undesirable given the complexity surrounding diasporic subjectivity presented so far in this study. Meanwhile, notions of citizenship that reach beyond nation/state to other forms of inclusion, such as cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1994); flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999); alternative citizenship (Levitt, 2007), to name a few, remain intrinsically problematic because “it remains unclear whether extended citizenship discourses carry any meaning for people who lack citizenship – and therefore rights – by legal definition” (Krausea & Schrammb, 2011, p. 125). To transpose these contested notions of citizenship, I adopted Isin’s (2009) approach in conceptualizing citizenship as political subjectivity, which “shifts our attention from fixed categories by which we have come to understand or inherit citizenship to the struggles through which these categories themselves have become stakes” (p. 383). I then analyzed the data not to answer the question “who is the citizen?” and describe individuals as the rights–bearing subjects, but to address the question “what makes the citizen?” and describe “the process by which people and groups negotiate their positions vis-à-vis authorities” (Krausea & Schrammb, 2011, p. 126).

While Hot Pot, as well as Hà Buôn, country monk and Lê Khánh Hoàng shared the same appreciation for the human rights and democracy entailed in the American citizenship, Vidya and Traveler showed a sense of regret for certain political events that happened in the American history. Lala felt that she had taken the citizenship for granted while so many people had to
sacrifice their lives for it, whereas Adam, Leo and Emma expressed the tricky aspect of navigating dual citizenships, between what they were born into and what their parents had bestowed on them. Table 5.5 below features a telling case which reveals a stark contrast between two modes of identifications with the definition of American citizenship.

Table 5.5. Contrastive Analysis of Citizenship Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-U.S. born</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>U.S. born</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LÊ KHÁNH HOÀNG:</strong></td>
<td>them</td>
<td>VIDYA: I happened to have been born here in this country, and I always felt that we were the country that was helping other people. […] I was indoctrinated by parents who were World War II veterans. And they did have a noble fight. They did stop an evil man, Hitler, from dominating the world, who murdered millions of Jews […] And then when Vietnam and Korea came along, and then we sent people to Iraq and kill five hundred thousand men, women and children, civilians […] I started looking at our history, and we were very belligerent and warlike. (Interview 2, lines 512-520)</td>
<td>entitlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t want them [Vietnamese immigrants] to be disrespected by Americans. For example, when I travel to Vietnam on vacations, I saw American passport holders walk proudly, while permanent residents had to wait in lines, and looking at the attitude of the staff I knew they [the staff] looked down on them. […] And it’s the same everywhere. For example, if we have American citizenship and travel to Canada, we can walk straighter. Without it [American citizenship], they would put us in a room and interview a lot, and we would feel like a nobody. And a lot more rights… (Interview 1, lines 344-352, translated)</td>
<td>disrespect</td>
<td>indoctrination</td>
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<td>American passport holders</td>
<td>rights</td>
<td>permanent residents</td>
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<td>American citizenship</td>
<td>rights</td>
<td>free movements</td>
<td>non-rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country monk: Being U.S. citizen from social perspective I feel comfortable, that is I become a citizen of the country where I can uh express my thoughts, feelings, without worry anything.</td>
<td>being a U.S. citizen</td>
<td>TRAVELER: I mean I'm an American, but I think of myself in terms as a being. If I have to leave America, or not be an American citizen any more, I wouldn't... I'd still be me.</td>
<td>an American vs. a being</td>
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<td>comfortability</td>
<td>free speech</td>
<td>be an American citizen vs. being me</td>
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<tr>
<th>Non-U.S. born</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>U.S. born</th>
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<tr>
<td>And whenever I travel with US passport, I feel more comfortable, because US has a good relationship in general with majority people in the world, so that makes me feel I have more security feeling. And I have the right to vote. I have the right to raise my voice, or even compose a letter and send to the president if I like or dislike something from his leadership. (Interview 2, lines 278-283)</td>
<td>free movement</td>
<td>I was born here, that's what it means to me. I was born here, I grew up in these traditions. I don't hate my country, I'm just very sad that we have gotten to the point where we have gotten. (Interview 2, lines 275-282)</td>
<td>entitlement</td>
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The contrastive analysis exemplified Foucault’s understanding of subjectivity as produced by discursive regimes – as self-making and being-made by power-relations. The transnational experiences of the participants conditioned them to be engaged in highly complex positionings of shifting power relations that transcended the nation-state boundaries. On the one hand, the non-U.S. born participants embraced the functional aspects of the citizenship identity in the U.S. such as free movements, free speech, voting right, and “other” rights (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Tokunaga, 2018). Lê Khánh Hoàng specified the difference between the status of U.S. citizenship and that of permanent residency through repeated phrases such as “walk proudly” and “walk straight,” as opposed to “waiting in line,” “being put in a room,” or “feel like a nobody.” He further internalized issues of “attitude” and “respect/ disrespect” that extended from the functional to the emotional dimension of citizenship. country monk had similar feelings about having a U.S. passport, but even more valuable to him was the various rights that he could actualize as an active citizen, especially voting and freedom of speech, also understood as “governmental practices through which conduct is produced” (Isin, 2009, p. 383).
On the other hand, the U.S. born participants admitted their entitlement of the membership to the country while also enacting an “activist citizenship,” which means “to break habitus and act in a way that disrupts already defined orders, practices and statuses” (Isin, 2009, p. 384). Vidya reflected on instances in the U.S. history where “we” endured both “noble” and “belligerent” moments. Traveler distanced himself from being submissive to the state and avoided claiming state-belongingness to be part of his identity, while expressing the conflictive emotion of not hating the country but feeling “sad” because, again, “we” have “gotten to the point where we have gotten.” Evidently, the two participants were engaged in both formalized relationships with the state and a more emotional and ethical attachments to authority. These findings made explicit the “double face” of the processes of “political subjectification,” which grants people or groups the ownership of certain rights on the one hand and on the other hand, “force them to accept being subjected to the rules and governing practices of those authorities they addresses” (Krause & Schramm, 2011, p. 130).

**Summary of Chapter Five**

In this chapter, I explored the nomadic subjectivity constructed, shifted and complexified through relations and interactions at the temple through the implementation of interactional ethnography. I first mapped out the diasporic subjectivities in the temple as a transnational, diasporic space. Second, I constructed the event map of the first Friday of April session to exemplify the norms, expectations, roles and relationships as exhibited by members and their interactions over time. Third, using a telling case, I continued to explore the various subjectivities being constructed and opportunities for membership being afforded for individuals at the temple, which evidenced a transposition of differences through community-oriented discursive practice. Lastly, I uncovered complex issues pertaining to the concept of belonging,
political subjectivity, and how they constituted nomadic citizenship at both the local and transnational level. In Chapter Six, I provided some implications for research and practice in education as well as curriculum theory.
CHAPTER SIX. SO WHAT? WHO CARES?

My focus in this study was on the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities of members in a transnational, diasporic space that was a Buddhist temple. So far, I have invited teachers, educators, policymakers, community activists and anyone else interested in education as life itself, into the firsthand experience of community life as well as the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there.

In this concluding chapter I discussed the findings that challenge the isolation of schooling and educational discourses and practices from the living and breathing world outside of school which, for unknown periods since the beginning of time, has been understood as an enclosed institution for the teaching of children. In so doing, I emphasized the values of community in constructing people’s subjectivities and creating meaningful learning experiences through a hybrid, nomadic space. These findings were organized in the following topics: Democratic Education Beyond School Boundaries; Rhizomatic Curriculum Becomings; and Implications. I ended the chapter by directly addressing the two questions: “So what?” and “Who cares?” with implications for teachers, educators, community activists, policymakers and recommendations for future research.

Democratic Education Beyond School Boundaries

Previous studies have looked at identity formation in transnational spaces and the impacts of place on individuals’ sense of belonging, cultural knowledge as well as learning experiences (Adams, 2013; Bellino & Adams, 2014; Sampson & Gifford, 2009; Sheringham, 2010). Some researchers further saw space-making and constructing a sense of place as political acts in education, drawing them to the work of spatial justice (Jones et al., 2016; Lawson, 2016; Rubel, Hall-Wieckert & Lim, 2017). These studies have proven the significance of space proclamation
to education and justice for transnational as well as minority ethnic communities. Building on these studies and the larger literature, I further foregrounded the interdependence between spatial production and democratic education that extended beyond the school boundaries and transposed the imagined territories of a given community to benefit the whole society.

**Spatialized Learnings from a Transnational Space**

One of the many theoretical contributions that Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial production theory made to the field of social studies is that “space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning” (p. 154). As I have elaborated in this study, spatializing culture, or the act of studying culture through the lens of space, “facilitates an important form of engagement,” because it was through the analyses of space of representations, spatial practices and representations of space that people and their communities were offered “a way to understand the everyday places where they live, work, shop, and socialize” (Low, 2014, p. 34). Several learnings could be acquired from the spatialization of Thanh Tinh temple as a transnational space.

Firstly, the ethnographic study of Thanh Tinh temple illuminated how a marginalized urban space was (re)created and (re)appropriated into a cultural hub that shaped and was shaped by the material and discursive practices of humans, non-humans, other power relations and symbolic configurations. Thanh Tinh temple could be pictured as a place where some people attended regular Buddhist services while making and enjoying the flavorful food and observing traditional holidays from their homeland; some others visited to try out meditation and mindfulness practices in English-speaking sessions; and some others learned about their parents’ countries of origin through stories or performative rituals. Simultaneously, these people were entangled in networks of relationships, constantly changing ways of being, and local as well as transnational interactions that expanded beyond the physical structure of the temple. The
movements of these members, participants, practitioners, monastics, laypeople, and visitors, differentiated by race, ethnicity, origin, gender, age and class, together with their thoughts, conversations, dreams, aspirations, greetings, and prayers, have congruently constructed the embodied space of the temple. This space, in the words of spatial and nomadic theorists, was the “third space” (Bhabha, 2004); the space of the subaltern (Spivak, 2012), and ultimately, the “diaspora space,” which “marks the intersectionality of contemporary conditions of transmigrancy of people, capital, commodities and culture” (Brah, 1996, p. 238).

Secondly, while many empirical studies of transnational communities prioritized only the place-making processes, identity formations and sense of belonging among immigrants in an ethnically enclosed entity over the local residents of the host country (Erdmann, 2015; Sampson & Gifford, 2009; Smith, 2008), the findings from this study complicated the conversations regarding “who (and what) is in, at the heart, on the margins” (Gulson & Symes, 2007, p. 99), in other words, who dwelled in the space of Otherness. As evident from the findings, non-immigrant members found their place at the temple and participated in constructing their subjectivities through new learnings in relationships with others along multiple grids of differences, such as race, ethnicity and nationality, years at the place, or role at the place. As a diaspora space, the temple “decentre[d] the subject position of ‘native,’ ‘immigrant,’ ‘migrant,’ the in/outsider, in such a way that the diasporian is as much a native as the native now becomes a diasporian through this entanglement” (Brah, 1996, p. 238). This illustrated how power was produced, not preconstituted, and was exercised through the agencies of people in the space, who turned it into a site of resistance and creativity instead of oppression by merely being in it. What I meant by resistance was a push against the “horizontalities of representations” (Massey, 2015, p. 59) of space and an invitation to possibilities of imaginations, historicities, and narratives that
disrupted the Western-centric stories about the dominant versus the subordinant cultures and peoples.

Thirdly, the spacialization of culture necessitated the inclusion of community and the in-between spaces of learning other than schools as formal sites of learning, into the educational landscape. As Gulson and Symes (2007) pointedly remarked, while the concept of space is always fluid and shifting, so is the population that occupy them: “they are on the move; boundaries are increasingly porous and the flow and circulation of ideas, capital, labour, knowledge and cultural forms cannot be easily restricted” (p. 106). Consequentially, it is imperative to understand people’s relationships with places and how they develop a sense of belonging in order to create meaningful learning experiences. This is particularly true for students in a transnational community, whose sense of place is comprised of their lived experiences and those of their family members who had travelled places before them. Gruenewald (2003) conducted a spatial analysis of schooling and revealed its “most striking structural characteristic” to be the “enforced isolation of children and youth from culture and ecosystem” (p. 625). Therefore, allowing, conditioning and promoting students’ authentic connections with and knowledge of their own communities will be ground for a place-conscious education, in which pedagogy becomes more relevant to students’ lived experience and accountability become more grounded in place in tangible ways (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 620).

Democratic Education in the Community

Scholars in various fields in social sciences and humanity have identified the inseparability between democracy and education, for instance, “questions about democracy have always been closely intertwined with questions about education” (Biesta, 2007, p. 1); and “democratic education is public education” (Mendel, 2019, p. 10). Before any arguments about
democratic education are made, however, it is important to acknowledge that “democracy is an essentially contested concept,” particularly in the context of an increasingly interdependent world, and the reason for which is “not because people cannot agree on its definition, but because the very idea of democracy calls for a continuous discussion about and reappraisal of what it actually means and entails” (Biesta, 2007, p. 3). In this section, I am adopting a working definition of democracy, understood from an expansive view as “a way of life and type of decision making whereby the people within and without a nation-state can exert effective control and influence over the political landscape” (Oleinikova & Bayeh, 2019, p. 17). Building on bell hooks’ (2003) affirmation, “[t]eachers who have a vision of democratic education assume that learning is never confined solely to an institutionalized classroom” (p. 41), my argument is the study provided powerful evidences that the community is central to democratization and democratic education in the U.S. society.

As implicated in the spatialized learnings from a transnational space, the transnational practices enacted by non-U.S.-born immigrants at the temple solidified a sense of local attachment and stimulated a rhizomatic process of social identification and transformation in the host country, rather than challenging the integrity of the nation state. This result coincided with many previous studies (Bondy, 2015; Raffaeta & Duff, 2013; Sheringham, 2010). However, the study further unearthed some other complex perspectives on the American citizenship, for example: “If I have to leave America, or not be an American citizen any more, I wouldn’t... I’d still be me” (Traveler, Interview 2, line 277), or:

[...] technically, I feel like I'm a part of this country. Just like I'm a part of Vietnam. But I don't wanna limit myself to any country. Because I think each of us needs to see the big picture. We are parts of human beings. We are a part of the Earth. I would consider myself as the citizen of the globe instead of the citizen of the country. (Hot Pot, Interview 2, lines 293-296)
These sharings showed a conscious attempt to deterritorialize the dynamics of citizenship through a cosmopolitan subjectivity. According to Vieten (2006), cosmopolitan subjectivity “conjures up the image of individuals with an intellectual and an aesthetic openness towards people, places and experiences of different cultures, especially those of different nations” (p. 267). This concept invited an imagination for cosmopolitan democracy, which “focuses on the role of citizens who should be empowered in order to exercise their rights and duties, not just in their nations, but also in the political communities which affect their lives” (Archibugi, 2012, p. 11). This means citizens in a cosmopolitan democracy could take actions to apply values and norms of democracy for changes at any levels of governance, from local, national, transnational and regional to global levels.

Although it is commonly engaged as a project of normative political theory, cosmopolitan democracy does offer relevant implications for democratic education. Archibugi (2012) summarized four directions of impacts, of which I found two that were evidenced by the findings in this study. The first is “to educate young people to live in a multicultural context, especially when they already have to face daily the presence of multi-racial, multi-language and multi-cultural groups” (Archibugi, 2012, p. 18). All of the participants in this study, youth and adults included, identified strongly with the community of the temple and expressed understandings of the diversity experienced through everyday interactions with other people. For example, Adam commented on how good it was to have non-Vietnamese members to the temple: “It's good for exposure to other cultures and […] my belief is like you'd rather not be blind to other cultures or other ways of thinking by shutting yourself in with one community” (Interview 1, lines 293-295). His perspective manifested an openness to heterogeneity and an appreciation for difference.
Second, “an attempt to make young people sociologically keener to deal with diversity” foregrounds a willingness “to apply the values and rules of democracy when decisions should to be taken across communities” (Archibugi, 2012, p. 18). All participants were well familiar with the community meetings where most decisions concerning the temple were made through voting. As elaborated in Chapter 4, Adam practiced his right as a member by asking to attend such a meeting and proposing a food drive to benefit a local food bank. His presence was welcomed, and his plan voted into action. This strongly illustrated Archibugi’s (2012) claim:

If democracy should be preserved as political method, it should learn how to include unexpected groups of stakeholders. Learning through education to use the political space to accommodate also unexpected guests and interests is an asset that will prove to be useful in international organizations, non-governmental organizations, transnational movements and even in multinational corporations. (p. 18)

The norms and values of cosmopolitan democracy, as ambitious as they seem, were brought into life on the temple’s ground. This proved that democratic education could be reinvented to “enable students to see their fates as intimately tied to those of people within their cultural and national communities” rather than eradicate the cultures of diverse groups and alienate students from their own cultural identities through nationalistic and assimilationist conceptions (Banks, 2012, p. 471).

Emphatically, in agreement with Biesta’s (2007) political conception of democratic education, I would also like to problematize the prevalent views of “education for democracy” and “education through democracy” (p. 4), because they both focus on “how best to prepare children and young people for their future participation in democracy” (p. 5), which poses democracy as a problem for education and education as “the producer and the safeguard of democracy” (Biesta, 2007, p.5). For it to work, democratic education should depart from the conventional assumption that “political subjectivities and identities can be and have to be fully formed before democracy can take off” (Biesta, 2011, p. 151). Rather, democratic education
should engage with the concepts of a “democratic person” (Biesta, 2007) or an “ignorant citizen” (Biesta, 2011), who “is not a predefined identity that can simply be taught and learned, but emerges again and again in new ways from engagement with the experiment of democratic politics” (Biesta, 2011, p. 152). In other words, learning democracy can happen not at a cognitive level but only at an affective level, through doing democracy, with “a desire for a particular mode of human togetherness” (Biesta, 2011, p. 152).

In this sense, the practices at the temple practically elucidated the educational value of a Buddhist democratic commonality. Similar to Biesta’s stance on democracy at the individual level, Dalai Lama (1999) maintained that “[a]t the heart of Buddhism lies the idea that the potential for awakening and perfection is present in every human being and that realizing this potential is a matter of personal effort” (p. 70). This view is further elaborated through the various perspectives of the participants. As Traveler put it: “I think democracy is just everyone treating everybody with kindness. I think democracy is really Buddhism” (Interview 2, lines 315-316). Hả Buôn also coined the term “embodied democracy,” explicating that in the Buddhist view, every being was equal with their Buddha’s nature; once people lived closely in a community, “they would develop understandings and compassion that enabled them to see each other’s Buddha nature and live in harmony” (Interview 1, lines 430-444, translated). Meanwhile, Hot Pot distinguished between “freedom of choice” and “freedom of mind,” reflecting that he gained more freedom once he kept no other choice but to confine himself within the rule of law and accountability inherent in the monastic life, because “the rules and the regulations keep us away from having those materials and temptations, […] so the freedom we have is inside our mind, the free of temptation, the free of cravings” (Interview 2, lines 166-168).
A refusal of imposing predefined characters for a good citizen on every subject of the democratic project does not mean an argument for total anarchy. In Biesta’s words, it is not to say that “any interruption of the existing order is an instance of democracy” (2007, p. 152), but such interruption needs to stem from the confrontation of the logic of equality, liberty, or the policing of power. Consequently, a set of “reference points” needs to be in place, but such reference points themselves need to be “fundamentally open and undetermined” (Biesta, 2007, p. 152). Again, findings from the study showed a Buddhist viewpoint congruent with this rationalization: “democracy is everybody has this common set of basic precepts, per se, but how we went about them is different. [...] And just being respectful of those differences, that's what democracy would mean to me” (Lala, Interview 2, lines 210-215). The “precepts” Lala mentioned refer to the rules of mindfulness training, which is the most important system of morality and code of ethics for Buddhist lay people, however, their applications vary between individual practitioners depending on their level of practice and commitment.

In brief, the participants defined and actualized democracy from their own lived experiences as part of an ongoing experiment of democratic learning. Biesta would say that the ongoing transformations of their political subjectivities is exactly what democratic politics is about, and what democratic education should strive to enable.

**Rhizomatic Curriculum Becomings**

Through looking at the spatial production and nomadic subjectivities on the site of the temple, I hereby argue that the temple was a learning space with a unique curriculum, understood from the broadest sense of this word: “currere,” “the running of the course,” or a “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2008, p.xiii) that is “historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological, and international” (p. 186). Inspired
by poststructuralist, new-materialist and post-humanist curriculum theorists, I engaged in alternative perspectives on curriculum that are not method driven but are derived from “a dis/position that seeks to disentangle curriculum from its traditional dependence on formalities” (Reynolds & Webber, 2008, p. x); I sought “to be present in the relationships that are curriculum” (Eaton & Hendry, 2019, p. 14), and I conducted thought experiments for “a curriculum for miracles” (Seidel, 2014).

I am indebted to nomadic thoughts for many learnings, among which the concept of lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This concept was used extensively by Deleuze in his work with Guattari and in close association with the concepts of multiplicity and rhizome:

Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2016, p. 9)

Lines of flight as a thinking tool (Braidotti, 2011) allows me to be situated in simultaneous occurrences of various grids of differentiation that constitute subjectivity, as Reynolds and Webber (2008) postulated: “Curriculum theory moves when in multiplicities and lines of flight, not in dualisms or either/ors. Curriculum theory IS not this or that – defining it leads to this or that” (p. 3). In what follows, I am thrilled, challenged, and urged to explore the different becomings of curriculum in a transpersonal and collective mode, while I am less than interested in seeking “a tidy, linear story of progress through which curriculum becomes intelligible” (Eaton & Hendry, 2019, p. 14).

As illustrated in Figure 6.1., I depicted three intersecting lines of flight informed by the findings from the study, which shifted underlying assumptions of curriculum from discourses of either/or to discourses of in-between. I worked not to conciliate the three, but to “draw from the intensity of what could be becomings between them” (Clark/Keefe, 2012, p. 126). Moreover,
justified by Gregory’s (2001) proposition to never consider the effects of curriculum in isolation from the kind of pedagogy that delivers it, I employed the term pedagogy in different lines cutting open the space of curriculum and demanding constant remapping for the new coordinates (Braidotti, 2013).

**Figure 6.1.** Lines of Flight for Rhizomic Curriculum Becomings

![Diagram of Nomadic Pedagogy, Buddhist Pedagogy, and Place-conscious Pedagogy within a Rhizomic Curriculum]

**Nomadic Pedagogy**

According to Bright and colleagues, nomadic pedagogy “frames learning as a process which occurs when subjects enter into unfamiliar territory,” and the learner, as a nomadic subject, is “involved in becoming-other, engaging in a relationship with his or her surrounding in a process of deterritorialization” (Bright, Manchester, & Allendyke, 2013, p. 752). From this conceptualization as a point of entry, I would argue that the curriculum enacted at the temple engendered a material-discursive-affective spatiality that mobilized the subjects who traversed
territories of difference as the polyglots and constructed their situated knowledge through an “intensive interconnectedness” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 5) with others.

The polyglot, in Braidotti’s (1994) theory, is “a person who is in transit between the languages, neither here nor there” (p. 12) and this person knows that “language is not only and not even the instrument of communication but a style of symbolic exchange that links us together in […] a web of mediated misunderstandings, which we call civilization” (p. 13). There were instances in the study that demonstrated such “mediated misunderstandings,” for example, when Hot Pot intentionally translated a dharma talk differently from the original speech in a hope to deliver a more culturally appropriate message to his exclusive audience. By doing so and then reflecting consciously on it, he echoed a very nomadic view that “the state of translation is the common condition of all thinking beings” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 11). At the same time, efforts by Lala, Vidya and Traveler to interact with people in an unfamiliar linguistic site as well as their openness to gestures of kindness, smiles, and other non-discursive cues unfolded their subjectivity as the polyglot in between languages, who “banks on the affective level as his/her resting point” and “knows how to trust traces and resist settling into one, sovereign vision of identity” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 14). These polyglots understood the arbitrariness of language and the situated nature of knowledge; therefore, they had the potential of becoming an ethical entity that could survive the many shifts of language and cultural locations and be comfortable in a complex collection of fragments of identity.

A nomadic pedagogy would view difference in a direct opposition to commonly accepted views in the contemporary political context. Braidotti (2011) rejected the use of difference as “a negative term indexed on a hierarchy of values” and conveying “power relations and structural patterns of exclusion,” claiming that doing so equate its meaning to “the equivalent of
inferiority” (p. 17). Brah (1996) proposed to view difference as “personal experience inscribing individual biography” (p. 116) and as “social relation,” which can be understood as “the historical and contemporary trajectories of material circumstances and cultural practices which produced the conditions for the construction of group identities” (p. 117). This study exemplified an array of manners in which the “sexualized others,” namely women and ethnic or racialized others constituted through their narratives and counter-memories the multiple “positive sites” for the redefinition of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2011, p. 30). In this sense, difference entails affirmative empowerment and a pedagogy that embraces such differences could encourage substantial engagement with a becoming-minority that is “the privileged starting point for active and empowering processes of transformative becoming” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 344). In resonance with this politically engaged and ethically accountable vision of the nomadic subject, Honig (2011) proposed that we ask what problems might difference solve for us instead of how to solve the problems posed by difference; likewise, Nguyen (2010) advocated for a disruption of violence, knowingly and unknowingly, perpetrated on difference and otherness.

In nomadic theory, the different stages or levels of becoming “trace an itinerary that consists in erasing and recomposing the former boundaries between self and others” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 35), which suggests that becoming and deterritorialization are two interrelated processes at work in a nomadic pedagogy. In their life-wide learning journeys, the participants in this study traversed multiple eventful spaces unbounded by time and place, such as the deep American South, a re-education camp, a refugee boat, a Buddhist temple, an English class, or an American middle school; in asymmetrical power relations, such as son/mother, daughter/parents, monks/laymen, guest/host, students/teachers, practitioners/masters. Simultaneously, they negotiated multiple zones of identity, such as Asian American, Vietnamese American, refugee,
immigrant, Buddhist, woman, English learner, second generationer, and in so doing, they were blurring boundaries rather than burning bridges. These examples attest to a pragmatic aspect of nomadic curriculum, which perceives life as “practices and flows of becoming, complex assemblages and heterogenous relations” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 214), hence the practice of teaching and learning should be retuned as practice of accountability for one’s embodied and embedded locations through a reworking and unfolding of power differentials.

In short, what it means to inquire about curriculum theory from the embodied analytics of nomadic subjectivity is to involve in a nomadic ethics that “prioritizes relation, praxis and complexity” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 343) through “a process ontology” that “privileges change and motion over stability” (p. 344). In this nomadic mode of learning, the curriculum is constructed by neither the preordained inputs from experts nor the unspoken assumptions of the teacher. Instead, all subjects involved in the process participate as polyglots who communicate and negotiate on what counts as knowledge in a real-time manner to shape and be shaped by the constantly shifting responses within their learning space. Since the learners are always, already mobile, the nomadic curriculum would travel with them, because it is always, already embodied and embedded in their multiple becomings and relations.

**Place-conscious Pedagogy**

Place-conscious pedagogy has been promoted by critical theorists as a curricular alternative that views space as cultural education (Perez, Fain & Slater, 2004) and asserts the importance of ecological thinking in critical social analysis (Gruenewald, 2008), in attempts to downplay the consequences of a school-centric curriculum, which “ignores the pedagogical significance of experience with familiar and forgotten places outside of schools” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 646). While this study focused on discussions of space, it by no means suggests that
place is subordinate to space and time; rather, following Massey (2005), it holds that place is the articulated moment in spatial relations. As showcased in this study, the place of the temple was arguably pedagogical in four interrelated dimensions, namely, the perceptual, the sociological, the political, and the ecological.

Unlike rigid institutions such as schools or corporations, the place of the temple enabled its inhabitants to enter “a participatory relationship with other phenomena through the multisensory perception of direct experience” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 624). The whole place was a continual exhibition of sight, touch, sound, smell, and motion where people came to recognize, engage and nurture instead of manipulating, neglecting and destroying. As detailed in Chapter 4, the temple was portrayed by its visitors and members as “an oasis,” with a “beautiful and peaceful garden” and the “serenity” that posed “an instant calming effect” on their mind and body. The entangled scents of blooming flowers along the driveway, aromatic vegetarian dishes from Hall of Harmony, and fragrant sandalwood incense inside Meditation Hall were subtly drifting within the place. The sounds of the mindfulness bells and the clock chime were another signature of the place, ubiquitous in every daily activity. In the study, all 10 participants expressed appreciation for the peacefulness brought about through different sensory engagement in the place. Particularly, the practice of bowing down and touching the earth carried a significance for Buddhist practitioners, which Thich Nhat Hanh beautifully explained:

We bow down and touch the Earth, emptying ourselves and surrendering to the Earth. […] We surrender our pride, hopes, ideas, fears, and notions, and empty ourselves of any resentments we feel. Mind and body work together to form a perfect whole. We prostrate this way six times to help us realize our deep connection to all of our roots. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1994, p. 18).

The sociological dimension of the temple opened the ground for people to explore their culture, identity and relationships. Chapter 5 discussed the social constructions of norms and expectations, rights and obligations, as well as roles and relationships which resulted in multiple
potential subjectivities for members in the place. For example, it was through observing and talking to other people that Lala learned for herself a dress code to perform when attending services, and Traveler figured out that showing his feet towards the statue of the Buddha was considered an act of blasphemy in the Vietnamese Buddhist culture. On the contrary, it was through learning about and abiding to the rules in this place since his childhood that Adam became reflective and critical of the instances when people from the older generation were imposing “obsolete” thoughts on his generation’s choices of future careers or lifestyle. These findings served a double-folded purpose. On the one hand, they manifested how the temple’s place was a culture in the making, which shaped and was shaped by people’s actions in it. On the other hand, the findings indicated how place-consciousness empowered Adam as a member of the younger generation to question the existing cultural rules instead of continuing to legitimize them. Here, I contend that place-conscious pedagogy recognizes people as cultural place-makers, therefore, it invests in developing meaningful connections and situations where learners can actively participate in the sociopolitical process of shaping what their places will become.

The relationships that people created with the temple brought the place to life, breathing and pulsing with political, historical and power dynamics. The temple was, among its many functions, a community center for refugees of the Vietnam War and immigrants who left the country at different historical periods afterwards. Uprooted with remnants of the past, these people seeded a new imaginary on their new-found land, while working out the intensities of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and citizenship through discourses of North-South, us-them, diaspora-transnational-local, male-female, Vietnam-American, white-black-color, host-guest. At the same time, the temple also worked as a venue for local events such as Mental Health Professionals Workshop, Alcoholic Anonymous, or mindfulness retreats, whose attendants were
non-immigrant, birthright U.S. residents who came to benefit from mindfulness practice as well as mingle with the immigrant-associated members in a diverse community. Again, Chapter 5 tackled the complexity of identity politics, social positionings and interactions between all these members over time and across space. As evinced in this study, a pedagogy of place would appeal to teachers, educators and anyone interested in the politics of difference, because it is not concerned about enforcing uniform standards on marginalized groups to eventually assimilate them into the so-called mainstream society in the name of social justice. Conversely, it would promote an ethical attempt to identify and learn from diverse communities who resist social domination, reterritorialize boundaries and blur the border between us and them through their own creative, agentic power.

Finally, the interweaving of Buddhist practices and daily living presented experiential learning opportunities for ecological consciousness. In a small garden put together by the monastics and laypeople, there were a variety of vegetables and herbs that were grown seasonally and harvested to be consumed in daily meals, Sunday buffets, as well as vegetarian food sales. This garden was a popular learning site during the Youth Retreat, where groups of children aging six to seventeen would take turn to visit with their counselors, who were mostly members from the Friday sangha with background in education, psychology or counseling. During these trips, youths in each group were encouraged to study the plants, irrigation system, eco-friendly fertilizers and other bio factors in the garden, before discussing how the garden was or was not an exemplary model for sustainable ecosystem. At every community meal including breakfast, lunch and dinner during this three-day retreat, country monk would lead a communal chanting of the Five Contemplations Before Eating:

This food is a gift of the earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work.
May we eat with mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive this food. May we recognize and transform unwholesome mental formations, especially our greed and learn to eat with moderation. May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that reduces the suffering of living beings, stops contributing to climate change, and heals and preserves our precious planet. We accept this food so that we may nurture our brotherhood and sisterhood, build our Sangha, and nourish our ideal of serving all living beings. (Fieldnotes, 07/26/2020)

… then, he would invite three sounds of the bell before everyone started eating in silence.

During the retreat, children were taught to appreciate where the food came from, to finish what was on their plate, to keep quiet during mealtime, and finally, to clean their own plate at the sink along Harmony Hall. These were a few of the distinctive practices at the temple that connected place with self and community. This ecological dimension of place-conscious pedagogy engaged its subjects in “multidisciplinary, experiential, and intergenerational learning that is not only relevant but potentially contributes to the well-being of community life” (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 315).

I have so far reviewed how a non-school place such as the temple offered critical insights into 1) the ways a place taught people about how the world works and how their lives fit into the spaces they occupied; and 2) the ways people’s culture, beliefs and behaviors shaped the place they occupied in. These insights, hopefully, could create some ruptures in the prevailing commonsensical assumptions about school and school curriculum with content knowledge, skills, standardization and accountability at its untouchable core. It is, perhaps, time to assume that schools are not self-contained places, and for the curriculum to (re)connect teachers and students to places outside the school walls.

**A Pedagogy of the Sangha**

Since Western and American Buddhism has been a relatively new field of inquiry in social studies, scholars have observed “a diversity in academic points of view” which makes for
“a rich, if uneven, body of critical literature” with an “increasingly nuanced understanding” of Buddhism’s institutional and ideological landscape (Seager, 2015, p. 113). Oftentimes in education, Buddhism has been used as a blanket concept to cover anything remotely or seemingly Buddhist in its (mis)applications for education, school and learning. For example, Hsu (2016) problematized the promotion of “secular mindfulness” in schools because it advanced the market paradigms of education established by *No Child Left Behind* “without deep reflection on the larger structural forces that shape its environment” (p. 369) such as race, power and inequality. She further argued that secular mindfulness, or I would add, Buddhist epistemologies in general, can only be helpful in cultivating a paradigm shift in education, one that “enhances the value of education as a public good, recognizes the validity of diverse cosmologies of knowing/being, and enables the collective well-being of all living beings” (p. 379). Following this proposition, I explored a pedagogy of the *Sangha* exemplified in the study as an embodied curriculum (re)conceptualized on dependent origination, harmony, and mindfulness.

It is necessary to recall the definition of *Sangha* as a concept. As mentioned in Chapter 4, *Sangha* is one of the three Jewels in Buddhism, along with Buddha and Dharma. Buddha implies both the historical Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, and the ideal Buddhahood, or enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Dharma with a capital “D” means the teachings of the Buddha. The third Jewel, *Sangha*, refers to not just any community, nor a retreat from the world, but a spiritual community which served as a model for social equality, cutting across class and caste lines, economic sharing and democratic process (Macy, 1991). Not only limited to monastic members who are ordained monks and nuns, *Sangha* also indicates the whole community of Buddhist practitioners, including monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.
The first value in a pedagogy of the Sangha would be the principle of dependent origination, also called dependent co-arising, which states in the Heart Sutra that all phenomena arise in the 12-fold Chain of Causations in dependence on other phenomena:

… form is emptiness, emptiness is form;
emptiness is not separate from form,
form is not separate from emptiness;
whatever is form is emptiness,
whatever is emptiness is form… (The Heart Sutra, translated by Pine, 2004)

One of the participants, Vidya, illustrated her understanding of this principle in plain terms:

VIDYA: […] I’ve always felt that we are really one of the same thing. And I’ve also felt that this isn’t who I am. This body is not who I am.
CHAU: So what is?
VIDYA: There’s something beyond but is part of. It’s not like you can chop it up, and we got a little one over here, and a little one over there.
CHAU: [laugh]
VIDYA: And I think … we’re all parts, whether we’re recognizing it all the time or not, but some people really think they’re that little part that’s chopped off and has to defend itself and fight, argue and be right to survive, and it’s the ego. And the less ego you have, the more happiness you have, because you are not so invested in being right all the time. You’re not so invested in being… you know… dominant over other people. (Vidya, Interview 1, lines 388-402).

Vidya’s elaboration was supportive of Macy’s (1991) claim that, from the dependent co-arising viewpoint, “to be a person is to participate at every level of our being in a reality wider than that enclosed by our skin or identified with our name” (Macy, 1991, p. 184). In this dimension, a pedagogy of the Sangha enables individuals to recognize the arbitrariness of the definitive delineations between I and the other, self and the society, or member and the community.

The second value, which was strongly emphasized in the daily practice of the Thanh Tinh Sangha, is harmony. In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, harmony is considered the nature of a community, and it can be realized by following the Six Concords: “sharing space, sharing the
essentials of daily life, observing the same precepts, using only words that contribute to
harmony, sharing insights and understanding, and respecting each other’s viewpoints” (Thich
Nhat Hanh, 1994, p. 6). The temple posted *Fourteen Vows of Living in Harmony* on its bulletin
board and website; named one of its buildings Harmony Hall; and called the Christmas tree the
Tree of Harmony as well. When inquired about this naming, country monk explained:

> The foundation of this community is everyone respect the others even if [they] have
different perspectives, different ideas. So I always remind the people, including myself,
living in peace, in harmony, in happiness, regardless [of] what's going on right now, if we
can get along, work together, make a decision together, based on the majority vote.

> [...] I do believe the language has power [to] impact on people, the way they think, so [...] I
just thought of it randomly as the Tree of Harmony, and in fact that's not conflict[ed] with
the way we practice here and also I see some members of Christian[anity] from this local
area, they're very happy because they have a feeling that they are respected. (country
monk, Interview 2, lines 163-177).

In his answer, country monk portrayed Thanh Tinh Sangha with both diversity and unity
as equally integral to reality at the temple, which indicated that it is the differences that bring
people together through a process of negotiation under the rule of majority vote. This by no
means suggests that a Sangha is without problems. In fact, Hot Pot shared an honest lesson that
he learned as a member of the community:

> When I first joined the monastery, there are things that happened that not as a I expected.

> [...] When things turned out to be not like I thought, it's not always peaceful, it's not
always mindful, it's not always smiling, I was kind of disappointed. [...] But after that,
when I come back to reality, I realized that everyone is still trying their best to practice,
[...] so that helped me understand what monastic life really is, and what is the purpose of
joining monastic life. Joining monastic life is not about finding an ideal environment for
you to enjoy, but to accept the challenge and work on it by changing yourself first. And
when I start realizing that and applying it to my daily life, it's way easier. It's changed
until now. (Hot Pot, Interview 2, lines 201-212).

Hot Pot’s reflection echoed Thich Nhat Hanh’s (1994) assertion, which I argue could be
applicable to a pedagogy of the Sangha: “You do not need a perfect Sangha. An imperfect one is
good enough. We do our best to transform the Sangha by transforming ourselves into a positive
element of the Sangha […]” (p. 8). This pedagogy encourages individuals to transform themselves in order to transform their community. Building a happy Sangha by “taking care of each person, looking into his pain, her difficulties, his aspirations, her fears, his hopes,” Thich Nhat Hanh claimed, was an “art,” and “the most important thing a Dharma teacher can offer his or her students” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1994, p. 10).

The third value of Sangha as a pedagogy is mindfulness. Though often equated with sitting meditation and stilling of the mind, mindfulness at a broader sense means the capacity of being aware of what is going on in the present moment (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1994; 2015; 2016). In the same response Grossman (2015) drew against Western “heavily cognitive, clinical, and neuroscience orientations toward mindfulness,” (p. 17) and as informed by the findings from this study, I emphasize the ethical dimensions in which mindfulness plays a central role at Thanh Tinh Sangha. Throughout their daily practice at the temple, members were constantly reminded of the present moment through the sound of the bell, and the act of pausing seemed to be embedded in their very practice. All but three participants naturally paused in the middle of their conversations with me at the strike of a bell or the chime of the clock, and they picked up what was left off soon after the sound ended. All the notions of mindful breathing, mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful speech and noble silence, to name a few, were constantly enacted within the space and indicative of a Buddhist ethic that emerged from the simple experience of being alive in the world.

A mindset of mindfulness, or attentiveness to the present, engendered a very different image of home as conjured up in the participants’ reflections. Hạ Buông, country monk, Lala, and Vidya, all claimed that home was inside their heart, wherever they were, at any moment. Rather than anchoring in one place to be their home, these participants considered their home to be
intrinsic to their very existence, which would allow them to build up a moment-to-moment awareness as reality unfolds. This example represents “an embodied experience of a feeling of wellbeing that is not fully contingent upon, nor fully conditioned by, the circumstances in which we find ourselves” (Grossman, 2015, p. 21). Each individual being positively impacted by mindfulness practice hence can expand their impact to the whole community they live in:

Your mindful breath is your home base. If you want to realize your aspirations; if you want to build connection with your family and friends; if you want to help your community – you need to begin with your breath. Every breath, every step, every action done in mindfulness will give you sustenance. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2015, p. 127)

A pedagogy of the Sangha, then, would cultivate connections between interbeings through mindfulness in thoughts, bodily actions, and speech. A teacher in that pedagogy would purposefully develop mindfulness as a skill which can “ignite and sustain a lifelong curiosity and love of learning as well as an insightful grasp of whatever specific material is being studied” (Thich Nhat Hanh & Kabat-Zinn, 2017, p. xiv) while also using intuitions and expertise that are grounded in his or her own moment-to-moment mindfulness practice.

In short, a pedagogy of the Sangha challenges schools as institutions with decompartmentalized curriculum and classrooms which treat individual as separate a-historical, a-social subjects implicated in the power/knowledge system. In these instructions, there exist only hierarchical relationships between students, teachers, staff, and administrators and every activity is to prepare for a distant future rather than to enjoy the presence as is. A pedagogy of the Sangha proposes otherwise – a community of interbeings where an ethic of mindfulness and an understanding of dependent origination are embedded in each member’ very existence through mind, body and actions.
Conclusion

The previous lines of flight sketched the multiplicity of curriculum as a plane of immanence, where no line is transcendent, “each is at work within the others” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2016, p. 205). In each of the reimagined pedagogical spaces introduced, the same concepts of subjectivity, difference, language, place, movement, relation, and nonhuman factors could be reorganized and interpreted through another lens, like lines cutting into each other, making connections and marking new dimensions of multiplicities. This dissertation did not aim to provide a definite number of ways or a clear direction with detailed and comprehensive guidelines for curriculum, pedagogy, schools, teaching and learning to be improved into something they should be. What I did was engage in the “struggle” of the “AND-stammering” (p. 4) that Reynolds and Webber (2008), inspired by Deleuze, pondered to be the possibilities for creative curriculum thought:

It is the ‘in-between,’ the AND-becoming; new ways of thinking always proceed from the ‘in-between.’ This is where lines of flight take shape. The possibilities for creative curriculum thought for one lies in those multiplicities, which emerge in the ‘in-between.’ This shows not what curriculum thought should BE but how AND can be productive for it. [...] The ‘struggle’ is to keep on finding lines that disrupt and overturn, and tactically weave through the globalized corporate order. An AND, AND, AND, which each time marks a new threshold, a new direction of the zigzagging line, a new course for the border. (Reynolds & Webber, 2008, p. 4)

To teachers, educators, policymakers, education researchers, and anyone interested in education, teaching and learning, who were looking for a template to insert into their lesson plans or a list of points to answer their so-what questions about standardization or accountability, I am truly sorry that my work has caused a sense of disappointment. However, for those who cares about contemporary problems such as the “wide-spread dominance of models of industrial assembly as befitting teaching and learning,” the “fragmentation of the living fields of knowledge,” and the “consequent acceleration and proliferation of demands on the lives and attention of
teachers and students,” my study could offer embodied imaginaries that re-inscribe community into the heart of curriculum, counter its hegemonic discourses, de-territorialize its “textual striation” and reconceptualize it as “a living, breathing, rhizomatic relationality” (Eaton & Hendry, 2019, p. 14).

As a conclusion, I would like to end by reciting a part of the Great Bell Chant, which was a fundamental component of daily life at the site where I had spent eleven months of fieldwork.

May the sound of this bell penetrate deep into the cosmos
Even in the darkest places
May all living beings be able to hear it clearly
So that all suffering in them ceases
Understanding comes to their hearts
So that they transcend the path of sorrow and death. (Fieldnotes, 02/15/2019)

With this imaginary sound of the bell, I wish to invoke a moment of silence in the academic literature related to immigrant communities, immigrant students, and curriculum theory. This silence by no means is negative or oppressive, on the contrary, as Buddhist practitioners believe, “conscious, intentional quiet is noble silence” (p. 81), because it is a powerful statement that responds to our surrounding: “I am here. I am free. I hear you” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2015, p. 5).

Being silent together, then, is particularly dynamic and healing because it allows us to be fully alive and free in each other’s presence, without judgments or preoccupations about the future or the past. It may be in this noble silence that we might see each other’s values, contributions, aspirations, and all the other wonders of life. Again, as Buddhist practitioners believe, happy teachers change the world – it may be in this noble silence that we realize happiness is more than an individual matter; so is teaching, so is learning, and so is education.
APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Chau Vu  
    Education

FROM: Dennis Landin  
    Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 29, 2019

RE: IRB/ E11122

TITLE: Place-making Practices in a Vietnamese American Buddhist Temple


Review Date: 1/29/2019

Approved X Disapproved

Approval Date: 1/29/2019 Approval Expiration Date: 1/28/2022

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2b, c

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarly with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU’s Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
8. SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU’s Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb.
APPENDIX B. SELF-REPORTED DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participant,

Thank you for your participation in my research project “Spatial Production and Nomadic Subjectivities in a Buddhist Learning Space”. The purpose of this study is to explore place-making practices of people engaging on a setting of a Buddhist Temple and the role the place plays in the making of its members’ subjectivities.

As one of the attempts to ethically represent the data collected from you, the researcher is seeking your contribution regarding the demographic information important to her research. If you are able, please answer the list of questions at the end of this document with what most likely describes you. You could skip or write your own descriptors any way you want. The researcher is not looking for accuracy, but richness in portraying you as a member in this community. All your personal information will be kept in anonymity, but you reserve the right to answer or refuse to answer any question, without any consequences.

Thank you for your contribution.

For participant:

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

I hereby agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this form.

Interviewee’s Signature: _____________________________ Date: _______________________

Investigator's Signature: _____________________________ Date ________________________
1. Participant’s name:
2. Chosen pseudonym:
3. Age:
4. Gender:
5. Race/ Ethnicity:
6. Country of origin:
7. Country of parents’ origin:
8. Years in US:
9. Years to this Temple:
10. Profession/ Job/ Career:
11. Highest level of school completed/ Highest degree received:
12. Primary language spoken:
13. Secondary language spoken:
14. Other languages spoken (if any):
15. Role at the Temple:
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INFORMANTS

1. Tell me about yourself – where you are from and what do you do.

2. Please describe your cultural background – what is the culture that you could best relate to?

3. Describe your role at this place?

4. How long have you been to/ living in this place? How did it start?

5. Do you know anything about the history of this place? Which event do you think is/was very important to the history of the place?

6. Which corners in this place do you spend lots of time at? Which ones do you feel most comfortable in?

7. What do you normally do when you are in this place? Who do you meet or interact with? Describe how a day goes here for you.

8. Tell me some special memories you have about this place.

9. Is there anything you like about this place? What is it?

10. Why did you decide to come here?
APPENDIX D. INFORMANT FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe the whole Thanh Tinh community in one big picture? Who come here?

2. Do you feel belonged to this place? Is there any moment when you don’t feel so? Why do you choose this place over the others? If you could have a choice, would you stay here?

3. How does the experience at this place relate to your cultural background?

4. Out of the many events happening at this place over the year, which one was remarkable to you?

5. Can you tell me about some rules and regulations here that you must follow? What are you allowed to do? How do you feel about those rules?

6. What is home to you? Where is your home?

7. How do you feel as a citizen in this country?

8. What does democracy mean to you? Do you think this is a democratic place? How is it democratic or not?

9. What is one good thing from this place that you wish other places could learn from?

10. What is something you would like to see improved in this place?
APPENDIX E. WRITTEN CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. STUDY TITLE

Spatial Production and Nomadic Subjectivities in a Buddhist Learning Space

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe place-making practices of people engaging on a setting of a Buddhist Temple. It closely looks at the social interactions between people or groups of people, as well as forms of knowledge and practices being transmitted within the Temple and the role the place plays in the life of its members. It also encourages the participants to think about two questions: First, “What is this place?” and second, “Who are you in this place?”.

The study aims to provide a counter narrative to the shared literature on Vietnamese immigrant communities and shed light on how place-making practices in an immigrant space have impacts on the identity formation of people whether they are immigrants or not. The findings from the study promise to contribute to the theorization and practice of curriculum design and the teaching of under-represented communities of color.

3. STUDY PROCEDURES

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be instructed to:

Using a fictitious name of your choice, express your agreement with this consent form via handwritten or email communication with the researcher.

Participate in one or more 60 minute to one hour in-person interview with Chau Le. The interview(s) will be conducted in a place of your choice within this temple, and your confidentiality will be protected during the whole process of this study through the use of fictitious names. The interview is recorded for transcription, which will be used for the data
You are invited to review the transcription of this interview as well as the textural-structural descriptions. You will also have an opportunity to provide your feedback via mail, email, or in-person meeting with Chau Le.

The researcher will also take photos of you within the setting of the temple and ask for your own photos, drawings, journals or recordings you have taken of and about the temple. These artefacts will also be used for the data analysis portion of the study. You are invited to review the description of these photos and provide your feedback via mail, email, or in-person meeting with Chau Le.

4. PERFORMANCE SITE

Tambao Buddhist Temple, 975 Monterrey Blvd, Baton Rouge, LA 70815

5. SUBJECT INCLUSION

Individuals who visit the Temple at least once a week who show interest in the research. To participate in this study, you must meet requirements of the inclusion criteria.

6. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

10

7. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Chau Le

Dept: College of Human Sciences and Education, School of Education

328 Peabody Hall, Louisiana State University

Rank: Graduate Student

Ph: 225-620-6842

Email: cvu4@lsu.edu

The investigator is available for questions about this study M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8. CO-INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Kim Skinner
Dept: School of Education

Rank: Associate Professor

Ph: (361) 739-6441

Email: kskinner@lsu.edu

9. BENEFITS

There is no gift or any type of monetary compensation for participating in this study. However, by participating in this study, you will get to share your personal experiences related to teaching and learning. In addition, the results (your personal experiences) of this study may help educators and policymakers find out new educational venues to best improve the experience of children in schools. The findings may also be used to change or create after-school programs for informal, community-based learning and teaching.

10. RISKS

There are minimal risks in this study. The interview will be conducted in a place of your choice within this temple, using the interview questions to inquire about your experiences related to teaching and learning. Your identity will not be used during this study; fictitious names or aliases will be used instead.

A possible potential risk is that you may feel uncomfortable or stress in sharing your feelings or emotions. If this happens, you can stop the interview, take a break, or completely withdraw from this study without any consequences.

11. RIGHT TO REFUSE

Participants may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

12. PRIVACY

Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

13. SIGNATURES
I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

I hereby agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Interviewee’s Signature: _____________________________ Date: ______________________

Investigator's Signature: _____________________________ Date ______________________
REFERENCES


Census Viewer (2010).


VITA

Chau Bao Vu Le, born Vu Bao Chau in Hai Duong, Vietnam, worked as a lecturer at Vietnam National University for one year after receiving her bachelor’s degree from Vietnam National University in English Teacher Education. She then moved to the U.S. and entered the Department of Education, College of Humanities and Social Science at Louisiana State University. Upon completion of her master’s degree, she proceeded to complete her doctorate, which is in Curriculum and Instruction.