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## CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE: THE VIETNAMESE-AMERICANS AND LITTLE SAIGON

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### Abstract

Based on a study of Little Saigon, an ethnic enclave in Westminster, California, this paper examines the physical, social, symbolic and emotional significance of such places in the lives of immigrants. We focus on three specific aspects of the ethnic enclave: architectural elements, everyday social interaction within the enclave, and public ritual events. We highlight how the built architectural environment and the immigrants' social, commercial, and ritual activities interact to create and sustain a sense of place, foster community identity, and structure social relations. We conclude that ethnic enclaves constitute an important aspect of an immigrant's place identity enabling him/her to simultaneously remain connected to the places left behind and yet appropriating and forging significant new place ties.

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### Introduction

#### *Ethnic enclaves*

Ethnic enclaves<sup>1</sup> play a significant role in the immigrant's experience (Abrahamson, 1996; Gold, 1992; Zhou, 1992) by mitigating the psychological trauma of displacement, providing alternative economic structures, and facilitating the preservation of cultural traditions. The literature asserts that migration is often traumatic, involving physical and social displacement accompanied with feelings of loss, separation and helplessness (Handlin, 1951; Kramer, 1970; Gold, 1992). Separated from family and friends, isolated from their old and familiar socio-cultural institutions, immigrant groups seek to create their own communities where their cultural identity can be preserved and interaction with the new society mediated. Robert Park (1952, pp. 99–100) described such ethnic communities as a 'mosaic of segregated people' each trying to 'preserve its peculiar cultural forms and to maintain its individual and unique conception of life'. Ethnic enclaves, then, provide new arrivals with a chance to adjust and adapt (Gordon, 1964) by insulating them, tempering the shock of transition (Kramer, 1970), and provid-

ing a variety of important services (Lyman, 1974; Gold, 1992; Zhou, 1992). Portes and Manning (1986) see ethnic enclaves primarily as economic ventures, as mini economies; that is, the primary purpose for their emergence is economic enterprise, for which the three prerequisites they mention are 'first, the presence of a substantial number of immigrants with business experience acquired in the sending country; second, the availability of sources of capital; and third, the availability of sources of labor' (Portes & Manning, 1986, p. 61). They suggest the 'ethnic enclave' as an alternate mode of incorporation of immigrants. This is understandable as their focus is on economic integration into the host country (see also Wilson & Portes, 1980). In this model, however, there is little or no consideration given to issues of symbolic communication, community formation, place identity and attachment.

#### *Place identity*

How do immigrants come to identify with such places? How do these places become the locus of a community's identity and attachment? According to the literature, place identity is a 'substructure of the self identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognition about the physical world in which

the individual lives' (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983, p. 59; see also Proshansky, 1978). While agreeing with Proshansky *et al.* (1983) on the importance of place, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996, p. 206) assert that place identity is not merely a 'separate part of identity' (as proposed by Proshansky *et al.*, 1983) but rather 'all aspects of identity have place related implications.' They focus on the importance of continuity, distinctiveness self esteem and self efficacy in the development of place identity. Other linkages between people and places are expressed by Tuan (1980), Relph (1976), and conceptualized through such terms as 'spatial identity'<sup>2</sup> (Fried, 1963) and 'settlement identity' (Feldman, 1990).<sup>3</sup> Physical settings, both home and neighborhood, 'reflect and shape people's understanding of who they are as individuals and as members of groups' (Brown & Perkins, 1992, p. 280). The notion of community-based identity is further developed by Relph (1976), Rowles (1983), Hummon (1992), and Rivlin (1987). According to Relph (1976, p. 35):

The relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other and in which the landscape is very much an expression of communally held beliefs and values and of interpersonal involvements.

Community identity, then, is 'grounded in both social integration and environmental experience' and 'appears to build particularly on the personal meanings of life experiences and the public images of local culture' (Hummon, 1992, p. 262).

#### *Ethnic enclaves, place identity and attachment*

Historically, in the United States, almost every newly arrived group has felt the need to express its community identity through the creation of its own enclave, its own space and place. Chinatowns (Yuan, 1963; Loo, 1991), Polish enclaves (Lopata, 1964), Lebanese enclaves, such as the one in Dearborn, Michigan, Germantown and Little Havana (Abrahamson, 1996) are some examples. From these earlier studies we have come to understand that enclaves are places where members of a group strive to 'retrieve', 'engrave', and 'enclose' segments from their collective memory and their collective past (Halbwachs, 1980). They establish what Bellah *et al.* (1985, p. 153) call a 'community of memory', 'one that does not forget its past' and one that is 'concerned in a variety of ways to give a qualitative meaning to the living of life, to time and space' (Bellah *et al.*, 1985, p. 282). In recreating their past, immigrants seek to reestablish a sense of home and also to reconnect with what they have left behind

(Buttimer, 1980; Feldman, 1990). In these enclaves they build for themselves a life that has many spatial characteristics that are either similar to or reminiscent of the places left behind, thus enabling them to maintain continuity with place. Place continuity is maintained in two ways: first, 'continuity via characteristics of place which are generic and transferable from one place to another' (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 208) referred to in the literature as 'place congruent continuity' (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996); and second, 'continuity via places that have emotional significance for a person' (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 208) also referred to as 'place referent continuity' (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).<sup>4</sup> According to Jonassen (1948/1961) the Norwegians were drawn to the area near the Brooklyn shipyards because the salt-water ships and shipyards reminded them of their nautical heritage. 'In this atmosphere of salt water and ships, men familiar with the sea could feel at home' (Jonassen, 1948/1961, p. 266). To the Norwegians then 'socialized in the coast culture of Norway, this environment had meaning and value in terms of sustenance and psychological satisfaction' (Jonassen, 1948/1961, p. 270). Nostalgia for place helps immigrants regain what is lost (Eliade, 1982) and retain some semblance of continuity (Milligan, 1998) in their lives. Relocation, then, is often characterized by the 'struggles to defend or recover a meaningful pattern of relationships' (Marris, 1976, p. 1). Places such as enclaves come to serve as a kind of 'psychic anchor' (Cooper Marcus, 1982) for displaced people, providing them with a 'symbolic life line to a continuous sense of identity' (Hummon, 1989, p. 219).

Attachment to enclaves runs deep (Gans, 1962; Fried, 1963; Rivlin, 1987; Abrahamson, 1996). Rivlin (1982, 1987), describing the intense commitment of the Lubavitch Jewish community, argues that it is the totality of their religious immersion and experience afforded by their Crown Heights neighborhood (such as the presence of the Rabbi and the network of kosher shops, *mikvahs*, *yeshivas*, synagogues and other supportive institutions) that led to their attachment to place. Loss of such places, according to Fried (1963, p. 232), represents a 'disruption in one's relationship to the past, to the present and the future. Losses bring about fragmentation of relationship and expectation...'. Some residents go through a prolonged grieving process following such loss (Abrahamson, 1996). Others make a ritual pilgrimage to lost enclaves to remember and relive their collective past. Abrahamson (1996, pp. 6-7) recounts the annual reunion held by a few dozen Jewish men originally from the Brownsville section

of Eastern Brooklyn: 'The place that was their enclave is no more, but now they come from across the country to meet every year because the Brownsville of their youth is still an important part of their identities.' A similar example is described by Gans (1962) and Fried (1963). Even though the Little Italy of the West End of Boston was demolished by the bulldozers over two decades ago, the erstwhile residents of Little Italy still cherish memories of the place and long to go back (Fried *et al.*, 1995). Over the years they have maintained a 'psychic community' by communicating through meetings and publications and aspire to move back to the West End by purchasing property there. Even though the setting has changed a lot, they feel they can expose their children to a life similar to the one they experienced and can show them the places they can now communicate only through stories. Stories then keep the collective place memory alive.

Buildings, artifacts, and other objects of material culture also tell a story and act to preserve 'social memories' (Zerubavel, 1996), 'signify history, relationships, current practices and goals' (Rochberg-Halton, 1986, p. 191), and transmit information about a group's collective past (Milligan, 1998). From Relph (1976) and Rapoport (1982) we learn that the urban landscape can act as a means of nonverbal communication, 'as a mnemonic . . . reminding people of the behavior expected of them. . . who does what, where, when and with whom' (Rapoport, 1982, pp. 80–81). Thus it can be expected that the architecture and urban scape of the ethnic enclaves will communicate messages. But we do not know much about how, for social and cultural groups, architecture becomes an instrument or an agent of communication. There is a difference between an observer claiming that architecture is a connotative symbol that the observer is reading, and a group using architecture as a communication device (Rapoport, 1970). Despite numerous studies on ethnic enclaves the role of architecture in creating, expressing, and sustaining identity has been inadequately researched. Neither has the literature addressed the issue of how the character of the ethnic enclave is shaped by the interaction between ethnic architecture and the social relations and religious life of the enclave.

This paper focuses on both the physical and social construction of an ethnic enclave. We suggest that though buildings and artifacts communicate identity, it is people's interaction in these places that give meaning to the setting. Through a study of Little Saigon we highlight how the built architectural environment and the immigrant's social, commercial and ritual activities interact and intersect to create

a sense of place to foster community identity and place attachment. What are the specific architectural elements used to foster identification with place? How is the physical setting made meaningful to its members through its activities, services and interactions? How is group life sustained through ceremonial and ritual events and spaces? These are some of the questions we focus on in this paper.

### Methodology

The primary methodology used in this project was 'naturalistic field research.' A diverse number of labels have been used to describe this approach. While some (Lofland, 1967; Blumer, 1969; Matza, 1969) have called it 'naturalistic social research,' others (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) have called it 'qualitative social research.'<sup>5</sup> Naturalistic field research has several aims. A primary aim of this methodology is to arrive at a deep understanding called for in the parallel methodology of *verstehen*,<sup>6</sup> first proposed by Wilhelm Dilthey, and adapted into the social sciences by Max Weber and Alfred Schutz (1967). A second aim is to study phenomena in their natural setting as they occur naturally.<sup>7</sup> Minimizing of disturbance and obtrusiveness are given careful consideration. As Blumer has pointed out, it is an 'investigation that is directed to a given empirical world in its natural ongoing character instead of to simulation of such a world or to an abstraction from it (as in the case of a laboratory experimentation) or to a substitute for the world in the form of a pre-set image of it' (Blumer, 1969, p. 46). Third, socially negotiated arrangements are important. These include local and shared understandings, views, mores, norms, rituals, social relations not only in their interaction with other people but also with the physical setting, artifacts and objects.

Data can be collected using a variety of techniques. Gold (1958, p. 217) has suggested

... four theoretically possible roles for conducting field work. These range from the complete participant at one extreme to the complete observer at the other. Between these but near to the former is the participant-as-observer. Nearer the latter is the observer-as-participant.

In our study of Little Saigon, our objective was to collect the 'richest possible data' (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 11). By 'rich data' Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 11) mean:

... ideally, a wide and diverse range of information collected over a relatively prolonged period of time ... that collection is achieved again ideally, through

direct, face-to-face contact with, and prolonged immersion in some location or circumstance.

In order to collect 'rich data' we relied on multiple data collecting techniques. First, was our role as observers. This involved observation of the physical setting, social interaction, ceremonial public events and religious ritual. Detailed observations were conducted in a variety of settings such as in the malls (Asian Garden Mall), streets, restaurants, food markets and specialty stores such as herbal, jewelry, and video stores. Second, we also took the role of participant-as-observer by participating in several activities, such as religious and ritual events including the annual Tet festival, and participating as a visitor, and customer. Third, data collected through these sources was supplemented by interview data. This included short, unstructured interviews, in-depth interviews, and repeated in-depth interviews with key informants. Interviews were conducted with Vietnamese residents, customers and visitors as well as with community leaders and planners.<sup>8</sup> Finally, additional information was gathered from written records, archival material such as City of Westminster Design Standard, Design Proposals and articles in booklets, newsletters, and newspapers.

The purpose of this study is not to test meta-theories or a predetermined hypothesis but rather to use 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) to provide a detailed understanding (*verstehen*) of the physical and social world of Little Saigon and the meanings attached to it by social actors. '[T]he essential task of theory building', according to Geertz (1973, p. 26), 'is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases, but to generalize within them'. Our study, then, is not a 'search of law' but a 'search of meaning' (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) with the purpose of inductively generating grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### **The Vietnamese experience and the emergence of Little Saigon**

The story of the Vietnamese experience is one of pain and loss, loss of nation, home, family, culture and identity (Nguyen & Henkin, 1984; Freeman, 1989; Masequesmay, 1991; Gold, 1992; Nally, 1994; Kitano & Daniels, 1995). Ravaged by war, violently pushed out of their home country, separated from family and friends, the Vietnamese have struggled to reclaim their heritage, and reestablish their roots here in America. Although thousands of Vietnamese

had escaped before the fall of Saigon in 1975, it was the withdrawal of American troops that precipitated the exodus of the Vietnamese (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). Over the next 2 years, immigration leveled off followed by a massive surge of refugees in 1980 of hundreds of thousands of the most helpless of victims, commonly known as the 'boat people' who escaped with little only to be further brutalized, tortured, and raped by pirates while in transit (Freeman, 1989; Masequesmay, 1991; Kitano & Daniels, 1995).

In contrast to other immigrant groups, the federal government actively involved itself in the relocation and dispersion of the Vietnamese refugees to different parts of the country thus denying them an 'avenue of adjustment used by previous immigrant groups, the ethnic community' (Henslin, 1996, p. 306). However, as Schaefer (1993, p. 335) points out, such efforts failed because the 'refugees like European immigrants before them sought out their compatriots' regrouping with family and friends, forging social networks, appropriating new places and building once again a sense of community (see also Mazumdar, 1995). Little Saigon in Westminster and Garden Grove, California, became one such reclaimed place, representing memory, hope and a symbol of their lost capital and homeland (Masequesmay, 1991). It was indeed an emotional day for the Vietnamese community when Governor George Deukmejian came to Westminster and officially dedicated the name Little Saigon to the area.

Today, Little Saigon is replete with signs, symbols, language, food and artifacts that constitute the core of the Vietnamese-American culture (see also Rivlin, 1982, 1987). What began in the 1970s with a few shops has grown today to include over 2000 businesses including major shopping centers, mini malls, super markets, restaurants, professional offices, nail salons, flower shops, bakeries and other services. From the signs on shops and businesses in both Vietnamese and English, to the sound of the Vietnamese language and the aroma of the Vietnamese cuisine, Little Saigon has become not only the commercial hub but the emotional focal point of the Vietnamese community in America. According to the publisher of *Ngoi Viet*

People say, that if you live outside of here, you have to make a pilgrimage (D. N. Yen quoted in Tran, 1998, A 36).

In the following sections we will describe how Little Saigon became the center of the community's identity and attachment.

### Architecture and a sense of place

For the diasporic Vietnamese community Little Saigon embodies the material and symbolic transference of culture. Its distinctive architecture communicates its Asian heritage, reaffirming ethnic identity, expressing nostalgia for places left behind and 'engraving' on the new landscape memories from the past. Some architectural features are direct adaptations from Vietnam. This is particularly true of the newer developments in Little Saigon such as the Bolsa Medical Center which according to architect Phan is a modern interpretation of traditional Vietnamese architectural style. This new facility housing 20 doctors and other services uses covered colonnades, glazed tile roofs, tower gates and archways that are directly inspired by the imperial palaces of Central Vietnam as well as by the traditional temple architecture (Phan, 1994). Care is taken to skillfully reproduce and present a certain look and ambiance:

All three towers are placed on massive bases with open archways resembling the imperial gates at Hue ... the three towers [have] curved ornate roof[s], clad with burgundy color tile ...

Roof decorations and other design motifs such as stylized dragon heads at colonnade and Kicktail roof hip are introduced to emulate Vietnamese architecture and emphasize the Asian theme of the Center (Phan, 1994, p. 33).<sup>9</sup>

The landscaping too provides visual reminders of native plants and trees such as the exotic bamboo and other plants typically found in Vietnam (Phan, 1994).

The new upscale Asian Garden Mall epitomizes the use of Asian design features to communicate its Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese heritage. The roof of this mall is made of green tiles; an ornate curved roofed gateway with ridge ornaments leads to this mall. At the entrance, welcoming visitors is a statue of Buddha, behind which are the statues representing the Gods of Prosperity, Longevity, and Good Luck (also known to the Vietnamese as Phuc Loc Tho). The landscaping includes miniaturized (bonsai) plants and trees. The interior decor further accentuates the use of (Asian) Vietnamese symbols<sup>10</sup> such as red paper lanterns, fans, statues and figurines.

In order to sustain the ethnic character of Little Saigon, the use of some architectural features and symbols has been formalized through the creation of a Design Standards Manual<sup>11</sup> by the City of Westminster. The manual urges the use of:

architectural elements similar to those found on buildings constructed in Vietnam in the early

1900's in the French colonial tradition ... the use of design elements and details that follow a traditional Chinese architectural theme may also be used, as this style of architecture is used on many religious buildings in Vietnam (Urban Design Studio, nd, p. 53).<sup>12</sup>

The Design Standards Manual explicitly requires the incorporation and use of Vietnamese design features and motifs in newly built structures. Some of these are large, prominent roofs with overhanging eaves, use of columns, beams, gateways and the use of accent colors of bright red, dark green, black and gold (Urban Design Studio, nd, p. 54). The manual also emphasizes the exclusion of those design elements, styles and materials that would confound the communication of a Vietnamese identity such as Mediterranean, Spanish, Colonial, Ranch, Western or Old English, contemporary 'glass box' buildings and buildings with flat roofs.

There have been conscious and careful attempts to manage the 'look' and 'feel' of the place. There are individual, collective, informal as well as formal efforts (Mazumdar, 1986). The use of architectural and urban design elements, such as general arrangements in space, structural elements, materials, gateways, arches, curved painted roofs with overhanging eaves, colors, ornate glazed red, blue and green tiles on these roofs, decorative columns, open archways, dragons and other symbolic motifs, landscaping with miniature trees, make the area of the ethnic enclave different, distinct and Asian, and help create and communicate a Vietnamese sense of place and a sense of identity for the Vietnamese community. This is an important symbolic expression for a community in exile which has lost its homeland and is now seeking to create a new home in a new place.

### Social life and a sense of place

The preceding discussion indicates the important symbolic role of architecture. Architecture is one component of many that helps create a sense of place or community. The people, the networks, the interaction, the shops, celebration of religious events and holidays all cumulatively contribute to communal solidarity and ethnic identity. Many of these events occur in the context of buildings and reinforce the sense of community communicated by the architecture. This is important as:

[c]ommunication itself depends upon the possibility of a common ground, and the common ground is the life of the community: the purposive web of social

individuals whose symbols, that is, gestures, language, artifacts, buildings and practices, constitute a culture. Each and every sign, in representing something to someone, acts as a communicate dialogue within an organic objective web of meaning (Rochberg-Halton, 1986, pp. 192–193).

To the Vietnamese, Little Saigon expresses a distinctive Vietnamese character and lifestyle through a number of features described below. For a Vietnamese person, who had been in Louisiana before moving to Southern California, this aspect was noticeable.

... Little Saigon provides me with cultural feedback of what Vietnam is really about. In Louisiana, the only thing that reminded me of Vietnam were the few Vietnamese shops. When I came to California, I found this Vietnamese town inside American town. It has everything. It has *Tet* festival, Vietnamese people, Vietnamese food (VC:0314\AS\1).

One of the primary features is the presence of Vietnamese people.

What makes Little Saigon so distinctive are the people. They speak Vietnamese... The people dress Vietnamese style. The men do not wear pants and ties but wear loose shirt[s], ... white shirt[s] and trouser[s]. Women, they do not wear shoes; they wear sandals. In Vietnam it is really hot — here too it is hot so they wear sandals ... Everywhere there are Vietnamese people. Even the cars are driven by Vietnamese people (VC:0314\AS\1).

There is a certain comfort in being with people who share the same language, culture, and ethnicity. This is poignantly expressed in the following excerpt.

I don't consider myself a minority when I am there. When I am in other malls such as South Coast Plaza [in Costa Mesa, CA], I am constantly aware that I am 'different' because of my physical traits. It is a belonging need that other places cannot fulfill (VC:TT:069\A1\W).

Several kinds of people come to Little Saigon. They have different characteristics and interests, and different spaces hold meaning for them.<sup>13</sup>

First, there are the 'newly arrived,' many of whom do not know English

When the boat people come here they come to Little Saigon. They do not speak English and have very little interaction with Western Society (VC:0314\AS\1).

One informant describe it the following way:

My dad came in 1979 and my mom in 1980. At that time there were only a few stores. It was nice for them to go and talk to other Vietnamese people because at that time the neighborhood that we lived in was primarily Blacks and Hispanics. We were one of two families that were Vietnamese. Besides the

family next door, they could not talk to anyone (VC:0314\KK\1).

For the newly arrived, the enclave provides a cultural buffer zone, a cultural bridge, helping to minimize the stress of transition and culture shock. It is reassuring for the newcomers to have an established ethnic enclave, as pointed out by this interviewee.

For one, there was a sense of everybody looking similar; for another [there was] the type of food and its aroma (VC:0314\KK\1).

For the nonelite migrant coming to the U.S.A., not speaking the predominant local language, English, is an isolating experience. In the enclave, however, they could meet, interact and talk in their native language. They could go there and buy Vietnamese language newspapers which provided them with news about their home country as well as news about their new community 'Little Saigon.' Businesses in the enclave also help them communicate with their relatives and loved ones back in Vietnam by helping them send packages, money, and medicine. This was particularly helpful (as one informant pointed out) during those years when packages could not be sent directly to Vietnam due to lack of diplomatic ties, but had to be sent through France.

[People] would go to the gift shops and fabric shops. They would give money to the store owner. The store owner would send the money to his relatives in Vietnam, who would then give the money to the (sender's) relatives. The store owner would guarantee the [delivery of the] money and the medicine (VC:0314\KK\1).

The enclave provides other cultural services as well. Nonprofit organizations help with initial adjustment. English language classes are provided and the local Little Saigon television station also hosts programs useful for the newly arrived.

[These programs] would teach them a little bit of English. Also they would teach them what was acceptable behavior—such as 'Don't pick your nose'—so that [newcomers] would not get strange looks from Americans (VC:0314\KK\1).

Finally, the enclave provides newcomers with much needed employment; unlike in the dominant (English-speaking society) employers in the enclave (primarily Vietnamese) do not care whether they speak English, as primary communication takes place in Vietnamese. It is in the garment shops, the restaurants, and the beauty parlors of Little Saigon that many of the newly arrived found work.

Young Vietnamese growing up and negotiating two cultural traditions also come to Little Saigon.

They usually visit the newly built upscale Asian Garden Mall, the music and video stores, the restaurants and the swap meets. They come to experience Little Saigon and its unique character (a character quite different from a prevalent American mall). The music stores in Little Saigon not only sell Vietnamese music, they create a particular ambience by playing Vietnamese music loudly, and displaying Vietnamese signs and posters. One young informant says:

... The music stores play Vietnamese music out loud—not like Wherehouse—they play the CD's loud ... The shops have Vietnamese posters, Vietnamese signs ... (VC:0314\AS\1).

Some stores show videos of Vietnamese settings on large screen television. Karaoke is a popular trend among Vietnamese Americans and many of the music/video stores sell laser discs for Karaoke machines.

Coffee shops are places to 'hang out':

These coffee shops are unique ... you get only one kind of coffee—espresso with condensed milk ... Traditionally these coffee shops are male domains. It is improper for females to come here. If you are proper and you wanted coffee you would go to a restaurant (VC:0314\KK\1).

Thus, the coffee shops too, by their physical nature and the kind of goods and services they provide (only one kind of coffee), communicate images and roles prevalent in Vietnam. They provide a setting for males to gather and 'chit-chat', as if they were in their traditional environments. The enclave provides the context for this to occur. A similar setting of a coffee shop in a regular American mall would not function the same way. Not all are comfortable with this arrangement which enables, perhaps even encourages, sex segregation, as the comments above from a female informant indicate.

The elderly constitute a third set of Vietnamese people who draw on Little Saigon. They come to the Asian American Senior Center located in the back of a shopping center. There they can take English classes, play mahjongg, smoke waterpipes, read newspapers and meet with other Vietnamese elderly. Since the center is located near shops, they can also do some shopping or wait at the center while their family members complete their shopping (Montgomery, 1997). The elderly also go to church, where services are conducted in Vietnamese.

Middle-aged Vietnamese are a fourth set of Vietnamese who rely on Little Saigon. At Little Saigon, shopping is a major activity for them. They buy jewellery and other items made of gold at the

many jewellery shops selling Vietnamese jewellery in Little Saigon. Gold is seen as an investment and purchased not only for themselves, but also for their children, and as gifts for relatives and close friends especially for major and significant life cycle events. A young Vietnamese person feels that:

There are way too many jewellery shops in Little Saigon. Buying gold is an investment for the Vietnamese. They do not trust the American banking system. They either keep cash or buy gold (VC:0314\AS\1).

Other shopping includes visits to clothing stores, some of which sell traditional Vietnamese attire as well as western style clothes such as suits for men and women, visits to video stores, flower markets to buy the cherished *Mai* flower (apricot flower) and to stores selling herbal medicine. Medicine stores are stacked with herbal medicinal remedies to cure a variety of ailments from minor aches and pains to more serious problems. Alternative medicine is popular for a variety of reasons, ranging from the comfort of familiarity with it, mistrust of Western medicine and doctors, reliance on home remedies and lack of medical insurance.

In Little Saigon shop transactions can be different:

... The center of the mall has a swap meet. I bargain, they bargain back at me; can't do that in South Coast Plaza [a 'regular' American shopping mall] (VC:0314\AS\1).

Bargaining is a big thing in Little Saigon. Shoppers cannot bargain in [regular] malls. Whatever the price tag is, that's how much they have to pay. In Little Saigon, there are no price tags. Shoppers have to ask how much each item is and then they start bargaining. If they don't bargain, they will be taken advantage of (VC:0625\TT\1).

Bargaining over the price of goods and services is unusual in the U.S.A. (except for occasional swap meets), although bargaining is not an exclusively Vietnamese phenomenon and occurs in many Asian countries, it brings with it unwritten rules and norms about bargaining itself, some of which are Vietnamese. The communication involved in bargaining is Vietnamese in character and language. Participation in these activities requires knowledge of, familiarity with, and use of these Vietnamese customs. These call on and put the participants in touch, even though briefly, with their Vietnamese roots and make them feel Vietnamese.

For many, however, it is shopping for food that makes Little Saigon so important. Buying groceries is not just a necessary functional activity; culture,



identity and group attachments are maintained through food (Abrahamson, 1996; see also Rivlin, 1987). Food habits reveal important details about a group's values and lifestyle ranging from what they eat, how they eat, how they prepare it and what they abstain from eating (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 140;<sup>14</sup> see also Rivlin, 1987; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1994). For Vietnamese Americans, there are certain food items such as pickled celery, pickled lettuce, carambola juice, jackfruit, lychees, moon cakes and other baked delicacies that are not found in common supermarkets, such as Ralph's and Albertson's, in Southern California. Certain other food items such as soy sauce and fish sauce (which are available in the regular stores) are however much cheaper in the Asian markets and available in greater variety, ranging from low sodium soy sauce, naturally brewed soy sauce to specialty sauces from Vietnam. The following excerpt provides a description:

... I have never seen a conglomeration of assorted brands of soy sauce in one place before going to this market. I did not know that Kikkoman *lite* ever existed. There were easily a dozen brands of soy sauce on the shelf at the Vietnamese market ... In addition, I also noticed an assorted variety of fish sauce available to choose from as well (Field Observation: F.D).

Eating Vietnamese food (Such as *Phó*) and sweets are an enticing activity. There are many restaurants in Little Saigon serving a variety of Vietnamese food from staples to delicacies. Some restaurants have menus written only in Vietnamese, and servers who speak Vietnamese and little or no English. Restaurants cater to large families (ties with extended kin being an important feature of Vietnamese families) with circular tables seating 10 or more people a common sight.

NonVietnamese visitors are a fifth set of people who came to Little Saigon. They come to experience and learn about another culture without leaving the country. Not all such visitors are unfamiliar with Vietnam. There are those who have Vietnamese spouses, those who have visited Vietnam, fought in the war there, to whom the experience is one filled with and supported by memories and remembrances. And there are the curious. These are members of other cultures who come to get a feel of Vietnam in Little Saigon, enjoy the sights, sounds, festivities, or purchase products.

The atmosphere, ambience, and character of Little Saigon is Vietnamese. The sounds of Vietnamese music, and Vietnamese conversation can be heard in the mall, and sights of Vietnamese food, Vietnamese clothes, gold and Vietnamese knick-knacks, objects

and artifacts communicate to and remind the visitor that one is in a different place. For those Vietnamese-Americans who remember life in Vietnam, visits to Little Saigon bring up place memories. One Vietnamese-American describes it in the following way:

Little Saigon serves as a reminder for me of what Vietnam is like. I guess by going there, I retain a part of my heritage and culture. I need a Little Saigon to remind me of my home country since I left it when I was only eight years old. Even though I consider myself bicultural, I know that I will slowly forget my Asian heritage if I do not visit places like Little Saigon (VC:ITT\069\A1\W).

For another, Little Saigon evokes the following:

There are several images ... that bring memories of Saigon City. I remember seeing old women, grandmothers, walking down the streets of Vietnam in their black, loose, satin pants with their embroidered shirts, their hair in buns and darkened teeth from chewing tobacco. And being able to see the image again in Little Saigon gives me a sense of something that I used to be familiar with. Or sometimes I see vendors selling food—carrying on their shoulders, it brings back memories when I went to the market with my grandmother in Vietnam (VN89A2\F).

For those who do not remember Vietnam and for those who were born and raised in America, regular visits to Little Saigon are a way of learning about their Vietnamese roots and being socialized into their Vietnamese identity. Young adults recalled how, as children, their parents would routinely take them to Little Saigon on weekends to shop, to meet friends, to eat Vietnamese food and through these activities learn to appreciate and retain their culture.

### **Religion, ceremonial events and a sense of place**

Little Saigon is not just a commercial space with an active social life, but a center of religious life as well, serving as a setting for several of the more public, ceremonial ritual events. Some ritual events are individual and private; some are social, collective, public and large scale, while others have both components. On a private level Vietnamese stores, businesses and restaurants have altars dedicated to Buddha, ancestors and other religious icons. There individual shop owners offer prayers, fruits and burn incense. On special days, additional ceremonies and rituals are conducted. One event of particular significance to the Vietnamese is the *Tet*<sup>15</sup>

festival. *Tet* marks the beginning of the Lunar Calendar and is celebrated during the first 3 days of the New Year. It involves several family-centered ceremonies and rituals that occur in the home. Preparation for *Tet* and its celebration, however, is not confined to homes but spills over to business and shops. The following is one description.

On New Year's Eve, people were busily cleaning up and decorating their stores for the next day. Many people were sweeping the front of their stores because it was considered bad luck to clean up on New Year's Day. One may accidentally sweep away prosperity that was going to come in. Besides, one would want to have clean house or store to welcome in the good spirits. Groups of children belonging to Buddhist Youth groups were also going around doing the lion dances, bringing good omens to the shops, and in turn they received luck money from the storekeeper (Masequesmay, 1991, p. 38).

*Tet* also has ceremonies and rituals that are communal and public. At the center of the festival grounds in Little Saigon an altar is set up. It is covered with fruits, white gladiolus flowers and incense offered to invoke the spirits of the ancestors. Elderly Vietnamese men, dressed in traditional outfits, bows before the altar to pay respects for themselves and collectively for the community, and to welcome the spirits. Noisy fire crackers are set off in the belief that the noise will scare away the evil spirits and usher in the good. Traditional singing, dancing (the Dragon Dance for example), plays, cultural events and festivities continue through the day. *Tet* food, such as moon cake, is available at several decorated food stands.

People of different ages experience these ceremonies in different ways. Adults enjoy the plays, speeches, and the music, teenagers take the opportunity to meet people from the opposite sex and sample the food, and young kids are excited by the rides and martial art demonstrations. But for all, it is time to reconnect their present with the past, to share and express their heritage. It is an opportunity to teach the children, particularly the ones born in the U.S.A., their Vietnamese roots. One young informant sums it up:

It [the *Tet* celebration] is a symbol of the Vietnamese culture. I go there to support the community and to show that I have not forgotten my roots (VC:0314\KK\1).

Even though space allocation for such celebration is temporary, such public and congregational ceremonial events make religion more visible and central in the lives of the people and play an

important role in Little Saigon. Little Saigon is also home to permanent religious structures such as the Buddhist temple and the *Hung Vuong* (Ancestor Temple). Ancestor worship is a significant component of the religious lives of the Vietnamese.<sup>16</sup> Reverence is shown not only to one's immediate ancestors but to distant ones buried in their native Vietnam. Every year on Ancestors' Day Vietnamese Americans come to pay their respects to the deceased and through this ritual process become connected once again to their ancestors left behind in Vietnam. The felt need for religious activities and a properly designed space for them has led to proposals for buildings that will make Little Saigon reflect even more a Vietnamese-Asian architectural character.

There are plans for a new temple, proposed in a new planned development, 'The Temple Village' proposal. Its proposers claim that this will be the 'first of its type not only in Little Saigon, but in all of Orange County' (Proposal for Temple Village, nd). The plan includes a temple described as follows:

... the proposed temple is non-denominational and is open to everyone. It serves primarily as a memorial shrine to ancestors and 'Kuan Kung' will be designed in accordance with the Fung Shui principle... The Fung Shui principle is widely appreciated and respected in many Asian countries and Little Saigon. Temples of this type are found throughout Vietnam and many other parts of Asia. In Vietnam particularly a temple is an essential part of every village and urban neighborhood ... the temple also will serve as a meeting place for small community or family groups and for teaching about the ancestors, gods and customs. This temple has no resident priests or monks, no congregation, no extensive seating and no mass ceremonies. There is one small room for a resident caretaker (Proposal for Temple Village, nd).

The temple is located in the center section of the U-shaped plan. The plan includes space for stores and business on the long legs of the U. It is considered auspicious to have one's store located in close proximity to the temple (Proposal for Temple Village, nd). The plan also has housing units on two floors above the shops, much like it is in Vietnam, where people live in close proximity to their business. Families can combine shopping trips with visits to the temple. The temple is expected to become the focal point of religious activities and events for the Vietnamese in the vicinity of Little Saigon. Once built, children would be introduced to the formal aspects of their religion on a more frequent basis than the once-a-year *Tet* celebration.

### Concluding discussion

Our study of Little Saigon has several implications for the literature on place identity and attachment. We delineate three themes here.

#### *Ethnic enclaves as significant space*

According to Relph (1976, p. 1), 'to be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place'. The ethnic enclave of Little Saigon is a significant place for the Vietnamese in Southern California. People talk of it in affectionate terms and express their emotional attachment to it. They feel a sense of being drawn to it as if there were an invisible centripetal force. It is a center, a watering hole, a physical space they need to visit. Going to Little Saigon is like making a pilgrimage. For them it is a substitute home, a home away from home, a place they can go to easily to get a shot of home. For some the draw is very strong and they need to live there, others visit it at frequent intervals.

It is a must for people like myself to make a pilgrimage to Orange County, to meet people, eat good food and have a sense of the old Vietnam (N. N. Bich as quoted in Day & Holley, 1984, p. 1).

For a refugee community that has lost its homeland including its capital, Saigon, the creation of Little Saigon represents hope from being 'homeless' to having a 'home' again.

I know I had lost my country, but to see another Saigon created by my own people ... I can't describe the emotions I felt that day (Q. N. Danh as quoted in Tran, 1998, A1).

We resurrected Saigon in spirit here. That's the beauty of it. We were a community on the move. This area represented the hopes and ambitions of the community as a whole (V. T. Tran as quoted in Tran, 1998, A 36).

By giving the old name, Saigon, to the new place, immigrants frame 'the new landscape in familiar images' (Leonard, 1997, p. 46), which is a 'way for immigrants to empower themselves in new contexts, a way of taking charge of the physical landscape and emphasizing continuity with the past' (Leonard, 1997, p. 46).

Ethnic enclaves enable the immigrant to feel rooted and connected again. In places like Little Saigon, they can:

... talk the same language and see the old country in their mind (Q. N. Danh as quoted in Day & Holley, 1984, p. 1).

Speaking the language helps to make lost places be ever present in their minds. As Eliade (1982, p. 100) points out:

The homeland for every exile, is the mother tongue he still continues to speak ... The homeland for me is therefore the language I speak ... and is the language in which I dream ...

Place ties to ethnic enclaves develop over time through repeated visits, through participation in a rich and varied social life, through ritual celebrations and formation of networks, all of which, according to Rivlin (1987, p. 21), 'connect people to settings, creating powerful sentiments for a place as well as its inhabitants'. For the Vietnamese refugee immigrant, Little Saigon became an important setting for their social and religious life.

Generally, immigrants participate in at least two kinds of social life. On the one hand they participate in the social life and social events of their new adopted places. These social events are often new and unfamiliar to them; as a result they may not be as meaningful, and perhaps not as deeply satisfying. On the other hand, they participate in the social events and social life of the culture of the place they emigrated from. These are more familiar ones they can participate fully in, and perhaps are more deeply satisfying. But these are more difficult to come by or organize in the adopted land. Little Saigon, with its expanding provision of larger numbers and more authentic services, provides many opportunities for participation in a life similar to that in Vietnam. The variety of shops, such as coffee shops, jewellery shops, bakeries, grocery stores, herbal medicine and so on, provide the wherewithal for a Vietnamese social life. People of different ages find a social life in Little Saigon as it promotes communication between different members of the immigrant group: elderly with elderly, young with young, newly arrived with 'old timers'. Recently arrived members and the less acculturated find greater comfort in being among familiar people. In addition to the above, collective celebrations of socio-cultural, religious, and ritual activities involving community participation act as a ritual reminder, making present their past heritage and enabling the young to learn their heritage, culture, ritual and religion. It is this multilayered

immersion with place and its activities that leads to place commitment and rootedness (Rivlin, 1987).<sup>17</sup>

*Ethnic architecture, symbolic communication, and place meaning*

This study points to the important role of architecture in the communication of identity and presence. Two types of communication occur. One is internal communication between members of the community. Use of characteristic and familiar traditional Vietnamese architectural forms helps create for the Vietnamese the sense that this is a 'Vietnamese place', making it reminiscent of Vietnam and a place where they can visually connect with their architecture and culture. Here, the built environment and the social environment merge to create a Vietnamese sense of place. Furthermore, building temples and other structures according to the principles of *Phong Thuy* (Vietnamese *Feng Shui*) leads not only to the continuity of architectural forms but also to the perpetuation of knowledge regarding the philosophic concepts and principles of site selection, spatial layout, and architectural style. For the diasporic community, particularly for its older immigrants with vivid place memories, familiar architectural forms (such as arches, gateways, curved roofs), artifacts (such as Buddhist statues, dragon heads), and landscaping (use of plants, trees, shrubs from Vietnam), all evoke memories of places, landscapes, and urban scapes left behind. Architectural and urban design, then, is an important component of place identity on two levels: retention and creation. Places such as Little Saigon with their visual reminders help older displaced immigrants, particularly refugees, to retain place identity. For the generation born in America with little or no place memory of Vietnam, visits to ethnic enclaves with their distinctive architecture becomes a mechanism through which place identity is created connecting them not only to Little Saigon but through Little Saigon to the lost Saigon and Vietnam, the country of their parents and Vietnamese ancestors.

Little Saigon's architecture also plays a role in external communication, conveying to the non-Vietnamese the existence of the Vietnamese community with its distinctive architecture, culture, goods and services. For people with some cultural similarities to the Vietnamese, Little Saigon provides familiarity. To the curious who want to learn about Vietnam, Little Saigon offers a glimpse of Vietnam. Thus, the architectural design with its symbolism and symbolic elements communicates ethnic

identity and the desire of an immigrant group to maintain its identity.

Yet, Little Saigon is not completely Vietnamese in its character. Much has been adopted and adapted from the host country. Compliance with local laws and regulations related to planning and architecture necessitate adoption of the host culture's ways of doing things. Materials and modes of construction are American. There are huge parking lots to accommodate the ubiquitous automobile. Monetary transactions are in the currency of the host country. So even in the effort to create a 'Vietnamese setting', there is in actuality negotiation, an accommodation, and an artful incorporation of elements from both cultures.

Pointing to the formalization of the Design Standards Manual and its adoption, some may argue that the efforts at managing the architectural image of Little Saigon may be due to an interest in harvesting the marginal income (in the economic sense) from the local 'tourists'. Economic viability is of course important. But, it may be erroneous to impute economic aims as the sole or primary rationale, as, if it were, we would expect to find several malls with similar themes. In this time of emphasis on multiculturalism, some developers may invest in such an idea. But Little Saigon's historical roots do not suggest or lend credence to the idea.

*Ethnic enclaves, transitional places, and the making of a new identity*

Voluntary migration involves place disruption and disconnected place ties (Brown & Perkins, 1992). For refugees, violently expelled from their home, community, and nation, place disruption can be overwhelming; place loss involves not merely moving away from place but often complete or partial obliteration of place. The ordinary migrant can return to 'home' places through visits and thereby retain some semblance of continuity with their past. For a refugee, there is often no return; for them, 'home' places are reconstructed spatially through Little Saigons and Little Havanas and/or cognitively through memory and nostalgia (see also Abrahamson, 1996). For these exiled communities,<sup>18</sup> the formation of new place ties is facilitated by the presence of elements and characteristics that are familiar (Brown & Perkins, 1992). The ethnic enclave is a mechanism through which the familiar is created in unfamiliar settings.

The ethnic enclave of Little Saigon is an 'intermediate station', a stepping stone in the life of an (Vietnamese) immigrant trying to adjust to life in

an unfamiliar land (U.S.A.). It is created with many of the characteristics and qualities of their homeland so familiar to them. Yet, it also has characteristics of the adopted land and culture. It is somewhere near the middle on the continuum from one culture to another, assisting the immigrant in a continuous transition by providing pockets of familiarity, bridging the two cultures, and yet buffering him or her at least temporarily, from the difficulties of being in a completely unfamiliar land. To surrender completely and abdicate in one fell swoop, one's preferences for food, culture, language, music, festivals, ceremonies, and the values one is familiar with and holds dear, would mean a sudden and total loss of identity. This would be rather traumatic, and filled with apprehension, rootlessness, normlessness, isolation and alienation (Handlin, 1951; Kramer, 1970; Brown & Perkins, 1992; Gold, 1992). The ethnic enclave is an attempt by the exiled refugee to create social and cultural ecological conditions for ease in survival and adaptation.<sup>19</sup> The great effort and investment that go into it is indicative of the importance of culture and place to people and of the gradual and slow nature of the process of change.

Finally, the very presence of Little Saigon symbolically communicates to the host society the desire of the Vietnamese immigrant community to strike permanent roots in the newly adopted land (in American soil) and at the same time maintain their own ethnic identity through the successful transplantation of their religion, culture, and business. Ethnic enclaves, thus, constitute an important aspect of an immigrant's place identity enabling him/her to simultaneously remain connected to the places left behind and yet appropriating and forging significant new place ties. Thus, as Rochberg-Halton (1986, p. 191) points out:

The buildings, places, and institutions of the city are not merely static entities or inert objects; or even simply structural codes, but are signs that live objectively in the transactions people have with them. They signify history, relationships, current practices and goals; communicate a sense of place and participation; and grow through cultivation, in the minds of those who care for and about them

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### Notes

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(1) We are using Abrahamson's (1996, p. 13) definition of what constitutes an enclave. According to him enclaves contain the following: concentration of residents who share a distinctive status that is important to their identity; specialized stores and institutions that provide local support for the residents' distinctive lifestyle; and a strong tie between the lifestyle and the geographic space the residents occupy.

(2) According to Fried (1963, p. 56), spatial identity 'is based on spatial memories, spatial imagery, the spatial framework of current activity, and the implicit spatial components of ideals and aspirations'.

(3) According to Feldman (1990, pp. 191–192), 'settlement identity is defined as patterns of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, beliefs, preferences, values, goals and behavioral tendencies and skills that relate the identity of a person to a type of settlement and provides disposition for future engagement with that type of settlement.'

(4) Hay (1998) points to certain similarities in the concepts used by Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) and Stokols and Shumaker (1981). The following are Stokols and Shumaker's (1981, p. 481) definitions of generic place-dependence and geographic place dependence. Generic place-dependence is the 'degree to which occupants perceive themselves to be strongly associated with and dependent on a category of functionally similar places'. Geographical place-dependence is the 'degree to which occupants perceive themselves to be strongly associated with and dependent on a particular place' (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981, p. 481).

(5) For a more detailed discussion, see Lofland and Lofland (1984), Singleton *et al.* (1988).

(6) For a more detailed discussion on *verstehen* as proposed by Dilthey see Ermath (1978) and Hamilton (1994). To understand its use by Weber and interpretation by Schutz, see Schwandt (1994).

(7) Our purpose was to understand the 'life world' of the informant from his/her point of view. As Kvale (1996, p. 32) points out:

The qualitative research interview aims at obtaining nuanced descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee's life world. It works with words and not with numbers. Precision in description and stringency in meaning interpretation correspond in qualitative interviews to exactness in quantitative measurements.

For the interviewer then knowledgeable informants can take on the role of teachers as aptly pointed out by Spradley (1979, p. 34) in the following excerpt:

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way

you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?

In this regard 'quality rather than quantity' (Kvale, 1996, p. 103) takes on added meaning and seeking out, and learning from key informants becomes an important component of qualitative research (see also Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

(8) Unlike some studies that rely entirely on data from interviews, where the interviews are expected to provide all information, are complete, and are quoted as their only source of data, in this research interviews constituted only one of many sources of data. Some interviews were carried out at the setting and were brief, while a few were conducted at the university and were more detailed and longer. Additional data was provided by students who were asked to visit Little Saigon and write about what they observed, heard, experienced. In our description we call on this data, but found ourselves quoting mostly from the interviews done at the university as they were more complete in their sentence structure and therefore more understandable to the reader.

For those who were fluent and comfortable in English, the interviews were conducted in English, and for those who were more comfortable in Vietnamese, the interviews were in Vietnamese, and there were some which used both languages. The driving factor was the quality and fluency of the data, not strict adherence to any one language.

(9) As much as possible, quotes have been left in their original form. English errors existing in some writings were left unaltered. They provide a flavor of what Vietnamese authors were trying to express in the English press.

(10) Though some architectural features are specifically Vietnamese, some others are from the region and can be described broadly as Asian, as these forms can be commonly found not only in Vietnam but other neighboring countries as well. Within Vietnam, besides Vietnamese features and characteristics, it is common to find architectural features and influences from French, Chinese, and Indian architecture, among others.

(11) Little Saigon CPA receives specific attention in the City of Westminster Design Standards Manual. A separate set of design standards for Little Saigon CPA Section 71.67.090 takes up pages 53 to 66 of the 75-page manual.

(12) The use of Chinese, Cambodian, Buddhist and Hindu motifs can be expected because of strong ties and intermigration. Given the large numbers of ethnic Chinese among the Vietnamese immigrants who see themselves as Chinese-Vietnamese and not Vietnamese, it is futile for us to try to decipher which forms are originally or authentically Vietnamese. Although there has been some disagreement and conflict over the use of forms primarily Chinese (such as the controversy related to the Bridge), the Vietnamese in Southern California find it difficult to make these distinctions. Some of the malls are owned and financed by Chinese-Vietnamese. Though they seek Vietnamese and other customers, that have drawn freely on forms that are Chinese and Vietnamese. Though we use Asian and Vietnamese here as linguistic vehicles to enable this discussion, we are aware of the ethnic issues described above.

(13) The classification developed here was influenced by the work of Herbert Gans (1962).

(14) Abrahamson (1996, p. 140) provides the following example:

Many southeast Asians working in American hotels will forego a free meal at work and wait until they get home, to the company of others, like themselves, to eat their own food purchased in Asian grocery stores.

(15) *Tet* is short for *Tet Nguyen Dan* and translates to feast of the first day.

(16) Ancestor worship is also practiced in China, India, and several other Asian countries.

(17) According to Rivlin (1987, p. 20):

The greater the number of domains the group membership covers in terms of an individual life, which involve residence, the activities of daily life (food purchase and preparation) work, education, recreation, socialization, religious or ethical life, and the more *concentrated* domains are within an area, the deeper the roots are likely to be in the place.

(18) Abrahamson (1996, p. 100–101) provides a detailed analysis of differences between traditional immigrants and exiles.

(19) We are aware that ethnic enclaves are not without their problems (see also Kitano & Daniels, 1995). Some have argued that they insulate the newcomer from mainstream society thus limiting the process of acculturation. Others focused on exploitative practices (Nee *et al.*, 1994). Our focus at the time of this study was to understand the meaning of Little Saigon in the lives of the Vietnamese-Americans.

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